PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1989-90

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

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House of Commons

Monday 18 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

1. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has made of the likely impact of privatisation on electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): Competition in electricity generation and supply, combined with price control where monopolies remain, will put downward pressure on prices to the benefit of the consumer.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend do his utmost to see that the undoubted efficiencies arising from privatisation are passed on in the form of reduced costs and to ensure that any additional future costs arising from nuclear decommissioning are not passed on as extra costs?

Mr. Wakeham: The regulatory regime will provide for benefits to be passed on to consumers. On nuclear energy, as in the past, electricity customers will continue to pay the best estimate of the cost of the decommissioning when they purchase electricity. We have taken powers to contribute to these costs should they subsequently increase.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: With regard to the impact of privatisation on electricity prices, does the Minister understand the sense of moral outrage that there will be throughout the country at today's announcement that Lord Marshall is to receive a golden handshake of £250,000? Does the Minister agree that because of his record of advice on nuclear power and the dishonest costing of nuclear electricity, Lord Marshall's decisions and advice have cost us billions of pounds? Would it not be a suitable epitaph for Lord Marshall if the Minister had the courage to cancel the last of the pressurised water reactors and scrap Sizewell B?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have made clear their intentions on Sizewell B. We wish to see the completion of that project. As several hon. Members know, I have today received and accepted Lord Marshall's resignation as chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board. Lord Marshall feels that in the light of my recent decisions on nuclear power he is unable to continue as chairman of the CEGB and as chairman-designate of National Power. In accepting Lord Marshall's resignation, I pay tribute to his long and distinguished career in public service and to his stewardship of the CEGB during the past seven years.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the low cost prices given by the CEGB in the past for nuclear electricity have now been largely discredited? In the light of that, is my right hon. Friend inclined to believe the new high cost prices for nuclear electricity that have been given in different circumstances—with the CEGB being responsible for privatised nuclear electricity—or does he think that they, too, should be treated with a pinch of salt?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend is aware, because he studies these things closely, the indicative prices that we

received from National Power reflected the City's perception of the financing of nuclear power. That perception made the indicative prices so high that they were unacceptable the Government. The future prices of nuclear power are at present being discussed with the Nuclear Electric company. I have no doubt that satisfactory arrangements will be made.

Mr. Barron: What exactly does the Secretary of State mean by "downward pressure on prices"? He knows that the major fuel source of electricity is British Coal and that for the past three years there has been a real reduction in the cost of that coal, with a saving in the current financial year of £850 million on the contract. However, at the same time, by Government diktat during the past two years, there has been an increase in electricity prices of 15 per cent. Given that the new contract with the generator will continue to have the benefit of that cost reduction from British Coal, which will accumulate in the third year to a saving of about £450 million, why will not the Secretary of State tell the House and consumers that electricity prices will go down as a consequence of those massive savings?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the efforts of British Coal and its work force to stabilise the price of coal in recent years and its continued determination to do so. What I mean by downward pressure on prices is that competition in generation, which is responsible for 75 per cent. of all electricity costs, will be a force for reducing prices.

Gas Industry (Competition)

3. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations have been received about opening up competition in the gas industry.

Mr. Wakeham: I have received a number of representations about competition in the gas industry.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that competition is beginning to develop in the gas supply industry, as evidenced by the formation of Quadrant Gas by Shell and Esso which will undoubtedly bring price and other benefits to consumers? Against that background, how does he foresee competition developing along the lines envisaged in the Gas Act 1986?

Mr. Wakeham: Like my hon. Friend, I am delighted that new companies are beginning to compete in the market place. They include not only Quadrant Gas but Associated Gas Supplies and Kinetica Ltd. There are good prospects for producers wishing to sell gas directly to the industrial market. The Government's decision that 10 per cent. of all new gas supplies should be sold to customers other than British Gas is promoting competition. As my hon. Friend knows, the power generation sector offers a significant prospect for the early development of competition in the gas market.

Dr. Kim Howells: Does the Secretary of State agree that an uncontrolled expansion of gas burning for power generation could result in an even greater escape of methane into the atmosphere than occurs at present, and that the escape of methane is an important, if not the most important, contributor to the greenhouse effect?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's latter statement is wrong. CO_2 emissions are by far the biggest contributor to the greenhouse effect. However, he is right to make that point. No form of energy generation is without its risks and problems, but gas has substantial advantages over several of its competitors.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to facilitate competition in the gas industry is to open a trunk pipeline to Europe? Will he do everything possible to bring that about?

Mr. Wakeham: At present there is no great demand for that, but there is a considerable improvement in the competitive environment for gas. I should like to see how that develops before taking further steps.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Secretary of State accept that, contrary to his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), the latest estimates in the current issue of *Nature* are that the escape of methane into the atmosphere contributes as much as the burning of fossil fuels in power stations to the greenhouse effect?

Before the right hon. Gentleman authorises any gas burning in electricity generation, should he not get together with the 12 area boards forming the non-fossil purchasing agency, which has just missed the 1 December deadline for 1990? Before he allows the new players in gas to sell gas for electricity generation he should first make sure that the gas board has made its pipelines as gas-tight as they can be, instead of leaking 2 or 3 per cent. of the gas into the atmosphere. Secondly, he should get together with the waste disposal authorities to ensure that landfill gas is used first for conversion into electricity through small turbines. That would make a major contribution to resolving the greenhouse gas problem.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked several questions, and I am not sure that I accept most of what he said. He asked me to confirm what the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said about methane, but he did not repeat what his hon. Friend had said in his question. I stand by what I said.

The full effects of all the different forms of gas emissions are not fully known and that is why the Government are encouraging the panel that is considering those matters. That is why we recently submitted evidence to it, which is available in the Library if the hon. Gentleman wants to see it.

Mr. Butler: Since privatisation, has the price of gas fallen or risen, and is that any evidence of increased competitiveness?

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend is wise enough to know the answer to his question before he asks it, I confirm that the price of gas has fallen.

Electricity Privatisation

4. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implication for coal burn from Scottish mines of the Government's decision to exclude nuclear power stations from their privatisation proposals.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): That will depend on commercial decisions to be taken by the South of Scotland electricity board.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister be a little more forthcoming about what is happening to coal burn? We now have only one effective Scottish pit and its future depends on securing its outlet to the Longannet power station. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that an agreement will be concluded soon between the SSEB, or what remains of it, and British Coal to ensure the continued employment of at least one deep mine coal complex in Scotland?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is right that there is a great deal of competition to coal in Scotland. That competition comes not only from nuclear power, to which his question is addressed, but from gas; and the competition from gas will increase.

Recently £70 million has been invested in Longannet. I visited the pit fairly recently and morale is growing, with some reason: the pit is attaining record output per man shift and hitting good seams of coal. There is everything to play for at Longannet. Scotland has a rich diversity of fuel sources and the coal industry must compete against them.

Mr. Eadie: Will the Minister reflect on that answer? He must be well aware that in Scotland we are currently locked in a legal battle in the courts over precisely what the coal burn should be. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) spoke about Longannet, but I have a constituency interest in Monkton Hall colliery. That colliery is mothballed and whether it will be resuscitated depends on the coal burn and on the outcome of the present legal wrangles. Will the Minister be a bit more positive instead of standing back and saying that it is a matter of commercial decisions reached by the people involved? He should say that he will do his best to see that the legal wrangles are resolved so that we know what the coal burn will be in Scotland.

Mr. Spicer: If I followed the hon. Gentleman's advice to see that the legal wrangles were sorted out, he would accuse me of interfering in the courts. The courts are currently sitting and I understand that they will pronounce on the matter soon. We must await their decision. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want me to intervene in the affairs of the courts. If I did he could accuse me of intervening in the judiciary.

United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association

5. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the representative of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association; and what matters were discussed.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met representatives of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Associations on 8 November, when a number of North sea issues were raised.

Mr. Ross: Before the Minister next meets the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association, will he take time to study the evidence given by the Manufacturing Science and Finance union to Lord Cullen's inquiry on Thursday? That evidence identified that at least one offshore operator—Philips in the Hewett field—had agreed with the union to apply offshore the health and safety regulations that apply onshore. Because of the operators' determination to apply those conditions offshore, employees' confidence in the system has increased. When the Minister next meets representatives of UKOOA, will he press the example of Philips on other United Kingdom offshore operators?

Mr. Morrison: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I listen carefully to any evidence relating to safety in the North sea, and MSF and put forward many recommendations. As he will be aware, Lord Cullen is still carefully considering much of he evidence and we await his report, which will be produced some time next year. We shall then look closely at the recommendations.

Mr. Doran: In his discussions with the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association, has the matter of steel supplies for gas pipelines arisen? Is the Minister aware that because British Steel's refusal to invest in the plant necessary to produce the quality steel required by the industry, millions of pounds worth of orders are going abroad? Japan is the only country that makes the quality of steel necessary. Will the Minister discuss with UKOOA efforts to encourage British Steel and others? It is not within his ministerial responsibilities, but I know the efforts that his office has made to encourage investment and expenditure in the United Kingdom. Will he take responsibility for this problem and see what can be done about it?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman is right; conversations certainly take place between the operators and British Steel about the possibility of obtaining more steel from British Steel. As he is probably aware, Sir Robert Scholey, the chairman of British Steel, is a member of the oil industry advisory board which discusses such matters and was present at the most recent meeting.

Nuclear Industry (Investment)

6. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what his proposals are for the future of the nuclear industry investment programme.

Mr. Wakeham: The first priority is the successful completion of current programmes, including Sizewell B and the major projects at Sellafield. The question of Nuclear Electric building new nuclear stations will be considered in 1994.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Secretary of State accept that the row over the privatisation of nuclear power has done more harm to the industry than even the Windscale fire of 1957? With the industry under attack on all sides from greens, the coal lobby, the European Parliament, the Irish Dail and a number of nations throughout the world, is it not about time that he made some far more reassuring noises about future investment in these stations?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have made it clear that we have not abandoned nuclear power. We recognise its strategic value in diversity, security of supply and the reduction of fossil fuel emissions. As I said, Sizewell B will be completed to maintain the PWR option. The prospects for nuclear power will be reviewed in 1994. I hope that during the intervening period we can look at some of the costings of nuclear power to see whether we can reduce them.

Mr Wigley: Is the Secretary of State aware of the considerable dismay in the Welsh counties that faced the prospect of PWR stations at the Government's reluctance to give any compensation towards the costs that they incurred in preparing their cases against those PWR stations, which are now not being built? Will the Secretary of State reconsider the matter to see whether those local authorities can be properly compensated?

Mr. Wakeham: In such circumstances it is not normal for the Government to compensate people for, rightly, seeking representation and incurring expense while presenting their case. I should have thought that people to whom the hon. Gentleman referred would be well satisfied with the outcome; I cannot say that I was, but I had to live with those circumstances.

Mr. Hannam: Is my right hon. Friend aware that some European countries have successful private sector nuclear power stations? Is there anything to stop that happening in this country if nuclear power becomes competitive again?

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely nothing. What I said about reviewing the option in 1994 related to Nuclear Electric, which will be a state-owned successor company to the CEGB. That company's prospects will be reviewed again in 1994, but it is perfectly open for anybody who so wishes to make the necessary planning applications if they believe that to be a sensible course of action.

Mr. Rost: Before Lord Marshall is made a scapegoat for the nuclear fiasco, will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that if his advice to build PWRs had been taken 10 years before it finally was, we should probably have a family of them now producing economic electricity?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly do not intend Lord Marshall to be made a scapegoat for anything. He is a distinguished public servant who served Governments of all types; but, as someone more significant than I has said, "Advisers advise, and Ministers decide."

Mr. Skinner: Is it not a scandal that over the past two or three decades this Government and successive Governments have been kidding the people that nuclear power is cheap, efficient and safe—and cheaper than coal? Now the truth has been blurted out: it is two or three times dearer than coal and other forms of energy. Is it not also disreputable that the Government, who have been conning the British people, should hand over £250,000 to Lord Marshall and accuse him of being a scapegoat? I know a lot of poor people in my constituency who would be happy to be called a scapegoat and handed £250,000.

Mr. Wakeham: I understand that the hon. Gentleman must have been pondering his question while I was answering my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) a moment ago, when I said that I did not want anyone to treat Lord Marshall as a scapegoat. I paid him a well-deserved tribute and said that he was a distinguished public servant.

The hon. Gentleman, who takes an interest in some parts of these matters, would be well advised to read carefully some of the evidence given—modesty forbids me to disclose who gave it—to the Select Committee on Energy last week. It was pointed out there that many economic factors in the various forms of energy generation have changed. Oil, gas and coal are much cheaper relative to nuclear power than they were. The hon. Gentleman will be wiser when he has read that evidence.

BNFL

7. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what matters he has discussed with British Nuclear Fuels plc since his recent announcement on the future for nuclear power.

Mr. Wakeham: I met Mr. Harding on 16 November when we discussed a range of matters concerning the company.

Mr. Jack: The answer that my right hon. Friend gave to an earlier question on the future of the nuclear industry will be warmly welcomed by my constituents who work at BNFL's plant at Springfields and who have striven hard to improve their productivity. Can he assure me that in future negotiations with the Nuclear Electric company over the price of nuclear fuel there will be no return to cost-plus negotiating and the consequent loss of the benefits of competitive tendering in this area?

Mr. Wakeham: Those are commercial matters for BNFL and the Nuclear Electric company, but I very much share my hon. Friend's view that cost-plus contracts are not the best way forward, and I hope that proper contracts will be negotiated. I have been particularly impressed by BNFL's progress. In 1988-89 Springfields increased its exports by 25 per cent. and contributed to BNFL's record exports of £169 million.

Mr. John Evans: Has the Secretary of State discussed with BNFL or anyone else the fears of a growing number of nuclear engineers and scientists about the inherent dangers of a PWR pressure vessel collapse? Is he aware that an increasing number of our nuclear engineers are so worried about the risks involved that they believe that Sizewell B and the whole PWR programme should be abandoned?

Mr. Wakeham: That sounds like a partial account of the position. I have had no discussions with anyone on that subject. Safety is the paramount consideration at all times in the operation of nuclear power. That will continue to be so in the future, and we have an outstandingly good record.

Combined Heat and Power

8. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on plans to expand combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will continue to encourage wherever possible interest in combined heat and power. Ultimately, decisions are for the private sector.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister join me in congratulating Leicester city council and Leicester Energy Ltd. on the pioneering work that they have carried out with combined heat and power? The right hon. Gentleman is aware of the problems that have affected that scheme and will recall the meeting that took place in his office when he was kind enough to show us his collection of clockwork teddy bears. Will he join me in wishing the forthcoming new talks well and hoping for a happy conclusion? Will he give an

undertaking that if the talks do not succeed his Department will do all that it can to save this environmentally safe and cost-cutting scheme?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman reminds the House, I was delighted to be able to see him and some of his colleagues from Leicester at the beginning of the summer recess. I hope that I left him with the impression that nobody would have been happier than I if the scheme as it then was could have gone ahead. As he knows, ultimately the negotiations between the East Midlands electricity board and Leicester Energy Ltd. did not come to fruition. If further options come forward I shall certainly do what I can to facilitate them. However, in all fairness to the hon. Gentleman I must make it quite clear that there is no question of any subsidy from the taxpayer.

Mr. Rost: Should not my right hon. Friend accept, however, that if two thirds of the energy that is presently thrown out of power stations in cooling water were used for district heating in cities, it would not only save huge amounts of fossil fuel but would be environmentally beneficial? Should he not therefore consider giving combined heat and power the same sort of support that he is giving high-cost electricity from nuclear and from renewable sources?

Mr. Morrison: In the main I certainly accept the principle of what my hon. Friend says. I know that he has been a strong supporter of combined heat and power for a long time. Ultimately, the matter comes down to commercial factors. As my hon. Friend may know, in one other city, Nottingham, there is a small district heating scheme. I hope that that example can be repeated on a larger scale in other cities. As he also knows, apart from that scheme there are many combined heat and power examples in other parts of the country. In industry there are 120 and in buildings there are about 300. Therefore, I think that the idea is catching on very well.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister agree that the best thing he could do to encourage combined heat and power schemes would be to follow the example of the Secretary of State for Energy and simply announce that the electricity boards would have to allow combined heat and power stations to be base load stations, in the same way as he has announced for nuclear power stations? If that were done, the economics of combined heat and power stations would be immediately transformed and they could produce the cheapest electricity in the system.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman puts forward an alluring and very attractive idea which would make a simple solution. However, he will understand that if I agreed with him here and now, I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State might find ourselves in great difficulties and my ministerial career would be quickly at an end.

Community Insulation Programme

9. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the community insulation programme.

24. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action is being taken to assist low-income households with home insulation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend announced recently his intention to take powers for a proposed new scheme of insulation grants for low-incomes households.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Minister aware that expenditure on loft insulation and pipe insulation has fallen from £32·6 million to £9·6 million this year? Is he also aware that as a result of Government cuts resources have fallen by 15 to 20 per cent? In view of that, how can he uphold the Government's intention stated in 1983 that Britain would become the most efficient energy-saving nation in Europe by 1990? With only three weeks to go, how can he manage that?

Mr. Morrison: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's first point, the decrease has come about in part because people are not moving house at the rate that they were a year ago. In terms of general efficiency measures, if the hon. Gentleman examines the facts he will realise that the efforts of the Energy Efficiency Office over the years have been very successful. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are still significant gains to be made. The nation still spends about £40 billion per year on energy. The current estimate is that we could save up to 20 per cent. of that, which would amount to some £8,000 million. I agree with the general drive of what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you disallow question No. 24 for oral answer?

Mr. Speaker: No. For many years it has been the practice that questions up to No. 25 can be linked.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the new scheme to be introduced will improve access for low-income households, along the lines of the scheme under which 700,000 have been assisted since 1982?

Mr. Morrison: As my hon. Friend said, some 700,000 low-income households have benefited from the old scheme. I expect that when we have worked out the details of the new scheme, considerable numbers—an increase on the present level—will benefit from that scheme as well.

Electricity Privatisation

11. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the new terms and conditions of the obligation to supply subsequent to vesting day under the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Wakeham: Obligations to supply electricity will rest with those authorised to supply by licence or exemption under sections 5 and 6 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Smith: I thank the Minister for that interesting reply, but is it not the case that under the present model of privatisation, which is not the model passed by the House, Britain stands to become the only advanced industrialised country which does not protect the supply of electricity to the consumer? Does this not show utter contempt for British consumers and prove that privatisation is not a means to an end but a discredited end in itself?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the position. The area boards will continue to have an obligation to offer terms for a supply. Every customer will be able to find a supplier, and regulations

will continue to prescribe the quality and safety of supplies. Licence conditions on all suppliers will ensure current standards of security.

British Gas

12. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Gas; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I met the chairman of British Gas last month when we discussed a range of issues of mutual interest.

Dr. Moonie: Will the Minister share with us his forecast, or that of the chairman of British Gas, for the future use of gas over the next 10 years in the generation of electrical power?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman has probably heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say, both in this Question Time and on previous occasions, we believe that the generation of electricity by gas will be on the increase in the next decade.

Nuclear Levy

13. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the level of the nuclear levy.

Mr. Wakeham: The size of the fossil fuel levy will depend on the prices negotiated for nuclear and fossil fuel electricity. These have still to be agreed.

Mr. Griffiths: What will be the upper and lower limits of the nuclear levy? How much will that cost the taxpayer and what would be the advantage to the consumer if coal-fired power stations were allowed to compete freely and on the same basis with nuclear power?

Mr. Wakeham: The cost of nuclear power is being paid for by the consumer. A fossil fuel levy, or a nuclear levy as the hon. Gentleman refers to it, will not change those arrangements. For the reasons that I gave in my original answer, I am not in a position to quote the amount of fossil fuel levy. However, the decision that I made with regard to nuclear power on 9 November will mean that the fossil fuel levy will be somewhat lower than it would otherwise have been.

Severn Barrage

14. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has any plans to finance the construction of a barrage across the estuary of the River Severn.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Prospects for the Severn barrage project will be reviewed on completion of the financing and organisational studies to be carried out by the Severn tidal power group.

Mr. Wardell: Will the Minister give the House a guarantee that the scheme will not be delayed unnecessarily by his Department? The scheme will generate 7 per cent. of the electricity demand of England and Wales from a renewable source, allow 200,000 man years of employment during construction and create up to 30,000 additional jobs, which will tremendously boost the south Wales economy. It will reduce the effect of the greenhouse problem and it will not create an acid rain problem. Will the Minister give us that guarantee?

Mr. Morrison: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I agree wholeheartedly with everything that he has said. The financing and the commercial objectives have, however, to be considered. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the sums involved in the construction of a barrage of such a magnitude are vast, and that problem is not easily overcome. Financial considerations must be addressed carefully because the cost per kilowatt hour would appear to be of considerable magnitude for the first 30 or 40 years. Subject to that, I wish the project as much of a fair wind as the hon. Gentleman does, subject to environmental and other considerations.

THE ARTS

North West Arts

81. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what funding North West Arts received in 1989-90.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): The overall forecast income for the north-west arts council in 1989-90 is just over £3 million.

Mr. Jack: That was an excellent answer. My right hon. Friend will be aware at this Christmas time of the joy that can be brought to people through brass band music. I ask my right hon. Friend, on behalf of the Freckleton prize brass band in my constituency, if he will do all in his power to ask North West Arts why it is not as yet giving any help to small village-based community music, such as brass bands? The Freckleton prize brass band is saying to me that my right hon. Friend should ask North West Arts to put some brass back into its band.

Mr. Luce: I appreciate my hon. Friend's interest in brass bands in the area that he represents. He will know that I do not take decisions in the precise allocation of funding for brass bands or any other arts. It is a matter for North West Arts and, to some extent, for the Arts Council. I hope that my hon. Friend will put his question directly to them.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise the serious threat to the provision for the arts in the north-west next year arising from the introduction of poll tax, which will make it extremely difficult for many local authorities to maintain the present level of funding? Will this not place in jeopardy financial provision for the Halle orchestra, the Mechanics arts centre and the Townelet museum and art gallery in Burnley?

Mr Luce: I have every conviction that any local authority with a pride in its arts activity will continue to have that pride. It will be directly accountable to ratepayers for whatever support it decides to give. It is interesting to reflect that in Scotland, where the community charge has been operating for several months, the level of local authority support for the arts continues at a reasonable level.

Mr. Donald Thompson: You will remember, Mr. Speaker, visiting the Terrace when seven brass bands played earlier this year, and the men, women and young people who played in those bands remember your visit

with pleasure. May I support my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and at the risk of sounding slightly ethnic, ask my right hon. Friend the Minister for more brass for brass.

Mr. Luce: I note the enthusiasm for brass bands. I am sure that the various regional arts associations will note the views of the House.

Stolen Treasures

82. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had from the Society of Antiquaries about problems of identified stolen art treasures being auctioned in sale rooms abroad; the difficulties of reacquiral of such objects by the churches and other organisations from whom they were stolen; and the need for Her Majesty's Government to satisfy article 7 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation convention, relating to a wide definition of cultural property.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of representations from the Society of Antiquaries on this subject.

Mr. Dalyell: I am gratified. Would that not make the Government more effective in dealing with future Icklinghams?

Mr. Luce: I appreciate the importance of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question about stolen works of art, or alleged stolen works of art, and the Icklingham case of Roman bronzes is foremost in everybody's mind at the moment. I am seeing my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on this issue tomorrow.

I have thought carefully about the UNESCO convention, but various other avenues are available to us. It is right to say that the Metropolitan police arts and antiques squad has been reconstituted. A computerised data base to index stolen art works is about to be set up. That will take place in January. The trade is already operating two codes of practice. The various procedures are fairly widespread. I remain to be convinced that the UNESCO convention, which is a fairly bureaucractic and cumbersome procedure, is the right way to deal with this difficult problem.

Mr. Cormack: As a fellow of the society, may I ask my right hon. Friend to reconsider this whole issue very carefully? It is a serious matter. As UNESCO is no longer the absolute charade that it was a few years ago, it would help enormously if my right hon. Friend would ratify the convention.

Mr. Luce: Of course I take my hon. Friend's question seriously, but there is a general point to be made. The whole question of export controls is to be reviewed under the 1992 procedure, and that will apply to works of art and the restitution of works of art. The matter can be considered in that context.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister knows that the measures that he has outlined will not secure the return of the bronzes, which are now in New York. Does he accept that he has responsibility for our heritage and, in particular, those bronzes, which were illegally excavated, illegally exported and, in effect, have been stolen from Mr. Browning, who has a good claim to them?

If the Minister is serious about the matter, will he raise it with the United States Government? Is not that the only way of ensuring that the bronzes are returned to their rightful country, Great Britain?

Mr. Luce: Of course I am serious about the issue, but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the police are currently investigating the matter. There has not yet been a court case to prove that the bronzes were stolen. If there is, and if that is the conclusion, further action can be taken.

Departmental Budget

83. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the increase in his Department's budget for the coming three years.

Mr. Luce: Between 1989-90 and 1992-93 my Department's budget will increase by 24 per cent.

Mr. Martin: I thank my right hon. Friend for that welcome reply. What is in his budget for an improved programme of building and maintenance for our national galleries and museums?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because one of the most important parts of my recent decision to increase the three-year funding is to put added focus on improving the fabric of our national museums and galleries to ensure that they are in good shape during the 1990s. It is a campaign of unprecedented importance and I have earmarked £180 million over the next three years to that effect.

Mr. Boyes: In this the 150th year of photography, do not the Government stand condemned for doing precious little about such a major and important historical event? Will the Minister ensure that some cash from that 24 per cent. rise in his budget goes into photography so that young photographers and galleries can do something for themselves, because the Government, typically, are doing nothing for them?

Mr. Luce: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's question. He knows that the science museum in Bradford has an extension housing the national museum of photography, film and television. It is a major centre of great importance to the whole of the country. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should suggest that there is little support for photography. This evening I am going to the royal academy to view a major exhibition of photography. There is a great deal of support for photography throughout the country.

British Library

84. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when the British library project is expected to be completed.

Mr. Luce: The complete building will be operational by 1996, although the first main phase will be opened in 1993.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this major and exciting project underlines the Government's commitment to the arts in all their forms? Will he take this opportunity to confirm that the British museum reading room will remain open?

Mr. Luce: I can assure my hon. Friend that the round reading room, which is of historic importance, will be kept

open under the overall responsibility of the British museum after the British library has moved to the new St. Pancras building. On my hon. Friend's first question, which is of great importance, the new British library is the Government's biggest civil construction today and the biggest cultural construction of the century. There could be no better evidence of the Government's commitment to the arts and the library world than this major new centre of excellence. It will provide remarkably improved services to the reader, in much better environmental conditions, and it will all be located in one building instead of the present 18.

North West Arts

87. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met a representative of North West Arts; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman of North West Arts in his other capacity as chairman of the Council of Regional Arts Associations on 25 July this year when various matters were discussed.

Mr. Fearn: Among the matters that were discussed, did the Minister talk about the allocation for the education budget that North West Arts would be allowing this time? It appears that money for education connected with the arts is being cut, and North West Arts is concerned about that. It means that children in school will not receive what they have been receiving in the past.

Mr. Luce: It is for North West Arts to decide how much work it does in that area. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I are carrying out a joint study on best practice in terms of the relationship between schools and artistic activities through theatres, museums, galleries, and so on. My right hon. Friend and I attach great importance to that and hope that it will lead to enhanced arts activity in the schools.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend believe that North West Arts has sufficient funds to fund the "In your own words" project, about which I have written to him and which has achieved a great deal of international recognition?

Mr. Luce: It must be for North West Arts to give a direct answer to my hon. Friend. However, I have no doubt of the importance of this and I look forward to meeting him to discuss the matter.

CIVIL SERVICE

Disciplinary Action

103. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will specify the particular guidelines, pursuant to *Official Report*, 27 November, column 436, which apply to action being taken against senior civil servants who authorise the disclosure of Law Officers' advice to the Government.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): Such a situation would be covered by the general guidelines in the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: Had they not been engaged in protecting their Prime Minister from being found out by the House, would not Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell have been liable to the same kind of criminal charges which, for a lesser offence, Clive Ponting faced? Once persons, however eminent, get away with these bad habits, as with Rover and the way in which the Prime Minister got rid of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, do they not do the same thing again in relation to the House which, were I so indelicate as to mention it, would mean that I would be suspended until Christmas?

Mr. Luce: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not go into more detail. We have been over this time and again. I have explained to the hon. Gentleman that there are detailed guidelines and he has no doubt referred to the copy that is available in the Library. On Westland, the matter has been debated on many occasions and I have nothing further to add.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister believe that European Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan was right when he said that Messrs Ingham and Powell improperly disclosed a Law Officer's report? If the Minister believes that, why are those two people in a completely different category from anyone else in the Civil Service? The Minister at least owes civil servants an answer to that question.

Mr. Luce: As I have already said, and am delighted to say again, I have nothing further to add in relation to that case other than to say that Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell are outstanding civil servants.

Central Policy Unit

104. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what guidance is issued to senior civil servants at attendance of meetings of the central policy unit.

Mr. Luce: Guidance on the circumstances in which civil servants may attend or participate in activities organised by outside bodies is set out in the personnel management handbook, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that, according to recent press reports, civil servants have been attending committees of the Centre for Policy Studies, a body established by Sir Keith Joseph and the Prime Minister a few years ago? Will he confirm that civil servants are at liberty to attend briefing committees of bodies that are associated with political parties?

Mr. Luce: Clear guidelines are set down as to what civil servants can and cannot do. One key criterion is whether or not a particular organisation is part of a party political organisation. That is not the case in respect of the Centre for Policy Studies. Clear guidelines lay down that if civil servants attend meetings they must show impartiality, observe the confidences of Government, and show discretion in respect of any controversial issues.

Mr. Tim Smith: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his contribution to the White Paper on the financing and accountability of next steps agencies. It is a great step forward in the programme for setting up agencies within Government.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the White Paper a new trading funds Bill, which will allow many of the newly constructed agencies of Government to operate within more commercial disciplines. That is good both for management and for the best use of Government resources.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister agree that this country has a long and honourable tradition of civil servants, including senior civil servants, being divorced from party politics? Is it not unfortunate that a number of civil servants, certainly those based at No. 10—Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell immediately come to mind—are very much associated in the minds of right hon. and hon. Members and in the minds of the public with a Conservative Government?

Mr. Luce: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's question. He knows as well as I do that the Civil Service demontrates the highest standards of impartiality. There is no shadow of doubt about that. It has demonstrated that impartiality under Labour Governments as well as under the present Government.

Museums (Opening Hours)

105. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what discussions he has had with the Civil Service unions about museum opening hours.

Mr. Luce: I have had no discussions with Civil Service unions about museum opening hours. This is a matter for the directors and trustees of the national museums and galleries.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should encourage families to visit museums and galleries, but that all too often they are closed in the early evening, at weekends and on bank holidays, which are the very times when families could visit them? Will my right hon. Friend encourage the Civil Service unions to play their part in making possible an extension of opening hours?

Mr. Luce: I am impressed by the more flexible opening hours that museums now operate. Recently, the Victoria and Albert museum, for example, reintroduced Friday opening as a result of voluntary donations. The natural history museum has extended its Sunday opening hours, closing at 6 pm instead of 1 pm, and the imperial war museum is open daily from 10 am to 6 pm. That all demonstrates greater flexibility and concern for the public interest.

Mr. Tony Banks: I associate myself with the question asked by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). Clearly one wants to encourage higher museum attendances through more flexible hours, but would not another way of doing that be to drop all admission charges, whether voluntary or mandatory, because they become a tax on knowledge?

Mr. Luce: I am interested that the hon. Gentleman should involve himself in the question of museum attendances, because this year will see higher attendances at British museums than ever before in our history. A total of 100 million people will have visited our museums, compared with 68 million four years ago. The degree of support for, and attendance at, museums is at an unprecedented level.

Mr. Favell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if a private sector organisation were to carry the value of stock that is carried by the average museum, it would have to remain open all the hours that God sends, and certainly at times most convenient to the public?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right, but his remarks stray a little from the subject of the Civil Service. Museums and galleries have a large reserve of works of art, but there is more and more evidence that they lend them out to other institutions. I am doing all that I can to encourage that process.

Trade Unions

106. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next intends to hold discussions with representatives of Civil Service trade unions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I meet representatives of the Civil Service trade unions from time to time. A wide variety of matters are raised.

Mr. Skinner: Notwithstanding all the Government's recent attacks on the pay of various sections of the working class, especially the ambulance crews, will the Minister confirm to the Civil Service unions that the Government do not have a pay policy? They were elected not to have one in 1979. As the Government's official policy on devaluation is rapidly taking place—there has been a 13 per cent. reduction in the past 12 months, which probably equates to a three percentage point increase on the inflation index—will the Minister tell those unions that their pay should be increased by at least that amount, on top of the 13 per cent?

Mr. Luce: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not realise that Civil Service pay and the pay of specific groups, such as the ambulance men is the responsibility of individual Departments or for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to decide. I am startled that the hon. Gentleman prefaced his question by talking in class terms. Nothing is more divisive than considering public issues in terms of class and nothing could be more neolithic than the hon. Gentleman's attitude.

Civil Servants (Morale)

108. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on measures taken to ensure the safety and maintain the morale of civil servants at risk from terrorist activity.

Mr. Luce: There are a number of precautions in place to protect civil servants against the risk of terrorist attack. Other contingency measures are ready to be implemented if needed. It would not be in the public interest to reveal individual measures.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept that Government buildings other than those of the Ministry of Defence, need protection against terrorist attacks? What will he do to reassure civil servants who work in those buildings that the Government are concerned for their safety?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is right. The first concern of Ministers must be the safety of their civil servants. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that all the necessary steps are being taken to maintain a proper level of security, whether protection is provided by civil servants or by other agencies.

Storm Damage

3.31 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the storms over the weekend and on what plans he has to assist with any damage caused.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to report to the House about the violent storms that hit many coastal areas of the British Isles over the past weekend.

Tragically, it has been reported that eight people lost their lives, and I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in expressing heartfelt condolences to the relatives and friends of those who lost their lives. I also extend my sympathy to those who have suffered damage to property or have been hurt.

It is apparent that the storms were severe and caused widespread damage, particularly in coastal areas. Obviously it is too soon to assess exactly how much damage has been done, the amount of work necessary and how much it will cost to put it right.

I am grateful to all the emergency and voluntary services who took part, often at great personal risk. The primary responsibility for dealing with emergencies lies with local authorities. They have wide discretionary powers to spend money for such purposes under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972, and they normally include an amount in their budgets to meet such contingencies. They also have the necessary local knowledge, resources and expertise to deal with such emergencies.

My hon. Friend asked whether the Government will bring additional national taxpayers' money to assist with the costs of dealing with the results of the storm. Under a model scheme designed to deal with the extraordinary costs arising from emergencies, known as the Bellwin scheme, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State provides special financial assistance to local authorities in certain exceptional circumstances. These are, in an emergency or disaster involving destruction of or danger to life or property; where, as a result, a local authority incurs expenditure on taking immediate action to safeguard life or property, or to prevent suffering or severe inconvenience in its area; or where those costs are not normally insurable.

The scheme has been used twice in England recently, following emergencies created by the severe weather during the winter of 1986-87 and the great storm of 1987, and once in Wales in 1987, following floods. We cannot yet tell whether the immediate emergency works necessary to deal with the aftermath of the storm will justify activating the scheme, but I have asked my officials to liaise with the local authorities whose areas have been worst affected to enable a judgment to be made as soon as possible. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be in touch with local authorities about arrangements there.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. Friend for his comprehensive reply and join him in thanking all the emergency services and local authorities in my area who acted so promptly in response to the flooding during the weekend. I am told that Preseli-Pembrokeshire district council dealt magnificently with the floods at Newgale, which were shown on national television, and in which, as far as can be ascertained, we lost a police car. I must also praise the Royal Air Force at Brawdy, which airlifted people out of the Dale peninsula when they were in danger of being drowned. I am sure that the whole House joins the Minister and me in thanking those services for what they have done.

I represent a constituency with a long coast, so we have particular problems. Will specific help be given to coastal authorities in view of the severe damage that has been done? Will he consider assisting local authorities, if severe strain is put on their resources, by giving them extra help over and above that provided through the Bellwin formula?

Mr. Chope: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words about the emergency services and all those who pulled together to improve matters in his area. Coastal protection is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will examine any submissions from local authorities under the Bellwin formula.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): May I first offer my deepest sympathies to the families of the men who were lost in the firth of Clyde? Skipper Billy Irving was a fine professional fisherman and a member of the Clyde Fishing Association, of which I have the honour to be an honorary president. As Skipper Irving was going about his hazardous business when his vessel, the Destiny, foundered just a couple of hundred yards from Gourock, can the Minister, who is not responsible for these matters, convey to the Minister of State, Scottish Office, who I am pleased to see on the Treasury Bench, the need for a fatal accident inquiry? Can he also convey to Scottish Office Ministers our anxieties about this loss?

Mr. Chope: I shall be very pleased to do that.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On behalf of Cornish fishermen, I join those who have expressed their condolences, especially as we lost two of our fishermen just a few weeks ago. As my constituency—the Isles of Scilly and along the arc of Mount's bay—bore the brunt of the storm during the weekend, will my hon. Friend the Minister convey to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the urgent need to review coastal protection measures, especially in the Porthleven area which, as the whole nation saw on television last night, was especially badly hit by the storm? There is a need for an extension of coastal protection works and possibly a review of their extent. Will my hon. Friend kindly convey that message to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? No doubt I shall be knocking on his door very soon with local authorities.

Mr. Chope: Hon. Members are not the only people who are familiar with that part of the country. I am sure that my hon. Friend's constituents will find solace in my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I also join in sending our condolences to the families of those whose lives were lost. We congratulate on their courage and heroism the emergency and voluntary services, not least in Cornwall and the Isle of Scilly which, as the hon. Member for St.

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

Ives (Mr. Harris) said, bore much of the brunt of the storms. In past occurrences, local authorities have encountered problems with getting funds through quickly enough to tackle the problems, particularly given their current financial constraints. Although I accept what the Minister said about the formula, and that it is not yet possible to ascertain whether it will come into play, will he ensure that everything is done to ensure that any funds that are needed are brought into action as quickly as possible with as few bureaucratic problems as possible?

Mr. Chope: I am happy to give the hon. Member that assurance. It is important that local authorities act now to repair the damage, without waiting for any bureaucratic procedures.

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): Will my hon. Friend ensure that central Government make a speedy decision about what help is available, because delay adds to the uncertainties and difficulties of local authorities that are faced with the immense bill for capital works for coastal defences?

Mr. Chope: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We will ensure that action is taken as quickly as possible.

Mr Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): May I associate myself with the condolences that have been expressed, and voice my concern about the speed with which the Bellwin scheme is operated? When there was gale damage in the south of England some time ago, when we were in recess, the emergency was handled within five days, but when there was gale damage in Scotland, it was 13 weeks before the Bellwin scheme was applied. Local authorities have not applied the Bellwin scheme to many other cases which it should have covered. I am concerned that it should be applied to this case. The Minister said that the scheme covers amounts that are "not normally insurable". Is that traditionally part of the Bellwin scheme, or has it been added to it?

Mr. Chope: That has always been part of the Bellwin scheme. On the last occasion, there was a five-day gap before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was able to report to the House. This time, the delay has been between 24 and 36 hours. The hon. Gentleman will understand that that is why we are not able to say at this stage whether the Bellwin scheme will apply.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): As the sea level is rising because of the greenhouse effect, while the Minister is working out his criteria for local authorities under the new community charge, will he give special grant to those areas with coastlines of more than so many miles? My constituency has 88 miles of coastline. Does he agree that some factor should be included in the formula so that, when such a catastrophe occurs, local authorities already have a fund which they can make available to repair any damage which occurs? For example, at Hope cove, a wall was completely destroyed, and at Blackpool sands an entire beach has disappeared.

Mr. Chope: I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that emergency capital and reconstruction works can be undertaken by local authorities and the National Rivers Authority and considered for grant by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if they meet the normal criteria, even if there is no prior approval.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): Is my hon. Friend aware that part of Lymington in my constituency was very seriously flooded, to a depth of 5 ft? Is he further aware that, thanks to the New Forest district council setting up a control post at 3.30 am on Sunday, and thanks to the tireless efforts of the police, the fire brigade and the social services, many of the problems have been resolved? Is he further aware that Hurst spit, which provides protection not only to my constituency but to all those along the Solent, has been breached in a number of places? Can he confirm that the compensation to which he referred earlier will cover that, should the district council require financial assistance?

Mr. Chope: I cannot decide at this stage whether any particular item of damage would be counted for compensation, but I shall certainly take my hon. Friend's point into account.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I propose to give precedence to those hon. Members whose constituencies have been directly affected.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Will my hon. Friend confirm that any funds allocated will be extra money and will not affect sanctions on local government expenditure when it is reckoned at the end of any particular financial year?

Mr. Chope: If additional money is payable under the Bellwin scheme, it will be in addition to the normal rate support grant.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend be making a statement before the House rises for the Christmas recess so that local authorities know what their financial position will be? Clearly, the decisions that they must take about what can be afforded will be related to whether the Bellwin formula will be operative.

Mr. Chope: I hope that local authorities, which budget to deal with such emergencies, will not be inhibited in making the expenditure necessary to put right the damage. We shall take a decision as quickly as possible about whether the Bellwin formula should apply. The ball is in the local authorities' court, because it is for them to make the necessary application.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why is it that one Department cannot pay local authorities, which have lost millions of pounds over the past 10 years as a result of the Government's actions, some money to help them out when there has been a disaster, because the Minister says "It is a complicated formula which will take a long time to work out," but when the Department of Energy has to find £250,000 to pay Lord Marshall a tidy sum for kidding the people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question is miles wide of the subject.

Mr. Skinner: Why do the Government have double standards—one for local authorities and another for people such as Lord Marshall?

Mr. Chope: I am afraid that it is typical of the hon. Gentleman that he should wish to bring party politics into this tragedy.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): The homes of quite a number of families in Holywood in my constituency were flooded at the weekend. Extensive damage was done to homes, furnishings and personal belongings. Insurance companies will not provide rapid or adequate payment. I therefore appeal to the Government to help to mitigate the emergency in the area by ensuring that prompt compensation is made to help them until insurance companies pay out.

Mr. Chope: It is clear from the comments of hon. Members that speed of action is all-important in this case.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): While we do not have a seaboard in Newham—or we certainly did not have this morning when I left it—we in the inner city are concerned about the risks that people who supply us with our fish must run. At times such as this, they and their hazardous jobs are high in our minds. It was good of the Minister to praise the emergency services.

As Ministers regularly do so on occasions such as this, would it not be better to pay the emergency services, such as the ambulance workers, the money that they deserve? Will the Minister say whether all the local authorities in the south-east and in London have been fully compensated for the storm damage that he mentioned of October 1987? Certainly in the south-east, there is still much evidence of the damage that occurred on that day.

Mr. Chope: So far as I am aware, all the claims made under the Bellwin scheme for the 1987 storm have been settled. We all praise the emergency services, but it is important to remember that many people work in these circumstances for nothing—particularly, for example, those who work for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The whole House will unreservedly agree with the Minister's remarks about compassion for those who lost their lives and for their families; that goes without saying for every hon. Member. We should like to know whether the Government will discuss with insurance companies what they think is a fair assessment for people who are not covered by insurance, including local authorities. That is important, because not all risks are insurable. It falls on the Government to consult insurance companies as well as local authorities.

We are worried about charities. Hon. Members have commented on the important work of the voluntary sector. Will the Government be prepared to recognise its contribution by considering grants for it where it has cost extra money to involve itself in rescue services?

Will he take this opportunity to congratulate the emergency services—including, specifically, the ambulance service, which at times has not been given the support of management that it deserves? Now is an opportunity for the Minister to associate himself fully with the work done by the ambulance service, despite the current industrial dispute.

My final point is of immense importance—I believe that this is the first occasion when such an issue has been before the House when Conservative Member after Conservative Member has asked for extra money for the local authorities. Most Conservative Members, especially the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), have spent most of their political careers working out ways in which they can cut, undermine and demoralise the power and resources of the local authorities, yet as soon as there is a bit of trouble in their constituencies, they all want the local authorities to solve it.

One answer that I did not hear the Minister give, and which I should like him to give, is in response to his hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) who put his finger on it when he asked, "If the local authorities get any money, will they later lose it?" I want a clear commitment from the Minister now that extra money will be available, not that it may be available. We understand that he cannot say how much, but we need to know that it will be available and that it will not later be taken back, as the Government have consistently taken back such money over the past 10 years, emergency or no emergency.

Mr. Chope: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman should try to make party political points on this occasion. It is common right across the House that we pay tribute to the work of the emergency services, whether the fire service, the ambulance service, the police or the voluntary organisations such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. We genuinely appreciate their work. This Government give generous grants to the voluntary sector. We have recently announced some generous arrangements for rate relief for charities' premises. I hope that local authorities will exercise their discretion to make that relief even more generous. The Government have a good record of commitment to the voluntary services.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, if any money is paid to local authorities under the Bellwin scheme, that money will belong to the local authorities and will certainly not be taken back by the Government. There would be no purpose in that. However, no decision has yet been taken on whether the Bellwin scheme applies in this case. We shall have to wait to see the submissions from the local authorities. I hope that they will bring them forward as soon as possible.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

3.51 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on local government finance in Wales. I have already made it clear that, in order to assist local authorities in Wales, I would announce the 1990-91 grant settlement before Christmas. I propose to lay the reports for 1990-91 on Wednesday; but I am today placing in the Library a paper detailing my settlement decisions. I will be sending copies of the reports and of further technical data to all Welsh local authorities on Wednesday.

In summary, the settlement provides for a realistic level of total standard spending of £2,114·5 million, well up on the equivalent figure for 1989-90. Aggregate external finance at £1,738·5 million is increased by no less than 8·6 per cent. Within this, and as compared with my provisional estimates in November, revenue support grant has been increased by a further £10·4 million to £1,141·3 million, and the distributable amount from the non-domestic rating account has been reduced by the same amount to £443 million.

This is an excellent settlement. It is good for non-domestic ratepayers because a uniform poundage of 36·8p across Wales will provide the certainty and stability they have been seeking and because their contribution of £443 million, which is only 20 per cent. of local government spending, is over £10 million lower than I predicted in November.

It is good for community charge payers because it presents local authorities with an outstanding opportunity to keep community charges down. They know, and their electorate will know, that the burden of overspending is borne entirely by charge payers. This will bring realism to the local authority budgeting process.

The increase in total standard spending should allow authorities to maintain, and where appropriate to develop, services—particularly if councils achieve the efficiency savings which the Audit Commission has identified and which, commendably, they have been seeking.

There is no reason for local authorities to budget to exceed total standard spending, and no reason for the average community charge in Wales to be more than £173. This is the true measure of the excellence of this settlement for the Principality.

Charge payers will expect their councils to set their community charges in line with this settlement. They will very quickly appreciate that expenditure increases which exceed this will result in higher charges, and will wish to satisfy themselves that they are not being asked to pay the price of overspending and inefficiency. It will be for councils, particularly those whose spending exceeds their standard spending assessment and who set higher charges, to justify their decisions to their electorate.

Similarly, charge payers will not expect those councils whose spending falls below their standard spending assessment to increase their spending by more than I have allowed for if they are already efficiently providing an appropriate level of service.

I intend to introduce a scheme of community charge transitional relief, carefully tailored to reflect Welsh circumstances. For 1990-91, I am providing £20 million in grant to fund this scheme; resources will also be made available for the following two years. This scheme replaces and improves upon the safety net that I proposed in July. It is carefully targeted and cost-effective. I have placed in the Library provisional details of the communities which may receive additional grant. The scheme is fully funded by the Government and an area safety net will not be required. This additional grant will reduce the average community charge which should be payable in Wales to about £165.

In addition, community charge rebates will be available for those on low incomes, and I urge all charge payers who may be eligible for a rebate to apply for one to their local councils. Those on the lowest incomes in Wales will actually be better off with the community charge than if they had received a 100 per cent. rebate under the old rating system.

Under this excellent settlement, central Government and non-domestic ratepayers will together finance around 85 per cent. of local government revenue expenditure in the Principality. It follows that only 15 per cent. of local government expenditure will be met by charge payers. In the light of this, charge payers have every right to expect their local councils to protect their interests by budgeting sensibly, by containing their spending to affordable levels and by keeping the community charge low.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I must tell the Secretary of State that, based on the provisional figures announced at the end of November, Mr. Gwyn Davies, the chairman of the Welsh Association of District Councils and Mr. Fred Kingdom, chairman of the Welsh Counties Committee, are of the view that, to cover costs for next year, some 3 to 4 per cent. more money is needed. Is he aware that, when poll tax demands fall through letter boxes in a few months' time, people in Wales will wonder why the amount is so much higher than the £173 that he has widely publicised? The Secretary of State will try to put the blame on local councils but the buck starts, and it stops, with him and his statement today.

Does the Secretary of State not realise that the statement borders on a confidence trick? It is not an excellent statement: it is deplorable. It will destabilise rather than stabilise. There is no room for efficiency savings after 10 years of Conservative Government. Therefore, will he concede that the statement is some 3 to 4 per cent. short; that the standard poll tax will be not £173 but £210 per year; that 2 million poll tax payers in Wales will pay £30 to £40 extra per person than he says; that the valleys communities will be hit very hard; that expenditure provision is £80 million short of what councils say they need to spend, and that the revenue support grant is £40 million short? The statement ignores persistent high inflation, high interest rates, and salary and wage increases of 9 per cent. which must be funded. The Secretary of State has not found the money to do so.

Does the Secretary of State understand that, if local councils in Wales spend, on average, 4 per cent. more than the provisional allocation, the poll tax charge for two-adult families—according to the district councils, not the Opposition—might increase by 50 per cent. in Dinefwr, Llanelli, Pwllelli, Islwyn, Arfon, Merionnydd and Rhymney Valley; by 66 per cent. in Merthyr Tydfil, Lliw Valley and Neath; by 75 per cent. in Port Talbot; by 90 per cent. in Blaenau Gwent and Cynon Valley; and by 123 per cent. in the Rhondda. What have the valleys communities done to deserve such a system? This is supposed to be the season of good will, but today the

Secretary of State for Wales is implementing a deeply unpopular measure. He should know that Wales hates the whole concept of the poll tax.

Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that the people who will benefit from the poll tax settlement will be those who occupy large, high-rateable-value houses? Has he forgotten that the transitional relief will be phased out over three years, just after the next general election? What a coincidence. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that this statement will not help district councils to increase the number of environmental health officers and their back-up technical staff in a year when Wales has suffered serious outbreaks of listeria and salmonella. Yet again, he leaves our councils short in that sphere.

How can local councils step up their excellent work to encourage new industries if, as a result of the statement, they will be short of the means to create new jobs? How can our councils build new homes when they estimate that their spending will be 13 per cent. down on their current expenditure? The Government have enforced the sale of 72,000 council houses in Wales, but they have not given the councils the means to build new council homes.

Has not the right hon. Gentleman wrapped the poll tax round the necks of the Welsh people? Surely the poll tax in Wales in a Tory tax. It is the Secretary of State's tax, as he has given the poll tax to the people of Wales. Does he understand that, when the general election comes, there will be nobody behind him in support?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has come out with a long statement, most of it totally inaccurate. Without exception, all the percentages he quoted are inaccurate. Let us get one percentage absolutely correct—the one for his constituency. There, on average, the community charge will be 15 per cent. below the average domestic rate charged in the past. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to convey to his constituents the adverse effects of the settlement.

It is nonsense to say that a settlement which is 7·1 per cent. above the budgets of the local authorities for the previous year is a scandalous cut in local government expenditure. If the hon. Gentleman wants to adopt a system under which there were scandalous cuts, he will have to go back to the time when he was a Minister at the Welsh Office. In his final three years at the Welsh Office, there was a cut in real terms in the rate support grant every year. I am glad to say that, in the past four years, there has been no cut in real terms in the rate support grant.

The hon. Gentleman also said that, after 10 years of Conservative Government, there was no room for any improvements in local government efficiency. That is one of the classic quotes from an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. The Audit Commission recently had meetings with the local authorities, which agreed that a host of improvements could be made in efficiency. It is deplorable that, given his responsibilities, the hon. Gentleman should suggest that local authorities in Wales should not look for further improvements.

I am delighted to say that one of the results of new business rate is that the valleys will pay £11 million less in business rates than under the present system. That is very much to their advantage, and the scheme I have announced this afternoon contains additional great advantages for those valleys. Opposition Members always cite the terrible low incomes of those in the valleys. In the Rhondda, the substantial number of people who have been receiving 100 per cent. rebates under the rate rebate scheme will receive 130 per cent. rebates under the new scheme.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I assure my right hon. Friend that I shall be here to support him after the next general election. However, even his legendary skill at extracting blood from the Treasury's stony heart—which has brought such great benefits to Wales generally and ensured that the levels of poll tax in Wales will be appreciably lower than in the United Kingdom as a whole—cannot make sense of this nonsensical system for financing local government. Can it be right that a local authority such as Rhuddlan in my constituency, which has managed its affairs with skill and prudence, should find that its grant has been cut by £750,000—20 per cent. on its last year's grant? This will oblige it to increase the poll tax by 50 per cent. Does not that show that, despite my right hon. Friend's efforts to modify the effect on Wales, the system is preposterous and those who denounced it from the start were absolutely right?

Mr. Walker: I think that my hon. Friend will discover that, when local authorities study the figures and my announcement this afternoon, they will find that the figures he has given are not accurate. Instead of the average rates in Rhuddlan being £201 per adult, as they were under the rating system, they will be £199. As a result of the new system, in the other part of his constituency, the district of Colwyn—a place which has many retired people —there will be rate reductions of about 17 per cent.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I am sure that the House is grateful to the Secretary of State for telling us how prosperous local government is in Wales. In that context, will he explain why each of us in rural areas meets weekly ever-increasing queues of young people who can no longer find housing in their own area? Will he explain why unmarried mothers with children whom they are looking after increasingly have to go into unsuitable halfway house accommodation where they cannot look after their children properly? Will he explain why, in the context of the prosperity of which he boasts, local authorities can no longer meet those priority housing needs?

Mr. Walker: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows full well that we have substantially increased expenditure on Housing for Wales, which, in turn, is substantially increasing its grant to housing associations throughout the community—that is having a considerable impact. Under the settlement, we have ensured that, under the new statutory arrangements, there will be a substantial increase in expenditure on improvement grants and the backlog of improvement grants, which are important in many rural areas.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Although I appreciate that my right hon. Friend has fought an effective and successful fight to gain a reasonable settlement for Wales as a whole, he will appreciate that I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) because together we represent the borough of Rhuddlan in this House. Is my right hon. Friend also aware of the concern in the borough of Delyn where the settlement appears to have been penalised because of the way in which it finances expenditure on industrial development?

Mr. Walker: The system that is operated in local authorities has operated for several years. It was discussed with local authority associations as to whether any change should be made, and the associations agreed that the existing system was the right one to keep. Therefore, Delyn's financing process was one that it used knowing what the past rules were and the fact that the local authority associations did not want any change in those rules.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the Secretary of State recognise, as he did a while ago, that our Welsh local authorities are not inefficient, but have a splendid record? Will he also recognise that the unrealistic poll tax figures which he has put out are seen by all local authorities for what they are: simply a red herring to disguise the full implications of what will undoubtedly be an unpopular policy?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman says that an increase of 7·1 per cent. on the budgets of the local authorities for last year is a red herring. However, it is a perfectly accurate assessment with which, due to the improvements in efficiency which have taken place, the Welsh authorities can certainly cope. I am delighted that in Newport the likely reduction, compared with the rating system, will be about 14 per cent. per adult.

We have not yet heard what scheme of local government finance the Opposition intend to bring in. They announced one scheme and abandoned it due to its unpopularity. Presumably, given reductions like those in Newport and Cardiff, they will not go back to the rating system. The people of Wales need to know soon exactly what the Labour party will do about local government finance.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I congratulate my right hon. friend on his statement and advise him not to shout too loudly in this House about his achievements, in case our English colleagues hear exactly what the people of Wales have managed to achieve. Is it not true that in Wales 67 per cent.—two thirds—of all local government expenditure comes from central Government, whereas the comparable figure in Scotland is 56 per cent. and in England only 46 per cent.? That is an excellent achievement.

Can my right hon. Friend confirm that my ratepayers, who now number 50 per cent. of the electorate, will be pleased to find that in future everyone who has a vote in local elections will make some contribution to the services that they enjoy?

Mr. Walker: Certainly the average community charge in Wales will be £100 per person lower than in England or Scotland. The people of Wales should rejoice about that; it is something that I find it difficult to explain to my constituents in Worcester.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Has not the Secretary of State been proved wrong yet again? Does he recollect how dismissive he was in November when he forecast a figure of £173 and I forecast one of £200? He regarded my figure as scaremongering.

The Secretary of State said that the burden of overspending would be borne entirely by the chargepayer, but is it not equally true that the burden of under-provision will also be borne entirely by the charge payer if the gap is offset by cuts? As the figure that the right hon. Gentleman announced today—of 7 per cent.—is lower than inflation, has he not announced a formula that will mean savage cuts in Wales in the next 12 months?

Mr. Walker: In November I gave a figure of £174; I now give it as £173, which, with the rebate scheme that I have announced, will come to £165.

If the inflation rate for this year proves to be above 7·1 per cent. and if there is no improvement in efficiency, it could be argued that local authorities and charge payers will be squeezed, but that will be as nothing compared with the 8 per cent. drop in real terms that took place when the right hon. Gentleman was a Minister at the Welsh Office.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, despite what he has said today, the valley communities, of which Neath is one, will be especially hard hit? Is he aware that we prefer to accept what we are told by local government officials—that there will be a 3 to 4 per cent. shortfall? Is he further aware that, in a two-adult household in Neath, there will be an increase of 66 per cent. as a result of the poll tax? How does he think that we will be able to afford to pay for roads, environmental protection, schools and the promotion of jobs? Is not this testimony to what the valleys initiative has been all about?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman's figure of 66 per cent. for Neath is not correct. With the interim relief, it will be much lower than he has suggested.

My answer on spending in the hon. Gentleman's constituency is: it depends. If he is arguing that will be a 3 or 4 per cent. gap, he is saying that we should be giving Neath an 11·1 per cent. increase on last year's budget——

Mr. Coleman: Yes.

Mr. Walker: If that is what is required in the hon. Gentleman's view, the people of Neath will have to see what it means and compare it with the present system, under which 85 per cent. of all local government expenditure in Wales is met either by the business community or by the Government. In no other part of the United Kingdom is only 15 per cent. of it met by the charge payers.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): But is it not true that, stripped of its gloss and technicalities, the right hon. Gentleman's statement, once interim relief is over, will mean that the real poll tax charged to working-class home-owning households in valley communities such as New Tredegar, Merthyr Vale, Aberfan and Brithdir will increase hugely as compared with the position under the present rating system?

How can the Secretary of State possibly justify that? I know that he has nothing to lose in those communities but he has gained nothing politically. However, he has a reputation to lose. He was supposed to be sensitive and caring to the needs of the valley communities, but he will destroy any reputation by implementing this inequitable system.

Mr. Walker: Without the interim relief, which makes quite a contribution in Merthyr Tydfil, the community charge would go to £167, compared with an average of £131 per adult previously. Merthyr will also have the benefit of its share of the £11 million lower rates on businesses in the valley area. There are many people in Merthyr on low incomes and they will get the benefit of

much better rebates than under the previous system. A total analysis of Merthyr shows a very good result. The total cost in Merthyr to a charge payer who does not receive any rebate at all will be £100 a year less than for people in England or Scotland.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State said that the total standard spending of £2·114 billion will be "well up" on the equivalent figure for this year. Can he tell us the percentage by which it will be up, and whether the amount was agreed with local authorities? Does he stick by the assurance which was widely broadcast in the Welsh press last month, that no one will face an increase greater than £25 a year?

Mr. Walker: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I think that I will probably have to change the figure and say that nobody will pay more than £20. However, I cannot be certain about that. That will apply in all communities designated for the relief under the system that local authority associations in Wales agreed was the best system to apply. It will also apply to people who are not in such communities, but in all communities designated for the relief it is likely that people will finish up with a maximum increase of £20. I shall try to get the exact constituency figure. It is substantial.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Does the Secretary of State agree that he seems to be brushing aside the assessment of every district council and county council in Wales of the amount that they really need? In my county of Mid Glamorgan the councils have worked out that their needs assessment is greater by about 3 per cent. than the amount to be provided by the Welsh Office. On that assessment alone, those councils will need £20 a head in poll tax more than the Welsh Office estimates. The council treasurer in the district of Ogwr, half of which I represent, has said that the figures so far provided do not take account of the fact that last year about £800,000 was taken from the reserves to maintain the services in the borough. The Welsh Office assumes that the borough can do that again this year, but it cannot.

The Welsh Office has not yet announced the new debt redemption rules, which will have an effect on the amount of poll tax that has to be levied. The Welsh Office seems to be assuming that everybody who registers for the poll tax will pay, but we know that in Scotland at least 10 per cent. did not. That has to be taken into account. Will the Secretary of State admit that, all in all, it is the Welsh Office that has got it wrong and not the local authorities in Wales?

Mr. Walker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will excuse me while I reply to the previous question asked by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). The percentage increase is 9·4 per cent.

Under the present arrangements, I do not think that there will be a substantial increase in the borough of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). The hon. Gentleman claims that all local authorities suggest that their spending will be higher than the Government estimate. I have had the privilege of being a Member of the House for 30 years, under Governments of every complexion, and I have never known a rate support settlement under any Government being greeted by local authorities with the words, "The Government have given us exactly what we want and have agreed with our estimates." But the worst period was under the last three years of the last Labour Government in which the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) was at the Welsh Office.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Does the Minister realise that many poor people who do not qualify for rebates, although they work on low pay and live in poor quality housing, even with transitional relief will face increases of 25 or 30 per cent. in their bills? When that transitional relief goes in two years' time, hundreds of thousands of people in Wales will find their bills doubled. What does the Secretary of State have to say to those people?

Mr. Walker: I would tell them not to listen to the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): The Secretary of State is no doubt aware that the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs has identified a number of problems, endemic to the valley communities, that will require large expenditure. These include cleaning up the environment and identifying landfill sites full of methane. How will local authorities pay the huge amounts of money that will be needed to drain such sites without the kind of increases that have already been suggested?

Mr. Walker: On the general improvement in the environment in the valleys, the total expenditure going, for example, on derelict land clearance is on an all-time, historic scale and way above any level previously achieved, and it is a committed programme for the next three years.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that all the remaining hon. Members who wish to ask a question are Front-Bench spokesmen. I ask them to have consideration for the 40 hon. Members who wish to take part in the coming debate. I should appreciate it if they were brief.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I thank the Secretary of State for Wales for the letter that he sent me today apologising for the wildly inaccurate and misleading figure that he gave me in an answer to an oral question that I asked a week ago today. Will he avoid further embarrassment for himself by revising the figure of the standard poll tax that he has given, with which every treasurer in Wales seems to disagree? Will he agree with these local authorities, which have a fine record of good value service, and say that the average ratepayer in Wales faces an increase of 20 per cent.? Or will he wait to send every poll tax payer in Wales a letter of apology because he has cruelly misled them today?

Mr. Walker: I sent the hon. Gentleman a letter that clearly stated the nature of the figures, and gave him two figures instead of the one that I had presented. I then sent a copy of that letter to the Library. To suggest, as the hon. Gentleman has done, that there was something terrible about that when the letter confirmed that the average wages in Wales and in his constituency in real terms were much higher than when the Government took over from the last Labour Government, is wrong.

I should hate the public to get a false impression from what the hon. Gentleman has said. The people of Newport will be paying less under the community charge then they were under the rating system, and I shall see that all the

[Mr. Walker]

electors of his constituency are circulated with these figures, so that they can compare them with those in the scare campaigns that the hon. Gentleman has conducted on the community charge.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Secretary of State will know that teachers' pay is well over half the education budget, and that the Secretary of State for Education and Science has already announced that teachers' pay will be increased by 7·5 per cent. from 1 April next year. That figure is likely to be increased by the interim advisory committee. Therefore, how does the Secretary of State expect Welsh local authorities to manage with what is a GDP inflator of about 5 per cent. when this year, they have to make special provision for local management? How can they ensure that local management will get off on a good footing with this great burden?

Mr. Walker: The 7·1 per cent. increase in budgets—9·4 per cent. of total spending—and the potential improvement in efficiency will enable authorities to cope with the problem of teachers' pay.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Why did the Secretary of State use the figure of 2 per cent. on which to base his inflation forecast?

Mr. Walker: He didn't.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): In view of the Secretary of State's answer to the hon. Member for Clywd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), and of the fact that he will inflict it on the people in Wales from next April, would he give the House two or three sentences of full, wholesome and unstinting praise of the poll tax?

Mr. Walker: Certainly. The people of Wales should be grateful for and pleased with any tax that produces the result that the people of Wales, on average, pay £100 per person less than the people of Scotland and England, and under which 85 per cent. of local government expenditure is met by the business community and Government.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Secretary of State tell the local authorities of Wales how they are supposed to make up next year for the shortfall announced over the weekend by the EC of £20 million a year, if not £25 million, in European regional development fund receipts over the next few years?

Will he explain why it is that the people of Wales are asked to choose between believing the right hon. Gentleman, who says that the 7 per cent. or 7·1 per cent. increase is okay, and non-political city treasurers like John Markham in Cardiff, who says that 11 per cent. is necessary and that the right hon. Gentleman's settlement is causing great anger in the city hall?

Mr. Walker: If there is one city in the United Kingdom that should be pleased about going over to the community charge, it is Cardiff, where it is likely to result in a 22 per cent. cut in domestic contribution. That is the largest reduction in Wales and no safety provison—*[Interruption.]* I look forward to making sure that the people of Cardiff recognise how lucky they have been.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will not the Secretary of State accept that many of his figures are misleading? Will he not accept also that his statement makes nonsense of consultation, and that it has been condemned by hon. Members on both sides of the House? He has stuck precisely to both the total standard spending level and the aggregate external financing level with which he started the process. The right hon. Gentleman has not listened to councillors and treasurers throughout Wales, who have explained that this level of settlement is inadequate. Will he listen to the House and accept that a standstill in local authority spending will require a level of standard poll tax of more like £210 than his £173, and that only after belt tightening? The right hon. Gentleman is the person who is introducing poll tax in Wales, and the people of Wales know that he is the person who will be responsible for the heavy level of poll tax that will be contained in the demands that fall through their letter boxes.

Mr. Walker: The manner in which the Labour party is trying to urge local authorities in Wales to go in for extravagant expenditure—*[Interruption.]* The Labour party says that an increase of 9·4 per cent. in total standard spending is inadequate and unreasonable and that much more should be given—that is from a party which cut rate support grant in real terms year after year when the Labour Government were in office—when the fact is that we have made a perfectly reasonable and sensible assessment. There is no reason why the community charge in Wales should not be the figure which I have given, of £173 on average.

Points of Order

4.27 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is widely expected that the ombudsman's report on the Barlow Clowes scandal will be available to hon. Members tomorrow. As you will know, the report is especially important to me as the first Member of this place to ask the ombudsman to undertake an investigation. In a letter that I have received from Sir Anthony Barrowclough, he tells me of his intention to "arrange for all 650 Members to be notified, on the day the report issues, that a copy of the report will be available for him (or her) to collect from 3.30 pm that day (from the Vote Office)."

The letter also states:

"I understand from the Department of Trade and Industry that the Government will be publishing its response to the report at the same time."

If the Secretary of State is to make a statement in response to the ombudsman's report simultaneously with its publication, will that not put hon. Members in difficulty? We shall presumably have to choose between obtaining the report from the Vote Office and listening to the Government's response in the Chamber. Nor will there be any opportunity even to try to influence the Government's response. Indeed, we shall not have seen the report, which has been known to Ministers for some weeks, before the Government give their response. Is there any help or guidance that you can give to the House on this important matter, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: First, I am not aware officially that a statement is to be made tomorrow. I understand, however, the difficulty which has been mentioned. I have no doubt that the Leader of the House, who is on the Government Front Bench, will have taken note of what the right hon. Gentleman has said. There may be——

Mr Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I have not finished yet.

There may be other opportunities during the week—perhaps during the Consolidated Fund debate or during the Christmas Adjournment debates—to deal with this matter.

Mr. Michael: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Having received a letter similar to that referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), I wrote immediately to the ombudsman and asked for sufficient copies of his letter for all my constituents who have been worrying over many months in a similar way to the constituents of my right hon. Friend. I asked the ombudsman to ensure and guarantee straight away that there would be sufficient copies so that each of my constituents could have one.

All those who have contacted me over the weekend have stressed that they want to see exactly what the ombudsman has said. They want their own copies of the report. As it appears that we cannot question individual Ministers because of the independence of the ombudsman, is there some way in which you, Mr. Speaker, on our behalf, can draw to the attention of the ombudsman the importance of Members of Parliament, who seek to serve their constituents, being provided with sufficient copies to give to indivdual constituents?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the report will be laid tomorrow, and it will then be available in the Vote Office. I am not certain that it is within my responsibilities to ensure that every constituent who has been affected should receive a copy, but no doubt sufficient copies will be available for hon. Members to pass on.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter of which I have given you prior notice, through the Clerk Assistant, about the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill. The matter is urgent because the Bill begins its Committee stage tomorrow, and I well understand that a motion needs to be moved if the Bill is to be committed to a Special Standing Committee, at which there can be hearings, before we begin our discussions in Standing Committee.

This matter involves £10,000 million for the PSA and £3,000 million for the Crown Suppliers. That amounts to billions of pounds, so the matter cannot be peripheral. It is highly desirable that the Government make arrangements, as they can do very easily, to withdraw the Bill from Standing Committee and instead have two or three hearings under the Special Standing Committee procedure. The new head of the PSA should be heard, and so should the trade unions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a very busy day ahead and I think that I can deal with the hon. Gentleman's point. The relevant motion was not moved last week when it could have been moved. Any hon. Member could have moved the motion, but that did not happen. There is nothing that I can do about it now.

Mr. Dalyell: May I explain why it was not moved? At that time, it was not clear that the Government would not answer parliamentary questions. They said the trade union evidence was tendentious, but when asked what was tendentious about it, they replied in general, and would not be specific. There needs to be a proper inquiry of two or three sessions before we discuss the Bill in Standing Committee.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may well be right but, unhappily, the opportunity has been missed. Perhaps on future occasions what the hon. Gentleman has said about motions on the Order Paper relating to the Special Standing Committee procedure should be borne in mind. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is to serve on the Committee, so he can raise these matters when it meets.

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter about which I have given you notice. It appears that today the Government have made a major and detailed statement on the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, via a written answer to a parliamentary question. They have done so despite the fact that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry asked the Minister to make a statement to the House, and despite the fact that the matter is of great interest to many hon. Members. The written answer appears to have been originally designed as an oral statement because it ends with the words, with which we are all familiar, "I commend them"—the changes—"to the House".

The privatisation of a large part of the ECGD and the weakening of our export promotion drive when Britain has a projected £20 billion trade deficit is obviously a matter of great concern to hon. Members. I wish to protest most

[Ms. Joyce Quin]

strongly about the statement being made in the form of a written answer rather than as an oral statement that could be properly questioned and debated.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady gave me notice of that matter. The terms of the written answer are not a matter for me. I do not know whether the final sentence that she mentioned should have been there. I fully understand the wish to the House to have numerous statements, but we have to consider the pressure on our time for debates. Today, no fewer than 40 right hon. and hon. Members seek to participate, and if we have numerous points of order, some will, I fear be disappointed.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is a Front-Bench spokesman and he ought to have some regard for his colleagues.

Mr. Morgan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The non-statement to the House involves 770 jobs in Cardiff. I seek your guidance, as a somewhat unusual device was used. At 12.15 pm today, an officer in the private office of the Secretary of State for the Department of Trade and Industry attempted to buy off the demand for a statement by asking hon. Members representing south Wales with an interest in the 770 jobs at the ECGD insurance services group in Cardiff to attend a meeting at his department at 4.30 this afternoon. That is a revolutionary way of conducting government, as I had always understood that this House was the Parliament of the British people.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is also a Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Michael: The trouble is that it is disgraceful to have decisions thrown at us in this way. I do not like taking up the time of the House any more than my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). If the Government were not trying to scrap jobs, ignore hon. Members on both sides of the House, ignore the firms which want the ECGD to continue in existence, and ignore the chamber of commerce and all the advice, we would not have to waste the House's time with points of order. I hope that the Government's attention can be drawn to that.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not a matter for me whether oral statements are made. However, I am sure that those who are responsible will have heard what has been said.

Orders of the Day

Broadcasting Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State, I repeat that there is great pressure to participate in the debate. I therefore propose to put a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 and 8 o' clock. I hope that those hon. Members who are called before that, and certainly those afterwards, will bear the limit in mind as it will enable the Chair to call more of the hon. Members who wish to participate in this important debate.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As one who hopes to be called outside that period, may I ask whether it would not be better and fairer for all, since a large number of hon. Members wish to speak, if the limit on speeches was from 6 to 9 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: As I have said before, that is perhaps a consummation devoutly to be wished, but it is not within my power.

4.38 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): I beg to move. That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

The Bill owes a great deal to the excellent report on the future of broadcasting that the Select Committee on Home Affairs published in June last year. The report recognised that British broadcasting has a rich tradition with great achievements to its credit, and so does the Bill.

One thing that the Bill does not do is mark the demise of public service broadcasting. The programming remits of BBC1, BBC2, Radios 1 to 4 and BBC local radio will not be touched in any way by the Bill. Channel 4 in addition to its public service obligations, will continue to be required, as now, to be innovative and distinctive, and to cater for tastes and interests not adequately met by Channel 3. Channel 4 will become responsible for the sale of its own advertising time, but financial underpinning will be there if necessary. The Welsh fourth channel will also continue with its successful programme remit. Three of the four terrestrial channels will thus have the same programming obligations as now. Channel 3, however, will also be expected to continue to produce good programmes, as will Channel 5. When our proposals are outlined, I do not believe for a moment that anyone will be able to argue, other than tongue in cheek, that we are creating a "philistines' charter" or "yob television".

The Bill provides a sensible regulatory framework for a new age in broadcasting in which technological change has brought vastly increased choice. It points no accusing finger at the conscientious way in which the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the Cable Authority have done their jobs under the Broadcasting Act 1981 and the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984, but those measures are simply out of date.

Since the publication of the White Paper, we have taken account of a wide range of views. On important issues—ranging from the quality tests and the licence allocation

procedure to the night hours and the ownership rules—we have made substantial changes, but the basic principles on which the Bill is constructed remain.

First, we want viewers and listeners to enjoy the increased choice that is now possible. Therefore the Bill authorises Channel 5, three new national radio services, local multi-channel franchises able to use microwave as well as, or instead of, cable, and many new local and community radio stations. We do not know precisely how fast broadcasting will expand, but expansion there will certainly be—and the legislation must cater for it.

The appetite for a much wider choice of local radio stations is clear. When the IBA recently offered a further 23 local radio contracts, the scheme attracted no fewer than 540 letters of intent, with little indication that all that the promoters wanted was pop and more pop. Under the future arrangements, new stations will cater for a wide range of tastes, from jazz to classical music. They will reflect the interests of neighbourhoods, of ethnic minority groups, and of other communities of interest—and there will be three new national independent radio channels.

Secondly, the Bill fully recognises that aspects such as programme quality and diversity, regional links, healthy and widespread ownership of broadcasting companies and proper geographical coverage cannot simply be left to take care of themselves. It therefore provides sharply focused statutory safeguards for all of them. It also incorporates a wider and more flexible set of enforcement sanctions, including financial penalties and performance bonds.

Thirdly, the Bill acknowledges that television and radio are powerful media with potential—if abused—to offend, exploit and cause harm. It therefore contains safeguards for programme standards on taste, decency, accuracy and balance—and extends them to all United Kingdom based broadcasters. It removes the broadcasters' exemptions from the law of obscenity and incitement to racial hatred, and it establishes a key role for the Broadcasting Standards Council in overseeing standards of taste and decency. It also implements the Council of Europe convention and the EC directive. Those instruments contain enforcement mechanisms that the United Kingdom can activate against broadcasts originating in other European countries where programmes are pornographic or glamorise violence. The Bill also provides draconian sanctions against those who support unacceptable foreign satellite services receivable here.

Many points will arise in the debate, but there are three key matters with which I ought to deal now. They are competitive tender, ownership and quality.

Our proposal that Channel 3, Channel 5 and certain other licences should be allocated by competitive tender has two main objectives. First, we want to establish a fairer and more objective system for awarding franchises than the present one, which has few defenders, but at the same time to ensure high standards and diversity. Secondly, we have a clear duty, which some campaigners gloss over far too quickly, to ensure that the taxpayer gets a proper return for the use of the valuable and scarce national resources constitued by broadcasting rights and, in particular, the use of the frequency spectrum.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Home Secretary used the phrase "gloss over". Will he give one concrete example of what he means by that?

Mr. Waddington: I mean that if the state is to allot to certain persons a valuable legal right, the state is entitled to claim in exchange a return for the taxpayer. One is not talking about the right of individuals but about claiming for the taxpayer a return on the valuable rights allotted by Government.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Would not the taxpayer derive more benefit from the auctioning off of those national resources if the money raised were invested in programme production and training? That would represent better value for the taxpayer than the Treasury amassing more and more money that it cannot spend for fear of inflation.

Mr. Waddington: I do not accept that argument for one moment. A person entering into the bidding process will have very much in mind what he can afford to pay. He will therefore pay the proper price for the valuable right that he is given. That will be fair both to him and to the taxpayer.

If we are to enjoy high standards and diversity, there must be ownership rules. The Bill includes in schedule 2 much clearer and more extensive ownership rules than anything that we have now. There is no chance whatsoever of British broadcasting falling into the hands of a bunch of tycoons or a cluster of conglomerates. To prevent that, the Bill provides the means for implementing the limits on ownership which were clearly set out by my right hon. Friend, now the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in his announcement of 19 May.

Non-EC ownership will largely be prohibited. National newspapers will not be permitted to hold more than a 20 per cent. stake in a direct broadcasting satellite channel, Channel 3, Channel 5 or national radio licensee. Satellite channels targeted at the United Kingdom, whether based here or abroad, will be subject to a similar 20 per cent. restriction on interests in those other licensees.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Home Secretary aware that a newspaper proprietor, for example, who already owns three or four newspapers but only one football club—that is the kind of society in which we live, where the Government are more concerned about football clubs than about the media—will be able to exercise formidable power and control with 20 per cent. share ownership? That is particularly true when one considers that the Prime Minister has only a 5 per cent. interest in the Cabinet, as one of 20 members, but she still runs it.

Mr. Waddington: I assure the hon. Gentleman that in deciding on those restrictions the Government addressed their mind carefully to the need to ensure that national newspapers would not be subject to the degree of influence and control that he fears.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Home Secretary stated categorically that all satellite broadcasters, whether based in this country or abroad, would be subject to the 20 per cent. newspaper ownership rule, but he knows very well that no such provision appears in the Bill. The Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), stated at his press conference that Sky Television would not be subject to such a restriction because it had already invested so much money in the United Kingdom. The Minister of State appears to rule out Sky from that criterion, but may we be clear whether or not it is subject to the 20 per cent. national newspaper ownership rule?

Mr. Waddington: Satellite broadcasters other than direct broadcasting satellite channels will not be able to have an investment greater than 20 per cent. in other channels. I refer to satellite broadcasters other than DBS broadcasters. I thought that that was the matter of concern to the right hon. Gentleman. Non-DBS broadcasters will not be able to make an investment of more than 20 per cent. in another broadcasting channel.

Mr. Hattersley: The 20 per cent. newspaper ownership rule applies also in respect of Channel 3 and Channel 5, but does it apply to satellite channels?

Mr. Waddington: My understanding is—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) asked for a reply. If he does not like the reply that he gets he can pursue the matter later. If he wants the matter amplified, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will amplify it in his reply later today.

I have told the right hon. Gentleman what I understand to be the position—that concentration of ownership will be kept in check, and that no one will be allowed to own even the proposed maximum of two regional Channel 3 lincences if both are large or if they are contiguous. That provision can be waived only when one or two contiguous franchises become clearly unviable, and only then when separate regional programming for each of the two areas will be maintained.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): At a recent meeting with local authorities and an all-party delegation from the Border Television area, the Home Secretary gave an assurance that they would not be allowed two franchises which are parallel and which have common boundaries. That assurance is not in the Bill. Will the Minister clarify that today?

Mr. Waddington: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks. I have made it absolutely plain that it will be possible to own two franchises, but not if they are both large, or if they are contiguous.

Mr. Buchan: The Minister has talked about ownership percentages. Did he notice that the Minister of State, in his statement, defended the Government's position on the rules on cross-media ownership, but said that it would not apply to Rupert Murdoch's Sky Television, because that venture was already running and had cost Mr. Murdoch "vast amounts of money"? If that is the case, how will the Government cope with over-monopolisation of the media?

Mr. Waddington: I am beginning to understand why the right hon. Gentleman for Sparkbrook is so upset. We are talking about two different things. It is perfectly correct that there is a limit of 20 per cent. on ownership in DBS and that there is no limit of 20 per cent. in non-DBS satellite channels. That is right, because DBS channels represent the allotment of valuable rights, given to the Government by international agreement. There is enormous potential for a large number of non-DBS satellite channels, but only five DBS channels have been allowed as a result of international agreement.

I now understand what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was talking about. I was talking about something entirely different. I pointed out that satellite broadcasters other than DBS broadcasters cannot have more than the 20 per cent. investment in DBS or any other broadcast channels. Now that we have that absolutely plain—*[Interruption.]* It was the right hon. Gentleman who——

Mr. Hattersley: As I know that the Home Secretary likes to speak in plain language—there is none plainer—I will ask him the simplest question. Is he saying that Sky Television and Mr. Murdoch are alone in not having any reservations or limitations placed on what newspapers they own?

Mr. Waddington: That is absolutely untrue. The Bill will apply to all satellite broadcasters other than DBS. I have explained the present situation in words of one syllable. Even if the right hon. Gentleman cannot understand it, I am sure that everyone else can.

The order-making power in schedule 2 will also be used to ensure that no one person is allowed to gain control of the six largest local radio stations. Even though there could be 200 to 300 independent stations by the end of the 1990s, control of the six largest would still give a person too much dominance—almost a network by the back door—so there will be supplementary limits.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is it correct that the Bill excludes church and religious bodies from having a full say on this? Will they be able to enter the television and broadcasting arena?

Mr. Waddington: Church bodies cannot own television channels. A similar prohibition exists today, and I think that that accords with the wishes of most people.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Given the moral decline in Britain, and the considerably greater church attendance in the United States, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there could be a case for allowing the Church to own channels so that religious broadcasting is not left entirely in the hands of a small clique?

Mr. Waddington: We have reached a sensible middle way, because Church organisations will be able to own radio channels. I doubt whether the majority of people wish us to go back on a system which has operated since the introduction of independent television and allow those organisations to own independent television channels.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Will the Home Secretary confirm that in the past 12 or 13 years there has been an agreement that certain national events—the cup final, the Derby and Wimbledon—should not be exclusive to one channel and would be available for widespread broadcasting? Will he give an assurance that the Bill would not allow those national events, to be bought exclusively by, for instance, Sky Television, which could charge for them?

Mr. Waddington: The Bill will continue to provide protection for major events, and no broadcaster will be permitted to show listed events on a pay-per-view basis.

I urge hon. Members to bear in mind the fact that it is an extraordinary view of the promoters of the events if it is believed that they will wish to sell the rights in the full knowledge that the events will be shown only to a minority of people in Britain.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I am grateful to the Home Secretary for his generosity in giving way. He will understand the importance of watching sport

to many people, in particular the elderly and the housebound. It is essential that they are not prevented from watching by some arrangement—not necessarily pay television, which I appreciate is ruled out—which means that ITV or the BBC, the national networks, are priced out of showing major events such as the cup final, the grand national and Wimbledon. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance that that will not happen?

Mr. Waddington: No doubt the right hon. Gentleman knows what Mr. David Broomfield, the press officer of the Football Association, said yesterday:

"However, we are conscious that the Cup final is an important international happening, and it is therefore unlikely that we will see the day whereby it was broadcast only on satellite television."

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that one of the problems is that existing broadcasters have simply been downright stingy about the amount of money that they are prepared to pay? A little competition will help them to stump up well-deserved money for national games such as football and cricket.

Mr. Waddington: One hears little about the rights of promoters in all these arguments. One hears only about the rights of television companies. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for restoring some balance.

The quality debate raises the most important questions of all. Here, hon. Members agree, I think, that we must take extra care to distinguish genuine argument from the voice of vested interest, especially as this voice is sometimes subtle and seductive rather than shrill. It is not unfair to point out that the present franchise holders are not there just for the love of it—they are there to make money and they are very successful in that aim. That does not mean that they do not deserve a fair hearing or that they do not wish to provide a good service—I am sure that they do—but some of the hyperbole that has been used should perhaps be discounted.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Earlier, my right hon. and learned Friend paid tribute to the high standard of British broadcasting. The Bill requires a "sufficient amount of time" to be given to programmes of quality. That is an expression of ardent idealism which reflects the spirit of mediocrity in which the Government are engaged. Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that such language will encourage quality, or will it feed the fears that I and many of my hon. Friends have that, when he talks of an auction and a franchise, what will come out will be not so much a quality hurdle as a limbo dancer?

Mr. Waddington: I cannot agree with a word of what my hon. Friend says. He seems to overlook the fact that the words of which he complains are remarkably similar to those in the present broadcasting legislation. It is also a distortion to talk as though the only requirement which has to be met to pass the quality threshold is the requirement that there must be sufficient programmes of high quality. That is only one of the requirements which have to be met. First, the plans have to cater for a wide range of tastes and interests. Secondly, there will have to be high quality news and current affairs. Thirdly, there will have to be regional programmes, and some of them will have to be made in the regions. Fourthly, 25 per cent. of the programmes will have to be made independently. Fifthly, consumer protection requirements will safeguard taste, decency, accuracy and balance. That is a lot more than my hon. Friend suggested.

Before an organisation is able to bid for a Channel 3 or Channel 5 franchise, it will have to pass a quality threshold. The chairman of the IBA, and chairman-designate of the ITC, Mr. George Russell, has described that quality threshold as a Becher's brook, and he is quite right. Those who wish to be franchise holders will have to provide diverse programme services which are calculated to appeal to a wide range of tastes and interests. They will have to give the viewer high quality news and current affairs programmes. There will have to be a sufficient amount of other programmes of high quality. A proper proportion of the material must be British or from other European countries. At least 25 per cent. of qualifying programmes must be made by independent producers. Channel 3 will be required to show regional programmes, including programmes produced in the regior Between them, Channels 3, 4 and 5 must also cater adequately for schools programmes.

Furthermore, even if a company gets through the quality threshold, the ITC will have power in exceptional circumstance to accept other than the highest bid. If it were possible to spell out all the circumstances which might be considered exceptional, we would do so, but I do not believe that it is. If the ITC uses the power, however, it will have to state and justify its reasons.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Nowhere in that list is there any definition of children's programmes, the times at which they should be shown or the percentage of them which will be other than schools material. Television is one of the most vital ways in which children receive stimulation and it is crucial that they should continue to receive high-quality programmes. Will the Home Secretary undertake to write such a requirement into the Bill?

Mr. Waddington: It is almost inconceivable that a person would pass the diversity and catering for a wider range of tastes and interests requirements if he put nothing in his schedules in the way of children's programmes. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where does the Bill say that?"] There is nothing in the present legislation either. When broadcasting legislation was last considered, the House turned its back on the idea of long lists of requirements, so why should one be considered necessary now? For a bidder to pass the quality test, the ITC will have to be satisfied that his plans will cater for a wide range of tastes and interests.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): The Secretary of State talks about quality requirements, but can he explain to the House and to the people of Scotland why there is no mention of Gaelic broadcasting in the Bill, especially when we have heard so many discussions about it in the past year and as his predecessor promised in June that proposals for Gaelic broadcasting would be presented? The people of Scotland are disgusted at the whole performance.

Mr. Waddington: I am delighted with the hon. Lady's intervention, and I have some good news for her if she will contain herself for a moment or two.

Channel 3 and Channel 5 are intended to be popular, mass audience channels. We should not try to turn them into new versions of Channel 4 and BBC2. Nevertheless, the requirements that I have outlined are exacting and are

[Mr. Waddington]

hardly a prescription for yob television. Indeed, the safeguards are greater than those which exist at present. Where, for instance, are the powers now to find franchise holders, or to require them to put up substantial performance bonds as a guarantee that they will live up to their programme promises? The ITC will have far more extensive enforcement powers than the IBA, one of whose problems has been that it has had few sanctions at its disposal short of the nuclear weapon of licence revocation.

Some people hanker for a detailed definition of quality, but frankly I do not think that that is on. The ITC will be able to issue illustrative guidelines, but it will not issue a blueprint—rightly so, as there is no single right way to pass, for instance, the diversity test. The winning applicant's detailed programme promises will, however, be incorporated into the licence conditions. There will be a clear commitment to quality, capable of rigorous enforcement.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does the Home Secretary agree with the Minister of State that parts of the Bill are not set in stone? Is he prepared to reconsider the basis of Channel 5 and the suggestion made by the Select Committee on Home Affairs report of a national channel made up of local affiliates?

Mr. Waddington: No. I believe that our arrangements for Channel 5 are exactly right.

Already there have been demands for all sorts of additional statutory requirements for programming, but if we were to give way to all the demands of the various lobbies and special interests, the new legislation would finish up far more onerous and prescriptive than the old. As long ago as 1954, Parliament wisely rejected the list approach. Those who seek guarantees for, for instance, religious or children's programmes, can take comfort from the multiplication of outlets as channels increase and from the diversity requirement on both Channel 3 and Channel 5. I imagine that the ITC would take some convincing that a service which did not offer any programmes of that kind was genuinely diverse, but this is also where the complementary nature of Channel 4's remit comes in. In addition to its public service obligations, it will continue to be required to cater for any tastes and interests not adequately met by Channel 3 and 5.

I wish to concentrate on key topics rather than go through the Bill clause by clause, so I will give no more than a brief guide to its structure. Part I establishes the Independent Television Commission in place of the IBA and the Cable Authority. Both George Russell and I want a smooth transition and maximum continuity of expertise. If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading, I will announce shortly the setting up of the ITC and the Radio Authority in shadow form.

Part I also deals with the regulation of Channels 3, 4 and 5, Channel 4, Wales, satellite services, and services using the spare capacity of signals such as teletext. It requires the ITC, among other things, to issue codes on how the due impartiality requirement is to be applied, on programme standards more generally and on advertising and sponsorship. Part I also includes requirements for schools programmes and subtitling for the deaf.

Part II deals with local delivery services—local multi-channel franchises using cable and/or microwave transmission. *[Interruption.]*

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Conservative Members are trying to listen to the excellent exposition by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. We cannot hear because of the bunch of yobboes on the Opposition Benches below the Gangway—*[Interruption.]* Could they please be asked to be silent?

Mr. Waddington: It would be a pity if they went out of here as ignorant as they came in. It might be to their advantage to listen.

Among other things, part II makes local delivery operators responsible themselves for the content of any foreign services which they carry from countries outside the EC and the Council of Europe.

Part III establishes a new Radio Authority in place of the IBA radio division, and deals with the regulation of national, local, satellite, cable and institutional radio services, and with spare capacity services using radio signals. The key requirement in this part is that radio should expand in such a way as to increase choice for the listener.

Part IV re-enacts the provisions dealing with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, and part V puts the Broadcasting Standards Council on a statutory basis. Part VI applies the law of obscenity, incitement to racial hatred and defamation to all British broadcasting services.

Part VII substantially strengthens the powers and penalties available against pirate broadcasting. Part VIII contains the new offences of supporting an unacceptable foreign satellite service, and deals with miscellaneous matters such as listed sporting events and transfer to the BBC of responsibility for collecting the licence fee.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House the good news for which the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) was waiting. At a later stage we shall be bringing forward provisions on Gaelic broadcasting. These will be based on a Gaelic television production fund, to be paid for by the Exchequer and administered by a committee of the ITC. The fund will commission the production of programmes in the Gaelic language. We plan that the ITC should have power to require relevant Channel 3 licensees to show Gaelic programming. The programmes would be made either by broadcasters or by independent producers. We intend that the fund should be able to finance 200 hours of Gaelic programmes a year in addition to the present 100 hours, which we would expect the BBC and the relevant Channel 3 companies to maintain.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Home Secretary will appreciate that many representatives of all parties have campaigned long and hard on that issue. How did he decide on the sum of £8 million? He mentioned a committee of the ITC. What direct representation from the Gaelic community will there be on that committee? Token Gaelic representation is insufficient, as we want those people to have real clout.

Mr. Waddington: A number of those matters are open to discussion. The hon. Lady will hear the details later, and I do not think that anyone would bless me if I went through them all now. It is worth bearing in mind that there are 80,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland—less than 2

per cent. of the Scottish population—so I should have thought that most fair-minded people would consider our proposal to be a very good deal indeed for Gaelic speakers in Scotland.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Waddington: I am sorry, but I must press on.

There are also some matters not now in the Bill. I should tell the House that we shall be bringing forward provisions ending the cosy duopoly of programme listings, privatising the IBA transmission system and dealing with transitional arrangements. Also on this supplementary agenda are the detail of the independent production requirement on the BBC, provisions in regard to offshore pirate broadcasters and the ending of needle-time restrictions on the playing of records by radio stations.

Finally, I remind the House that a Conservative Government introduced ITV in the early 1950s, independent local radio in the early 1970s, Channel 4 at the beginning of the 1980s, and the independent productions initiative a couple of years ago. At each stage the pessimists prophesied doom and gloom—and every time they have been confounded. On 22 May 1952, Lord Reith likened the introduction of commercial broadcasting to smallpox, bubonic plague and the black death, and on 25 March 1954 Herbert Morrison for the Opposition said:

"we regard the whole present scheme as objectionable and, indeed, futile . . . this Bill is the enemy of a reasonable culture in broadcasting and television."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1954; Vol. 525, c. 1472-74.]

Today's pessimists should consider how their comments may sound in 30 years' time. I commend the Bill to the House.

5.17 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): At least the Home Secretary will agree with me that today we debate fundamental changes in the organisation of broadcasting in the United Kingdom. As broadcasting has such a crucial effect on all our lives, we are also considering a major influence on the conduct and character of our country during the rest of this century and beyond.

The criteria against which the Bill must be judged are the quality of broadcasting which it encourages and the choice of programmes that it would make available to listeners and viewers. The Government claim, as the Home Secretary appeared to be doing today, that their proposals are likely to increase choice and improve quality. They are almost alone in that contention. The most distinguished and experienced figures in broadcasting are united in the belief that, if the Bill becomes law, standards will fall and choice will be diminished.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I know that the hon. Gentleman is eager, but I should like to get on a little before I give way to him.

The Bill also fails when measured against an obligation of even greater importance than choice and quality—the protection of democracy.

In Britain an increasing threat to genuine democracy is the concentration of the ownership of newspapers and broadcasting companies in the hands of fewer international media companies. Some parts of the Bill might have been written with the express intention of meeting the needs and fulfilling the ambitions of one of them—Mr. Rupert Murdoch. Already the Government have allowed Mr. Murdoch to acquire two national newspapers without the scrutiny of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry. In part, the Bill might have been dictated during one of Mr. Murdoch's cosy lunches with the Prime Minister.

I take the clearest example of the favour that Mr. Murdoch and his like are to receive, and it is the clearest proof that, in the true meaning of the words, the Bill will reduce choice and not increase it. Clause 157 deals with what are called "listed events"—a subject on which the Home Secretary gave a sort of answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). He was right to acknowledge that his predecessor had written the Bill, but we are intrigued about whether the Home Secretary has read it. It was clear that he did not understand what is meant by clause 157, which deals with listed events—great sporting occasions such as the grand national, Wimbledon and the cup final, which attract massive audiences. At present, no single company is allowed to acquire the exclusive right to screen them. We all know that the Bill prohibits them from being screened through pay television, but that is not the question.

Mr. Waddington: That is precisely what I said was in the Bill.

Mr. Hattersley: It is exactly what the Home Secretary said but, unfortunately, it is not exactly the question that he was asked, which concerned protection against one company having the exclusive right to screen those promotions and against their being able to monopolise the screening. Under the Bill, that protection is being removed. It will be possible for a single satellite or cable company to acquire the sole right to broadcast, for example, the Grand National and to prevent national broadcasting companies from screening it at the same time or at all.

Satellite and cable television is currently watched by 3 per cent. of the viewing public. Let us assume that, by the time the Bill becomes law, the figure has trebled and Sky Television buys the exclusive right to screen Wimbledon, the cup final or the grand national.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): Why does the right hon. Gentleman make that assumption?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall tell the Minister of State exactly why I make that assumption in a moment, but let me carry him with me on the assumption and then I shall try to justify it.

Let us assume that Sky buys the right to screen the grand national. Last week, the Football Association behaved quite reasonably about this, but on the radio the Jockey Club said that in a free market it would sell its rights to the highest bidder, whatever the company might be. Instead of every family with a television set enjoying the chance to watch that national event, the opportunity would be restricted to fewer than 10 per cent. of British families. What sort of extension of free choice is that? It is simply the freedom of Rupert Murdoch to use his wealth and power to exploit the viewer. It represents his right to

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dictate the terms on which British families enjoy television and the Government's willingness to be an accessory to that blackmail.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Give way.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is the most vocal and active Parliamentary Private Secretary that I have ever known. I shall give way after I have dealt with the question from the Minister of State which, like the PPS, he shouted from his seat rather than asking in the normal fashion.

The Minister of State asked why I should assume that Mr. Murdoch would want to buy the rights to one of those exclusive events. The answer is that that is what he always does when developing his broadcasting systems. It is his established technique. He buys a tempting programme and uses it as a loss-leader for the rest of the rubbish that he broadcasts, such as cartoons, old movies, pre-digested news and extended advertisements dressed up as consumer magazines. His aim is not to extend choice but to reduce it.

By popular demand, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and then to the Minister of State.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for eventually giving way. Does he understand that if any satellite broadcaster or what he would regard as a minority broadcaster were attracting the size of audience that he supposes, with no basis for his figures, they would be unable to afford to pay as much money as other broadcasters? Without attracting an audience, they would be unable to compete. Therefore it would be self-correcting. The right hon. Gentleman is trying to deny the sports that he is talking about access to money for their products.

Mr. Hattersley: I say only two things to the hon. Gentleman. First, his suggestion is belied by the experience of other countries, where minority satellites and cable companies have got their foot in the door and prised it open by making exclusive claims for events and saying to viewers, "Either you watch what we offer or you do not watch that programme at all."

Secondly—I shall develop the point in a moment if I get the opportunity—television, like football clubs and newspapers, has the unfortunate habit of attracting men who want to buy it not simply to make money but for prestige and political influence and as an entrée into other institutions and forms of life. They are prepared to lose to establish their position by saying, "I own this television company."

Mr. Mellor: Currently, if a satellite channel proprietor —there are more satellite channel proprietors than Mr. Murdoch—were to put in a bid, the right given to the BBC and ITV is to match it; they have no automatic right otherwise to show the programme. It is interesting that thus far no satellite operator has done so. The Bill makes one change, in that it says that it will be possible, although not on a pay-per-view basis, for the proprietor of a great national sporting event to sell to the highest bidder

In the right hon. Gentleman's pursuit of the Labour party's demonology theory about Rupert Murdoch, will he consider, first, that there is no reason why those who own a great sporting event should want to restrict its viewing to a few per cent. of the public? Secondly, the Labour party talks about money, but I wonder where the public interest lies, vis-à-vis the right of some broadcasting organisations to obtain sporting events at an undervalue or the right of the public who admire them to see them properly funded. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that it is the duty and obligation of the House, in perpetuity, to restrict the rights of individuals who promote sporting events to sell their products?

Mr. Hattersley: It is the duty of the Government to make great national occasions available to all the viewing public rather than a small proportion of them. That is the overwhelming view of the viewing public who have expressed an opinion.

I suspect that, like me, the Minister of State does not regard the grand national as the most important sporting occasion of the year, but, slightly to my surprise, many millions of people do. The Jockey Club and those who organise great sporting events have said on television and radio, in the Minister of State's terms, that they would sell the rights to the highest bidder. That seems to be not in the national interest but in the interests of a small number of satellite and cable broadcasters and perhaps in the interests of the Government, with their narrow view of these matters. It is not in the interests of media diversity and opportunity, which is what the Bill is supposed to be about.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I must get on. I shall give way in a moment but, like other hon. Members, I am restricted by the 6 o'clock rule. It is important that I do not forget it, as I am inclined to do.

I take this opportunity to make clear Labour Members' absolute commitment to greater diversity of media ownership. I make it clear that to us the problem of media ownership is not simply cross-promotion—newspapers plugging their own television channels, which is the subject of the inquiry that was announced last week—but cross-ownership. We should have a general reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the concentration of media ownership in fewer hands. Its terms should be the extent to which British newspapers and broadcasting companies are owned by a handful of individuals, and how the Government can best bring about disinvestment and greater diversity in the industry.

The Bill will facilitate concentration in one particular. This is the second point that I raised with the Secretary of State and I hope that the Minister of State will make this clear when he replies. Under the Bill, the proprietor of a national newspaper is not allowed to own more than 20 per cent. of a Channel 3 or Channel 5 company—that is quite right. However, why does not that prohibition apply to all satellite companies? Such an obligation could be placed on satellite companies by requiring them to relinquish ownership of British newspapers if they want to broadcast into Great Britain.

I understand that the Government—either their officials or Ministers—have told the British Satellite Broadcasting company that the membership-ownership

rule will be applied to it by secondary legislation—by some sort of order explicitly to prevent a satellite company that is based in Britain from being owned by or having any close connection with a British newspaper. If it is to apply to BSB, why will it not apply to Sky?

I present the Minister of State with another hypothesis. If Sky grows to the size of a Channel 3 company, why will Mr. Murdoch still be allowed to own five national newspapers——

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

Once upon a time the Government pretended that it was impossible to limit the connections between newspapers and ownership of Sky because that company is registered in Luxembourg. In the House of Lords, Lord Ferrers said that it was technically impossible to apply such a limitation. That fallacy having been exposed, this Minister of State discovered another reason for letting Mr. Murdoch do what he likes—to own a television company that broadcasts into Britain and five newspapers. The Minister of State gave his reason at a press conference a week last Thursday when he stated:

"A vast amount of money has gone into getting this thing"

—"this thing" being Sky—

"off the ground",

and implying that we should not legislate. That seems a new principle of Conservative Government—those who spend enough money can make up the laws as they go along to suit their convenience——

Mr. Gale *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to ask me a question, I am delighted to give way.

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Does he not appreciate the difference between BSB, which is a domestic satellite licensed by the United Kingdom, and Astra which is a non-domestic satellite? Is he seriously suggesting that this control should not only be exercised over Mr. Murdoch, who happens to uplink from the United Kingdom but could just as easily uplink from anywhere else in Europe, but should be extended to every newspaper proprietor throughout Europe who uses a foreign satellite? If so, how will the right hon. Gentleman make that work under EC directives and the Council of Europe convention?

Mr. Hattersley: What I am suggesting—this is perfectly compatible with EC regulations and with English law—is that if someone owns a company that broadcasts into Great Britain, that person shall not be allowed to own the British newspapers that he possesses at present. The control would not require us to take any action against the satellite broadcasting company; it requires us to take action against the domestically based British newspaper. That can be done with complete ease, and should be done by anybody who does not believe in the concentration of the British media in fewer hands.

The Government's attitude towards satellite television demonstrates most graphically the misconception at the heart of the Bill. Real choice for viewers depends on a diversity of programmes, not simply on the proliferation of the number of buttons on a set that it is possible to press. If pressing buttons produces no more than alternatives on the same dreary themes, choice has not been increased—it has been denied.

The Government confuse pressing buttons with making choices not least because, as the Bill demonstrates, they possess no coherent theory of broadcasting. The only attempt at a principle by which the Bill is guided is the weary old call for deregulation—an idea that clearly has not been thought through and which is not even applied with anything like consistency.

The Government preach deregulation but insist on possessing the power to veto appointments to the membership of the Channel 4 Corporation. When he replies, perhaps the Minister of State will tell us how this light-touch Government, this freedom-of-broadcasting Government, this deregulating Government, justify that little act of pointless authoritarianism. Opposition Members believe that the time has come to reduce, not increase, Government patronage. The Government appoint too many of their nominees to positions of authority and influence without check or limitation. In our view, neither the governors of the BBC nor the members of the Independent Television Commission should be appointed by the Government alone. They should be nominated by the Government and approved in office by a Committee of the House. Indeed, that rule should apply to all senior Government appointments.

A second proposal in the Bill is not so much incompatible with the claim of deregulation as in exact opposition to the notion. I refer to the whole of part V, which sets up the Broadcasting Standards Council. I admit at once that, in common with others, I was quite wrong about that institution. I feared that it was potentially sinister. I now realise that it is immediately ridiculous. It will possess no effective powers and have no real purpose, except to pretend to keep a promise that the Prime Minister gave at an unguarded moment and which she continues to repeat, although the Bill proves that what she continues to offer cannot and will not be realised.

In the debate on the Loyal Address, the Prime Minister announced that the Broadcasting Standards Council would be given the power

"to keep the violence that is unacceptable off our screens."

—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 31.]

However, no such power is mentioned in the Bill. As is so often the case, I take it that the Prime Minister said what she thought convenient at the time rather than what she knew to be accurate. I maintain my surprise that Lord Rees-Mogg, for whom I have considerable respect, should be prepared to lend his name to this silly and pointless exercise, which has been made all the more silly and pointless by the Government's welcome decision to extend the obscenity and racial incitement laws to cover television. That should be the proper and only limitation on what broadcasters are allowed to broadcast.

Choice and quality in television depend in part on the way in which the franchises to broadcast are allocated and on the rules that govern that right, as well as on the price that is paid to maintain it. Companies can obtain contracts through a process which, in general, encourages a wide variety of high-quality programmes, or by a system that puts a premium on neither standards nor choice.

In their proposals for licensing satellite companies, the Government have clearly abandoned all interest in quality and diversity. They expressly absolve the satellite companies from fulfilling the minimum obligations that

[Mr. Hattersley]

are required of domestic companies. Clause 31 (a), (b) and (d) absolves them from that duty. However, as the minimum obligations are in themselves wholly inadequate, the idea that the Government are protecting quality, diversity and choice even in the terrestrial channels does not withstand a moment's examination. The claims for quality and diversity are based on the concept of minimum standards that a company must agree to accept before it can bid for a franchise and which must be maintained after the contract is made if a financial penalty is to be avoided. But nobody believes that the financial penalty will be large enough to act as a real deterrent.

I shall now make another of my assumptions—that the standards set out in the Bill are respected. But the question that immediately arises is, "What are those standards worth?" The answer is, "Not very much." When those standards were first set out, the then Home Secretary described them as a "threshold", but by the time the White Paper was debated, the metaphor had changed to "hurdle". I prophesied at the time that they would soon become a fence, but I had not allowed for the verbal exuberance of the new Minister of State, whom I heard on the radio two weeks ago describing them as a "Becher's brook".

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman's standards of taste and accuracy are no higher than usual. It was the chairman of the ITC, Mr. Russell, who used the phrase, "Becher's brook". I merely retailed it around for him.

Mr. Hattersley: I compliment the Minister on his unusual modesty. I heard him use that expression in undeniable terms on the radio. If he wants to disown it now, I shall give way again.

Mr. Mellor: If it is the right hon. Gentleman's case that there is no quality threshold worth having, surely he should be reassured that the chairman-designate of the ITC and present chairman of the IBA says that it is to be a Becher's brook—that is, if the right hon. Gentleman is interested in reassurance rather than making cheap points.

Mr. Hattersley: I will come to a compact with the Minister that either we support everything that the chairman of the ITC suggests and implement everything that he proposes or, if the Minister will not accept that proposition, and pursue the metaphor, we can take a walk round the course to see how formidable an obstacle Becher's brook is.

Mr. Buchan: Does my right hon. Friend agree the Government are busy making Becher's brook even easier to jump?

Mr. Hattersley: I want to examine this barrier. Clause 16 defines the basic requirements that any company must fulfil before it can make a bid for a Channel 3 franchise. They include the requirements

"that a sufficient amount of time is given . . . to news programmes and current affairs programmes . . . of high quality . . . that a sufficient amount of time is given to programmes (other than news and current affairs programmes) which are of high quality . . . a sufficient amount of time is given to . . . regional programmes."

The Home Secretary, not normally a conciliatory man, will agree that those are not over-precise definitions of the standards.

I admit that they are only the beginning. There is also an obligation to appeal to a variety of tastes and include a proper proportion of programmes made in Europe. Again, those criteria do not suffer from an excess of intellectual rigour. Certainly, clause 16 gives the new ITC the right to define the terms. The Home Secretary must not pretend that the new ITC will be able to impose standards as exact as those upon which the IBA can insist now.

We were promised a light touch, and a light touch we certainly have been given. At present the IBA can ask for —it can demand—religious programmes, children's programmes, drama and documentaries. It is no good the Home Secretary saying to the House, "Don't worry, it is not written into the Bill but trust me and the Commission to propose it." According to the Government's propaganda, the purpose of the Bill is to lay down minimum standards. To take refuge in the idea that the minimum standards can be taken for granted without being specified is a negation of all that the Government previously claimed. More importantly, the new Commission cannot negotiate with the companies for the new right to broadcast.

When he replies to the debate, I should like the Minister of State to describe what will happen in the following circumstances. Two bidding companies apply for a franchise. In their prospectuses, both demonstrate their acceptance of the minimum standard set out in the Bill. One offers a programme prospectus that is superior to the other in terms of quality and diversity but it makes a bid lower than that of its inferior competitor. In those circumstances, can the commission award the contract to the programme company that offers the best programmes but the lowest tender? We know that the Bill does not allow that to happen, yet the Government continue to claim to care about quality.

The commission cannot invite the highest bidder to improve the quality of its programmes. Nor can it invite the company with the best programmes to increase its offer. Certainly, clause 17(3) provides for the Commission to reject the highest bid in exceptional circumstances. But no one has any idea what those circumstances might be. If the Home Secretary, who has written into his Bill the right to exclude a bid in exceptional circumstances, had the faintest idea what those circumstances were, he might have revealed them to us in his speech.

Mr. Spearing: Did my right hon. Friend notice that in justifying the procedure the Home Secretary prayed in aid taxpayers' rights and value for money for the nation? Will he invite the Home Secretary now, or perhaps in Committee, to calculate the difference between the hypothetical high and low bids in terms of quality such as my right hon. Friend postulated, and divide that difference between the two into a weekly amount that every household in the country will have to pay? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that would be a small sum?

Mr. Hattersley: I have the answer to my hon. Friend's equation. The Exchequer will receive very little extra for a substantial reduction in quality.

Mr. Walden: The right hon. Gentleman makes a valid point that I should like to reinforce. Surely the point is that the more people are encouraged to bid for the channels, the less they will be able to put into programmes. As a result, the much-vaunted Becher's brook will decline.

Mr. Hattersley: I agree with that and I hope to give some examples of exactly the position that the hon. Gentleman describes.

No one has any idea what the exceptional circumstances might be in which the commission could refuse the highest bid. Clearly, the commission would be crazy to risk discovering them in court, so it will give the contract to the highest bidder. The chairman of the IBA, who will be the new chairman of the commission, does not believe that the powers granted to him by the Bill will give him the chance to choose high quality in preference to high cash offers. He has said that to me in terms. As the Minister of State hangs on his every word and repeats them with such assiduity, why does he believe that the chairman-elect of the commission is wrong to fear that the complications in choosing between a high bid and lower quality will result in a deterioration in quality? Everyone else believes that that will be the case.

I suggest that a compromise is possible when choosing between bids, and I urge it on the Government. It was originally suggested by the Peacock committee, which was set up by the Government in preparation for the Bill, and the chairman-elect of the commission also urges the Government to accept the compromise. It should be possible for the commission to accept a lower bid if, in its judgment, that bid gives the viewer better value for money in terms of the programme service provided. That was the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), and endorsed, as I understand them, by some Conservative Members. I hope that, in the spirit of ecumenism, the Minister of State will consider that genuine attempt to compromise between now and 9.30 pm or in Committee.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): We are all in favour of better value for money. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell me, on behalf of my constituents, where in the great Labour plan for quality we shall find the soap operas, game shows and murder mysteries which I and many British people thoroughly enjoy?

Hon. Members: On television.

Mr. Hattersley: As my hon. Friends say, we shall find them on television. I hope that the hon. Lady accepts that I would not be party to any Bill that put "Coronation Street" in jeopardy—*[Interruption.]* About "EastEnders" I make no such assurance, but "Coronation Street" is absolutely sacrosanct.

I accept that the compromise that I suggest requires the Government to move away from one of their principles. It is the right of the franchising authority to negotiate with companies bidding for the right to broadcast. The IBA enjoys that power at present. If the Government denied it to the commission, they would wilfully abandon one of the principal methods of improving both quality and diversity.

It is possible to appreciate the importance of the negotiations only if we fully understand the method by which the Bill proposes to award contracts, a feat——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Not in the middle of a sentence, but I shall do so in a moment. That is a feat apparently beyond the leader writer of *The Times*, whose sycophantic editorial on the subject of contract procedures simply got the facts wrong.

The Bill does not propose an auction of television franchises—would that it did. Auctioning contracts is by no means our choice of method for awarding the right to broadcast, but it is a good deal better than the requirement to make a single blind bid in a sealed evelope. I remind the Minister that an auction of a sort was the second compromise urged on the Government by the industry. I commend it to him as an alternative way in which to assure value and quality. If the Government allowed a second bid it would be possible for a company to begin with a modest offer, committing most of their resources to programme-making, and if its bid was lower than that of another company it could make a second, larger offer, if necessary budgeting for lower-quality programmes.

From our point of view that is a far from perfect method, but it is much superior to a system that requires a bidding company to risk everything on a single tender. In consequence, that encourages the bidding company to risk everything to concentrate its resources on inflated offers rather than better programmes.

The only possible justification for the single blind bid is the calculated decision to use the allocation of television franchises as a means of raising revenue—the maximum amount of revenue. Maximising revenue and protecting quality are two mutually incompatiable objectives. Money spent on buying the franchise will not be available for the production of expensive, high-quality programmes.

Mr. Dykes: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the form of words relating to such changes should be agreed by all parts of the House? It is important that there is a consensus about such an important measure which transcends the different sides of the House. The form of words could be elaborated on later through a straightforward amendment tabled in Committee. That Committee stage must be an intelligent one, not the ritual to which we have become accustomed in recent years. The ITC will also construct the relevant clauses relating to its operations and it could encapsulate some suggestions about those changes. If such changes are not considered by the Government, the ITC will inevitably be a weak regulatory organisation.

Mr. Hattersley: I agree, and I hope that I can demonstrate that by saying that the Opposition, who want the normal—dare I say—contentious Committee, do not include in their first speech on the subject two proposals for compromise. They are not ideal to the Opposition, and the two suggestions that I have made would not naturally be introduced by us were we to have a free hand. I have suggested some areas in which quality and choice might be protected, which maintains the Government's view about how the Bill should be structured in general. My certain wish is that the Committee should improve the Bill rather than be a Committee of ritual battles over clauses, which often does not get us very far.

In not quite such an emollient tone, it is important to stress that one complicating factor of the single bid is the sort of people who will be encouraged by the nature of the system to write down a figure, put it in an envelope and send it to the franchise authority. Recently the Minister of State refused to accept that the Australian experience might be reproduced here. All the evidence suggests, however, that we might face exactly the same problems, not least because of the risk of rogue bids coming from outside the industry.

[Mr. Hattersley]

Discussing the prospectus with the IBA, as programme companies now do, maximises the participation of the professional broadcaster in the franchise negotiations—the man or woman who is interested in programme-making. The blind bid encourages cowboys. There is a type of individual who will bid for television companies for reasons that are only obliquely concerned with television—political influence, glamour, prestige and political connections. Newspapers and football clubs have the same attraction. The people who buy them often do so for the wrong reasons and with disastrous consequences. The Australian experience could be repeated here and we should remind ourselves what it was.

In that country three national commercial networks were bought by the highest bidders with no previous television connections. Mr. Alan Bond bought Channel 9 for 1·3 billion Australian dollars—shortly after it was valued at 0·15 billion Australian dollars. Mr. Christopher Skase bought Channel 7, but that company is now in liquidation. Mr. Frank Lowry bought Channel 10 and his company has made such immediate losses that half of them have been formally written off.

Faced with such a situation—bidding too much and making promises just to get the company—the new owner has only one option. Profit in television is a simple equation—profit equals advertising revenue minus production costs. With so much extra advertising time on offer because of the Bill it will not be possible to increase advertising revenue pounds per minute, and the only option will be to cut programme costs. Let us consider those programme costs. BBC and ITV drama costs between £350,000 and £400,000 an hour. Old films are available for between £2,500 and £5,000 an hour. If firms overbid and find themselves overstretched, their inevitable and unavoidable action will be to reduce high-quality production and high-quality broadcasts and turn towards lower, cheaper quality programmes. In one way that shift is being encouraged by the Government, as the Bill undermines the concept of public service broadcasting.

The obligation of cable or MVDS companies to carry BBC channels among their programmes will be abandoned if the Bill becomes law. The Secretary of State said that no such obligation existed in present law, but it exists in the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. That Act is to be repealed, however, and the obligation to carry BBC programmes on cable transmissions is not included in the Bill. As recently as September the then Home Secretary said that what is known as the "must carry" rule would be maintained. If, as I am sure the Government hope, cable prospers, an increasing proportion of people will obtain their entire viewing from such outlets. They will, as the Bill now stands, risk being denied access to public service channels—BBC 2, BBC 1 and Channel 4. The previous Home Secretary wished to protect their right to enjoy access to those channels and he promised that it would be maintained. Why was that promise broken?

In Cambridge, at the same time as promising that that access would be maintained, the right hon. Gentleman also promised the BBC would remain "the cornerstone of broadcasting", complemented by commercial channels. How can the BBC remain the cornerstone of broadcasting if it is not available to every television viewer, especially those who do not receive their signals from cable?

Universal availability is an essential feature of public service broadcasting. When the Minister replies I hope that he will tell us why it is to be abandoned. I hope that we will be told in turn—as the newspapers were told 10 days ago—that the Government are genuinely prepared to examine changes and amendments. They could demonstrate the good faith of that promise by agreeing that the Bill should go to a Special Standing Committee. It would therefore be subject to the expert scrutiny that a Bill of this importance deserves. I promise here and now that a Special Standing Committee will not take any longer than the normal procedures, but it will ensure that we examine the Bill more thoroughly and sensibly than going through the ritual confrontation.

If a Special Standing Committee is not possible, I hope that we will be spared the ritual rudeness during the Minister's wind-up speech and that questions will be answered calmly and contradictions in policy explained. If that is not the rule and if there is no suggestion of a willingness to amend and compromise, all the talk about open minds and doors will be demonstrated to be so much public relations guff.

In the meantime we shall, of course, vote against the Second Reading. Our vote will be cast for real diversity and genuine quality, for neither of those essential objectives is protected by the Bill.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that the 10-minutes limit on speeches operates from six o'clock.

5.59 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): Many people in this debate will want to talk about the quality of programming, but there is another matter that hon. Members may well not discuss and to which I want to refer briefly: a mechanism for the provision of training. I referred to it when we discussed the White Paper earlier this year. It is extremely important to safeguard the industry's future by having some mechanism to ensure that training is properly provided.

I hope that it will be unnecessary to extol the virtues and importance of training. Certain special industries in this country, such as special effects, have produced films such as the Bond films and "Star Wars". The special technicians, who have demonstrated their expertise in this country, have, over a period, gone to Hollywood. Due to the failure to provide proper training here, we have not generated a second generation or echelon of people, and we no longer have the expert capability.

In a franchise business, which is what we are talking about today, managements frequently have recourse to the old argument that they do not have a long enough security of tenure to provide training programmes. They use that as a sort of alibi. Some mechanism should be devised that is linked to the levy, and perhaps also to the percentage of the net advertising revenue formula, to enable contractors to contribute towards a training programme.

If we consider the importance of the new technology, high-definition television, we see that if we do not spend enough time and effort on training people who are both in front of and behind the camera about the importance of high-definition television, we shall run the risk of

becoming a Third-world nation. This country's television and film production industry is maintained only by the expertise of the people working in it.

In talking about quality, I shall draw on my experience gained during five years in the Ministry of Defence, when I frequently adjudicated on procurement contests—if I may use that word. In those cases, we were looking for the lowest bid, not the highest, but the principle was exactly the same. We never said that we would always take the lowest bid, but that we would seek the lowest bid and then look at other criteria. I am worried that the ITC will be so completely bound in that it will have no discretion to take account of the other essential criteria: the amount of money to be spent on programming. If that is not clearly stated and the ITC does not have the ability to take that into account, I fear that we shall be driven further towards lower programme standards.

I speak as someone who is not enamoured of present television programmes. Teachers in my constituency say that it is becoming impossible to persuade schoolchildren to participate in team games after class because they want to go home and watch a particular programme. I do not find that encouraging in relation to the wider use of television in society.

I am extremely anxious about the quality of television, as are many other hon. Members. I seek assurances from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister that he will be prepared to allay my concern and build into the Bill some discretionary powers of the ITC to use in the circumstances that I have described. If I am not given those assurances, I shall have to consider carefully whether I can support the Bill this evening.

6.5 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am totally surprised and delighted at being called so early in this debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I promise not to call the hon. Gentleman so early in future.

Mr. Buchan: I recall that the last time that somebody seemed to be totally astonished was Rupert Murdoch, although a competent written speech had been written for him. In that speech, at the television conference in Edinburgh this year, he started by saying that in economic matters, competition was always to be preferred to monopoly. From then on he talked about the economics of television to an audience of people who were artists, singers and in the theatre, and journalists concerned with news and facts. For him, it was sufficient that he could prove a case of profit coming from competition, as opposed to monopoly.

The same criterion applies once we have bids for television stations. If we have an auction bid, we are saying that we are seeing what money we can bring for the Treasury. As I understand the Home Secretary's responses to some of the earlier interventions, that was exactly his position. He seemed to suggest that we should have regard to the Treasury and the revenue coming in. However, in public service broadcasting we are not dealing with enormous figures. Advertising on commercial television will not cost the Treasury huge amounts of money. The remaining duty of public service broadcasting—which is also laid on existing commercial television, but which the Bill removes—will not be costly.

When we consider what television is, we should be prepared to pay a great cost. I am worried that Ministers do not seem to understand television's potential greatness. Today, man can speak to man at the same moment throughout the world. That is amazing. We can see the horrifying events in Tiananmen square and see the daily events in Wenceslaus square and know that something great and good is happening, to which we can respond. That is an amazing development in human communications and experience. We have been given an instrument with which we can expand human experience and improve communications.

The Bill is the most important piece of legislation we have had in this House for the past 10 years. Communication between man and man is what matters. All else flows from the understanding between humans. None of us questions—although the Government are trying to privatise it—the cost and devotion of time, energy and intellect to our universities and educational system. We know that our children must be educated, and we have an instrument that can enhance and develop that education. However, we are concerned only with how to maximise the money gained from this marvellous instrument.

In future, if we survive and live to see a time when we cease to have Governments with such a drab monotony of thought, we shall look back with amazement at throwing away such an opportunity. It is not enough for hon. Members to intervene and ask whether plays and games would be allowed on television. Of course television should provide entertainment, relaxation and the luxury of seeing such programmes. However, more important—people accept this—are documentaries. As soon as we commercialise broadcasting, we face the problem that there will be no means of allowing exciting, dangerous or risky experimentation.

I shall give the case which I gave to Rupert Murdoch, whose channels must make maximum profits. I asked him whether, if a man who had never been heard of, but who happened to be called Attenborough, asked him to devote much time and money to putting on a series of programmes about wildlife, he would have bought the series. The answer is that he would not. It is only because we have public service broadcasting that Attenborough has built up a mass viewing for such programmes. If someone had asked me five or 10 years ago whether I would pay for subscription broadcasting of such programmes I would have thought it nonsense—there would be no interest in them. But we who have accidentally come across these programmes have suddenly realised how marvellous and fascinating they are.

The criminality inherent in the Government's Bill is that this sort of development will not take place, because every time, the audience will have to be maximised, and that will involve two conditions.

First, a programme must be easily understood; it must not turn people off; it must not involve experimentation or anything new. Secondly, a programme must not disturb too many people: they must not switch it off; it must be fairly tranquil pap. I am no expert, but I believe there is good and bad rock music; likewise, there will be better and worse pap, but by and large it will not be experimental, it will not break new ground, it will not energise people or extend human experience. Above all, it will not offend. I think, with Hamlet, that unless there is offence not much happens.

[Mr. Buchan]

I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who said that the Broadcasting Standards Council was nothing to be worried about. I foresee a double jeopardy. It might have been right to bring the Obscene Publications Act 1964 into broadcasting—in some ways it was anomalous that it should have been missing, although I greatly distrust the Government handling anything of that sort. Now, in addition, the Government are bringing in the Broadcasting Standards Council—under Rees-Mogg, of all people—and that presents the double jeopardy.

The council will not go for the sleazy, suggestive pap: it will go for the serious programmes. Writing in 1907, Bernard Shaw listed the plays that the Lord Chamberlain had banned in that year. They included "Oedipus Rex", his own "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and Ibsen's "Ghosts". As Bernard Shaw pointed out, any commercial manager in London could put on plays about brothels or adultery as long as they were fun, but as soon as they became serious—like "Ghosts"—they were banned. As long as they were light, such plays were an open sesame for profit, for sleaze-makers. Just to prove the point, hon. Members may recall that Lord Rees-Mogg's favourite programme is "'Allo 'Allo"—sleazy titillation with undertones of Gestapo bondage.

To conclude, I want to quote Nye Bevan—I have quoted Murdoch enough. Bevan said that there is no need to look at the crystal ball when you can read the book—and we can read the book. Hon. Members who read my book will discover more about the subject——

Mr. Tony Banks: An excellent book.

Mr. Buchan: The book deals with what has happened to broadcasting when it goes commercial—for instance, in Australia, where there was immediate reduction in the number of serious programmes. Channel 9 in Australia has no current affairs, arts, religious or educational programmes and no documentaries, and 20 per cent. of broadcasting time is given over to advetising. The foreign radio and television broadcasting that I know best is that of Italy, where——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret that I must now call the next hon. Member to speak——

Mr. Buchan: —the new commercialised channel 5 devotes more than 27 per cent. of its time to advertising.

6.14 pm

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North):

"the Government's plans provide a most insecure and unpromising field for investment on the part of programme contractors."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1954; Vol. 525, c. 1473.]

"if this Bill becomes law, future historians will deem it to be one of the most irresponsible measures of modern times."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 June 1954; Vol. 188, c. 284.]

"I trust we shall reject this Bill, not only because commercial television is undesirable but also because it will not be of value."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 June 1954; Vol. 188, c. 303.]

I reassure my right hon. Friend the Minister that those are not my words—they were spoken by Labour spokesmen on broadcasting back in 1954. I apologise for resorting to a somewhat banal and childish deception, but my point is a serious one. My motive was not party political. I could equally well have quoted the late Earl of Halifax, a Conservative Peer, who said that, because the principle of public service seemed more important than the principle of commercial competition, he felt unable to support the Second Reading of the Television Bill back in 1954.

At every stage of our broadcasting history we have been nervous about taking the next step. My theme is simply that, as in the past, we tend to say that we have heard it all before—the faint hearts have always shouted louder than those who were bold, although the more enterprising may eventually have won the day. That is not to say that caution is out of place. Nor does it imply that broadcasting is unimportant. Everyone agrees that it is important. We can go further in agreement and say that innovations carry risks, so sensible precautions must be taken to avoid making mistakes. Today's debate is essentially about taking sensible precautions. Although it involves examining the facts leading to the best results, it also means ignoring the spurious cries of woe from various vested interests.

There is no shortage of special pleading. It comes from narrow-minded and enlightened people just as much as from self-interested or altruistic people. Let us examine first the cries of woe. Certain themes have constantly recurred in debates over the past 30 years. Will the change be viable? What about the quality of programmes? What about hostility to advertising? Dislike of private profit and accusations of triviality have been voiced. It has been said that ethics and morality will be debased and that changes will constitute a waste of our resources. The enemies of change are not always the upholders of the public conscience. Sometimes they are merely defenders of vested interests.

Back in the 1950s, the keynote was the defence of the BBC monopoly. The Opposition spokesman at the time said:

"There are . . . principles of our public life, one of them being that changes in great established national institutions should not be made without broad agreement."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1953; Vol. 522, c. 328.]

I believe that I have already heard that argument today.

There is an innate dislike of commerce, too. Speaking for the Opposition, Lord Macdonald went so far as to ask:

"Is it wise for this country to follow up this craze that we find growing rapidly in some countries to commercialise everything? . . . Surely there are some things which are too sacred to be commercialised."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 26 May 1952; Vol. 176, c. 1371.]

In the 1960s, the rationalisation was that private profit could never serve the public interest. The excuse articulated by the Labour spokesman was that the language of priorities dictated that due to lack of resources we should make no progress. In the 1970s the emphasis switched again. It was then a cocktail of technical difficulties and trivialisation.

Finally, having reached the 1980s, we are virtually back at square one. We have returned to where we started, back to the dying days of Lord Reith's era, and once again one has a growing sense of having been down this road before. Lord Reith said:

"nothing could be more certain than that Gresham's Law will apply and dominate".

With those words, the great patriach of broadcasting thundered against the breaking of the BBC monopoly and foreshadowed today's discussion about the auctioning franchises driving out the good. In ever more scathing

tones Lord Reith denounced even more wicked possibilities. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary spoke of Lord Reith's references to smallpox, bubonic plague and the black death, and Lord Reith ended the speech in question by saying:

"Somebody is minded now to introduce sponsored broadcasting into this country."

and

"A principle absolutely fundamental and cherished is about to be scuttled."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 22 May 1952; Vol. 176, c. 1295-7.]

For "sponsored broadcasting" we need only substitute the word "deregulation" and not much seems to have changed over the years.

Today we are witnessing a replay of two well-worn tunes from earlier decades. The first is that we must preserve the status quo as far as possible and at all costs, keep the BBC as it is, not upset the existing pattern of ITV contractors and freeze the formula for Channel 4. The second is an admonition that quality, standards and viability could be victims of innovation. Having listened to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) one would think that a third had been added —a threat to democracy itself.

Opposing these novel changes is an unholy alliance. Once upon a time it was the bishops in harness with the vice-chancellors and the BBC. Nowadays it is a less plausible alliance—the television entrepreneurs, safely entrenched in their citadels of power but hand in hand with the industry's creative people. Together they seem united against any invasion of their private, privileged territory.

Nothing that I have said should be taken as suggesting that I do not believe in pressing for the highest possible standards in broadcasting. The broadest spectrum of economically viable choice, not to mention economical use of technical and financial resources, is also highly desirable. Everyone admits, however, that we are moving into a new era of broadcasting and that the old methods of awarding franchises are not necessarily the best. The Government's plans must be thoroughly examined and probed in Committee, as they will be, and the Minister has already said outside the House that there will be reasonableness. That is commendable and highly desirable, but it has to be set against an equally important factor—the fact that we must put behind us for ever Lord Reith's thundering pronouncement that intellectual and ethical objectives

"are here and now at stake."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 22 May 1952; Vol. 176, c. 1297.]

They are not, they have not been, and they will not be.

6.23 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I followed the Home Secretary's speech with great interest. He will understand why I am opposed to the swashbuckling philosophy behind the Bill. It will make money for the Treasury at the expense of programme quality. Competition is one thing, but it is bad to have moneybags at the expense of viewing standards. I am strongly opposed to the Bill.

I should like to speak on just one aspect of the Bill, and I shall be brief. It is about the group that the Home Secretary mentioned in his speech—deaf people. He said that there is provision in the Bill for helping deaf people, and he and the Minister of State, Home Office have said that they want to help. I appreciate that. Deaf people have political significance for every hon. Member because they are to be found in every constituency. They are deprived of television if they are totally deaf or very hard of hearing. They simply cannot follow it without subtitling; in some cases, they need sign language. It is sad that so many deaf people should be excluded from television in that way.

For decades, they have been excluded because there was no subtitling. After subtitling was introduced, it was slowly extended, and today there is some provison. I should like the House to look at the amount of subtitling that exists. There is subtitling on several programmes, including documentaries and wildlife programmes. There is Oracle and Ceefax subtitling for various programmes on BBC and ITV. They do a good job. Independent Television News has live subtitles on its news programmes and is to be warmly commended for that. The little misspelling and few seconds delay on the Oracle subtitling on ITN is irrelevant. What is important is that it makes ITN news meaningful to the deaf viewer, whereas BBC news programmes are meaningless pictures. I hope that the BBC will think again and provide proper subtitling for its news programmes.

The Bill says that there will be a mandatory increase of 10 per cent. in the subtitled hours of commercial television programmes. I welcome that recognition of need by the Home Secretary and the Minister of State. However, a 10 per cent. increase is lamentable. There are about two hours of subtitling per channel per day, although there are over 500 hours of television per week. A 10 per cent. increase in those two hours means an increase of 12 minutes per channel per day, and that is not good enough. The Government cannot be serious. The figures cannot be challenged. I know that the Home Secretary and the Minister of State want to help, but such an increase is not acceptable.

Mr. Mellor: I am anxious that the right hon. Gentleman should understand exactly what the Bill says, because we want to meet him and those who feel strongly about this issue. The 10 per cent. increase is only for the first year of the new Channel 3 franchises. Thereafter, we expect the Independent Television Commission to suggest a new target each year which will increase year on year. The precise extent by which it should increase is a matter upon which I feel sure the ITC will want to hear the views of the House as the Bill proceeds through Parliament. The 10 per cent. increase is just a start, and we see it as an increasing commitment every year.

Mr. Ashley: The Minister has made an important statement, which I hope the ITC will bear in mind, because the Bill does not say that. The Bill says that the Commission needs to make the increase "greater"—not greater than 10 per cent.—in successive years. What does "greater" mean? If one is trying to minimise subtitles and make profits, "greater" could mean 1 per cent. or 0·1 per cent., and that is my anxiety.

I am delighted by what the Minister has said. The spirit of his intervention must be taken on board by the ITC. That is the end of my speech. Subtitling is crucial, because it is the key for deaf people. The Minister's statement is a big advance.

6.30 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I shall concentrate on one feature of the Bill—the provision, or lack of provision, for Christian or other religious broadcasting. The Bill is

[Mr. Michael Alison]

deficient and unsatisfactory in this respect. However, I am encouraged by, and appreciative of, the attitude taken by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State about religious broadcasting in the informal exchanges that I and other colleagues have had with him. It is clear that he has an open mind about this topic.

Let me highlight some of the defects of the Bill under this heading. It accentuates the negative on religious broadcasting. There is barely a word about it, except in terms of prohibition and restriction. In the very engine room of the Bill, clause 2, a positive duty is laid on the new independent television commission

"to facilitate the provision of . . . a wide range of programmes calculated to appeal to a variety of tastes and interests."

It is to provide those services by licence.

Yet clause 5 goes on to disbar and disallow any Christian body from becoming a licence holder. The so-called wide range of interests to be created for by licensees is open-ended in all sorts of directions, but in the direction of the Christian Churches and other religions, the door is conspicuously and deliberately closed. So, alongside governmental and bureaucratic bodies infinitely more limited in their appeal, Churches are disbarred from taking part as licensees. This is unreasonable and unacceptable.

I remind my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of what the Bishop of St. Albans said in his commentary on the Bill:

"churchgoing is still the most popular, voluntary communal activity of the British people".

It far exceeds, for example, attendance at football matches, and I wonder whether my hon. Friend and the Government have really seriously thought through the desirability of specifically disbarring the most popular national communal activity from being promoted, through banning its sponsors and promoters from taking their wares on to the air as licenceholders.

Some might argue that the United States television experience, involving scandals like that of Jimmy Bakker, provide evidence enough that we should not go down that road. However, the Bill already provides adequate safeguards to prevent such abuse—for example, the quality provisions in clause 6 and the fund-raising regulatory powers in clause 7. I urge the Government to consider open-mindedly, sympathetically and carefully the possibility of removing this fundamental limitation on the future of religious broadcasting.

If the limitation is persisted with, it will have the effect of de-licensing, and thus forcing off the air, an existing excellent cable channel carrying mainstream Christian religious output to 65,000 homes in Glasgow, Coventry, Swindon, Croydon and Ealing. The material in this output was recently described by the Cable Television Authority as "worthwhile and accessible". Could anything make the point more vividly about the Bill's accentuation of the negative than its proposal to wring the neck of such programme options? In this context, the views of the Central Religious Advisory Committee for the BBC and IBA on this issue are not the views of the Church of England as a whole, nor those of the wider Christian church.

The so-called radio option provided for in the Bill is not so restrictive, but it does not meet the case. I remind my hon. Friend the Minister of the point made by Mr. Clive Calver, the general director of the Evangelical Alliance in a recent letter to *The Times*. He said:

"If churches were to apply for radio licences they would be denied management control of their own output. Clause 83 (2) requires that a licensee should 'exclude from its programmes all expressions of views and opinions of the person providing the service . . . on religious matters'.

By this caveat a radio station run by a local church could not even broadcast its own live worship to the community it serves."

The religious broadcasting on sound radio option is a good start in the right direction, but it does not go far enough. The very fact of the admissibility of sound radio broadcasting should be regarded as the first chink in the curtain which could be extended to visual broadcasting.

Part of the Government's defence of their position as set out in the Bill is their declared confidence that, notwithstanding the prohibition of television station ownership, plenty of prime time will continue to be given to religious programmes under the new regime, as there is at present. The Government believe that the BBC will continue to feature religion on both channels, as it does now. Although the Government frankly acknowledge that there is no statutory requirement for religious programmes to be shown on ITV, they believe that the generalised provisions of clause 2(2)(b) about catering for

"a variety of tastes and interests"

will be sufficient for the safeguarding of prime time religious programmes.

Who is kidding whom? Does my hon. and learned Friend really believe that the abandonment of an overt public service obligation for the new commercial services, coupled with the new franchises tendering regime, will do anything other than marginalise Christian or other religious programmes? Unfortunately, it is no answer to argue that good quality and popular religious programmes such as "Highway" and "Songs of Praise" will continue to command prime time. Admittedly, they can command up to one third of the entire population of viewers, but the harsh reality is set out in this quote from the Bishop of St. Albans in his paper from the Church of England committee for communications:

"Although the size of audience is important, the crucial factor is its composition. A large audience of impecunious people does not interest advertisers. Since advertising breaks are not allowed in the middle of religious programmes, they are not among the high revenue earners.

It is the buying power of an audience, and not simply its size, which appeals to advertisers. Unless there are conservation safeguards in the new system, genuine audience choice will be inhibited.

In 1988, some ITV programme controllers attempted to move 'Highway' from its popular slot early on Sunday evening. 'Highway' is always in the top 100 programmes, drawing up to 10m viewers each week. Its unattractiveness to programme controllers is that its audience is neither young nor wealthy, so it has little appeal for advertisers."

That is the harsh reality. That is the reason that mainstream, prime-time religious programmes will go by the board and religion will be marginalised. That is not compatible with the sort of attitude that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, among others, takes towards the importance of religion in broadcasting.

I share and thoroughly advocate the views expressed by the pressure group Christian Choice in Broadcasting, which insists that it is

"essential that: channels committed to general programming should include religion; the wide selection of special-interest channels should include at least one with a religious emphasis."

6.40 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): There will be plenty of time in Committee to examine the Bill clause by clause and line by line. I shall use my 10 minutes today to examine the principles behind the Bill and to explain why there is a fundamental difference in values and in approach to the Bill between Conservative Members and Opposition Members. I hope that Conservative Members will not try to excuse the Bill with the line, "There is a small part that I do not like, but I can vote against that in Committee." They should examine the values behind the Bill and decide on Second Reading whether they support or reject it.

I shall take the Government at face value and believe them, temporarily, when they say that their basic principle is to provide for greater choice. It has been demonstrated conclusively in the debates that have preceded this one that greater numbers of programmes will not provide greater choice. We have seen that demonstrated in the listed events for sport. If the free market is allowed to apply, whether for sport or anything else, there can be no argument from a Thatcherite Government point of view that if a channel can afford to pay for a national event, it should have it, and that it is up to individuals to decide whether to have a satellite dish, or whatever else is required, to receive it.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I believe that there is a need for regulation to ensure that the nation as a whole can see national events. It is the result of skilled scheduling that areas which constitute minority interests now become majority interests. For example, who would have thought 10 or 15 years ago that snooker would be a major national event when world championships are being played? That is achieved by scheduling within a programme remit that has balance because the various events are shown during the course of an evening in a major national network programme.

Programme quality is already being affected. It is not pie in the sky to say that if franchises are auctioned programme quality will be affected in future. Any television company will say now that there is a need already to cut programme budgets because it is saving for the franchise auction. It is inevitable that companies will have to do that. My hon. Friends and I are not scaremongering when we say that the quality of programming will be affected. If cash is the first priority, quality will be affected and it is being affected now.

If there is a proliferation of channels there will not be more money to create programmes. We know that viewers spend about five hours a day watching television and that most adults watch for 25 hours a week. No one seriously suggests that when we have a proliferation of channels people will be watching more television. They will be spreading their viewing through more channels and there will be lower programme budgets to deliver the quality of programmes required by those operating the channels. That means that less money will be available for each programme.

We all know that good programming requires money. Who would have the nerve to send John Pilger to Cambodia with a film crew for a long time to make outstanding television documentaries on a restricted budget? John Pilger's programmes have demonstrated the power of television to hon. Members on both sides of the House. The response has been reflected in the letters which have reached our mailbags. There must be considerable commitment if such programmes are to be produced. As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) said, who would be able to permit film crews to make wildlife programmes over long periods with reduced budgets? Many types of programme would be at risk if budgets were cut substantially.

There is a fundamental difference between the two sides of the House because Conservative Members seem to think that the Bill is essential because of new technology. Technology is marvellous, but it is our servant and not our master. The technology of satellite and cable television enables us to make better programmes and any programme-maker who allows technology to get ahead of the story—to spin screens round, and all the other incredible things that can be done, which I can barely understand despite having made programmes in the past—will not improve the quality of the programme. The basic story line and concept must be good. If the Government have the will to regulate satellite and cable television properly to ensure that they are the servants of programme standards and that technology is not the master, they will be successful.

I fear that the real motive behind the Bill is not the stated one. I absolve a fair few Conservative Members who are in their places because I am sure that, by definition, they are those who have doubts about the Bill. I fear that the real motive is that the Government prefer to receive their news and current affairs via *The Sun* rather than "World in Action". They are happier in a world where the *Daily Star* provides the information about what is going on in the world and not "First Tuesday". They are not so interested in that outstanding documentary programme, which was the first to spell out the innocence of the Guildford Four. I wonder how many people wish that events which take place in the United Kingdom were not examined in detail by means of investigative journalism.

In 1987, the broadcasting research unit of the Home Office reported on the public's view of their sources of news and information. It stated that 67 per cent. cited television as the medium they most trust, 11 per cent. cited radio, and 8 per cent. cited newspapers. I am stunned that the percentage citing newspapers was so high, but it is clear that under the present regulatory framework the public see television as their most reliable source of news and current affairs. I am not surprised that some Conservative Members look forward to the day when newspapers and not television will be the main source of public information on news and current affairs. The House would be spending its time far more effectively if it were seeking ways whereby the press, as an important medium of current affairs, was brought up to the standards of broadcasting. Instead, however, the philosophy behind the Bill seems to be to drag broadcasting down to the standards of the press.

Behind the Bill lies a distessing philosophy. I regard television as a miraculous medium. It is one that I barely understand despite having worked in it, and one with a phenomenal capacity to communicate to peoples of all nations. How do the Government respond to the miracle of this means of communication and its miraculous extension through cable and satellite technology? They ask themselves how much money they can make out of it, how much they can get from the auctioning of franchises and whether it will satisfy the advertisers—a depressing, mean-spirited, narrow-minded response to a marvellous means of communication.

My right hon. Friends and I rejoice at what telvision can do. We do not want it reduced to musak in the lift, as

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

in the United States and most other countries where there has been deregulation. We want to see television used for what it is within a proper regulatory framework. That is the only way of guaranteeing real choice and real standards. There is a fundamental philosophical difference between the two sides of the House, and if we accept the Bill we shall be going down the road towards pap.

6.50 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): If I hesitate for a moment before speaking, it is only to allow time for my aunt to come in from the garden——

Mrs. Dunwoody: What was she doing out in the dark?

Mr. Critchley: She has a lavatory at the bottom of the garden.

Last year I was invited by a friend in the Conservative party—[HON. MEMBERS : "Name him."] No, but he invited me to speak at a supper club in his constituency. I shall not say where, merely that if we divided the map of the United Kingdom into four quarters, it would fall in the south-western quarter. Conservative Members know what such occasions are like. If I recount the menu—half a grapefruit with one red, Cyclopian eye in the middle; rubber chicken with half a tinned apricot or peach looking rather like a fried egg—it is only to explain to the House what my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has endured for the past four years.

The subject of my speech at the supper club in the south-western quarter was broadcasting. I chose it for a purpose, because broadcasting is one subject about which most Conservatives know absolutely nothing, but about which we hold very strong views. In the demonology of our great party—and by God, our demonology is full of candidates of one kind or another—the BBC holds a very special place. Sooty and sulphurous, the corporation has, or so it is believed, a long history of letting down the side. It is unBritish—its reporting during the Falklands war; it is snide—it makes jokes about my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister; it is limply impartial—when events call for a robust partiality.

I am sorry to say that, for a certain sort of Conservative, the BBC is certainly not one of us. In consequence, it has been given until 1996 and has been restricted to a licence fee that can raise no additional money—it is simply indexed—to enable it to meet the challenge of Channels 3, 4 and 5. Was not the BBC described by someone who lives not a million miles from Downing street as a nest of Marxists? If so, given the events in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, it deserves to be made a protected species.

The Bill has its origins in the White Paper, which in turn sprang from the loins of a Cabinet Sub-Committee. That Sub-Committee was presided over by the Prime Minister herself. There is nothing new in that; most of them are. However, it included the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, and it was his idea that the franchises should be auctioned to the highest bidder to raise the maximum amount of revenue for the Treasury. I understand that he is doing something like that with his memoirs.

To return to my speech at the supper club——

Mrs. Dunwoody: It may be the only one for some time.

Mr. Critchley: That is my ambition.

My audience appeared to regard the BBC as the enemy —"that Robin Day"—while ITV was judged in part by the irreverence of "Spitting Image" and by what many saw as the Left-wing bias of its news and current affairs. I found that extremely disturbing. They had no wish to see their distinguished Members of Parliament on the telly. Bringing the cameras into the House would, I was told, encourage politics—by which, of course, they meant the politics of our opponents. Conservative Members, as we all know, have nothing to do with politics of any sort.

It is well known that the Home Office is in something of a fix. On the one hand it believes—or its masters believe —in deregulation. Some of them believe in the magic of the market. To a Manchester liberal, and we have far too many of them in the Tory party, more does not mean worse; it means giving the man in the street what he craves —32 buttons on his television set, each one giving him access to one form of "Neighbours" or another. Such Manchester liberals are the worst sort of elitists. As my hon. Friend "the other Walden" has written:

"They shelter their children in expensive preparatory schools while handing over other people's children to the forces of the markets."

On the other hand—this is the fix in which the Home Office finds itself—the Home Office, or some of its masters, is worried about sex. Lord Rees-Mogg has been recalled to the colours with the sole purpose of defending the nation against the heated imagination of Mr. Dennis Potter. We live in a country in which nanny insists that we wash our hands before lunch, while she washes her hands of what we do between breakfast and lunchtime.

We should not permit the franchises to fall into the hands of the highest bidder. A channel on television is a scarce resource and must be allocated to the applicant who submits the most impressive prospectus. The Minister has already said—I think on the BBC—that nothing in the BBC is set in stone. In that case, will he consider my suggestion that his proposal on auctioneering should be stood on its head? There should be a simple rent, set by and payable to the Government. The other bid, over and above that, should be the amount of money that the rivals are prepared to spend on programmes—not on soaps, game shows or cheap Australian imports, because we already suffer from a form of Australian cultural imperialism—but on drama, news and current affairs. Unless that concession is clearly made, I do not think that I shall vote for the Bill.

6.58 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): The Bill gives us an opportunity to review the whole question of radio and television. The review must be used not to weaken existing standards, but to reaffirm the true role of broadcasting, which is to inform, educate and entertain. It is sad that the Government appear to be using the opportunity to sell stations to the highest bidders. The quality threshold must be regarded as a plateau, not as an obstacle to be jumped and disregarded later. The "highest bidder" concept is wrong as it cannot be in the best interests of viewers or the country to place such a powerful medium into the hands of those whose only qualification might be that they are richer than anyone else.

I welcome the establishment of the Broadcasting Standards Council and will be watching closely to see how it uses the powers given to it under part V. However, I am

concerned that under clause 129 certain cable and microwave transmission services seem to be excluded from the scope of the council's monitoring. If we are to have such a council, it should be responsible for examining all broadcasting services without exception. Perhaps the Minister will explain why, under part II, some licensed services are excluded from the council's responsibility?

Like the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), I am surprised and disappointed that the Bill gives so little support to the deaf and hard of hearing. I had hoped that, with about 4 million viewers falling into that category, much more consideration would have been given to their needs. I hope that amendments will be passed in Committee to provide more facilities for the deaf, and I was pleased to hear what the Minister said earlier on that matter.

The restriction on Christian broadcasting is resented by many people, especially in Northern Ireland. People in Northern Ireland agree fully with the concerns expressed in Great Britain about religious bodies being restricted from being involved in broadcasting. Under the provisions of schedule 2, such bodies can have no involvement in holding television service licences. Clause 83 places restrictions on editorial control of radio programmes. As was said earlier, that will disadvantage an existing Christian output on a cable channel. The Cable Authority has said that it regrets that the new legislation is "unnecessarily restrictive". I know that the Minister has received many representations on that issue and I urge him to think again and to allow Christian or religious bodies to compete in the marketplace in the same way as other groups.

I draw the House's attention to how the Bill will affect Northern Ireland. Provision is made in clauses 139 and 140 to bring television and radio under the obscenity law in England, Scotland and Wales. I was surprised to see that no similar provision has been made for Northern Ireland. Citizens in Northern Ireland should enjoy the same protection from obscene material as citizens in the rest of the kingdom. Perhaps the Minister can explain how that has happened and, if necessary, ensure that an amendment to the Bill is tabled in Committee.

I support the properly controlled but urgent evolution of radio in Ulster. I ask the Minister to say what criteria will be used by the new authority to decide how many stations are desirable and where those stations will be located. How and where will those criteria be obtained?

Radio enthusiasts in Ulster think that there is room for between six and 20 new stations in Northern Ireland. At present there is general agreement that Radio Ulster, Radio Foyle and Downtown Radio provide a good service for their own section of the market. However, there is clear evidence of a large audience looking for a different format.

That evidence is the undoubted success of stations based in the Irish Republic which beam programmes into Fermanagh and Armagh, Newry and Craigavon, as far up as Belfast and in the north-west of the Province. It becomes more imperative every day that new local Northern Ireland companies are given the opportunity to cater for that obvious market and thus provide an exciting and creative radio industry in Ulster, so that in the words of the Bill they can offer

"a wide range of programmes"

for a

"variety of tastes and interests"

Northern Ireland has been well served for 30 years by our existing television station—Ulster Television—which, as a result of hard work, dedication and expertise, has become a success in terms of viewing figures, profitability and local esteem. It is a great compliment that Northern Ireland people know it as "our station". Ulster Television employs about 270 staff and produces 400 hours of wide-ranging and diverse programmes a year. It is committed to grant-aiding the arts and sciences and provides sponsorship for sport, education and job creation to the tune of 5 per cent. of its annual television profit. Its board and management are involved in the life of the community and most of its reporters and presenters are from the Province.

Despite 21 years of terrorism, the station has managed to overcome the problems presented by a divided society and separate cultures, to become fully accepted by the whole community. That praiseworthy position is due to the company being locally owned and controlled. It is a remarkable achievement and is made even more so when one considers the subtleties of circumstances in Northern Ireland.

We must not lose sight of the many extra disadvantages that will be faced even by a local company. Sales revenue from Channel 4 will be lost. There will be increased competition from Channel 4, Channel 5 and five satellite channels. The privatisation of transmitters will impose extra costs and, on top of that, there will be the unquantifiable burden of tendering. Sadly, the IBA's most recent financial projection is more negative than before.

Right hon. and hon. Members do not need to be reminded of the special circumstances in Northern Ireland. The presentation of sensitive material requires careful handling and the careless use of information could, in extreme circumstances, result in tragedy. The emphasis on the wrong word or the careless use of a phrase can cause anger in some sections of the community. Because of those real difficulties, it is essential that broadcasting in Northern Ireland should be controlled and manned by local people who are sensitive to local problems. It could be a disaster if control of television were to fall into the hands of people lacking the inside knowledge that it so essential to anyone involved in the media in Northern Ireland.

I make the House aware of those many problems hoping that the Minister in his reply will concede the necessity for dealing with Northern Ireland in a different but sympathetic way so that in Ulster we will have not only a truly local operation but a viable one, too.

7.8 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): The White Paper that heralded the Bill is entitled "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality." I favour competition and choice, but the greatest of the three is quality. In a sense, that is the theme and essence of today's debate. It is the particular job of Government to ensure that the best of our culture is handed on from one generation to the next, and we are right to examine the Bill to see what it contributes to what I regard as the battle to preserve and enhance our civilisation.

A number of simple actions can be taken. One would be to make Radio 3 audible throughout the country. It is infuriating to drive to one's constituency, only to find that Radio 3 has disappeared from the airwaves. I would much

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

rather see Radio 1 converted to Radio 3 than the present situation continue to exist. Other matters are more difficult and complex to resolve. Notable among them is the way in which ITV contracts are to be allocated, and I shall deal with that aspect later.

The Government have taken a number of wise decisions. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was right to point out that Channel 4 has been safeguarded. As he said, it was a great Tory invention. He is right also to keep the BBC basically intact. Three of the four existing channels will remain as they are; although, goodness knows, they are far from perfect, by and large they provide a reasonably good service. Those are all, in essence, decisions for achieving quality.

The most vexed question is how the ITV contracts should be allocated. When it comes to Channel 5, I hope that its boundaries will not be coterminous with those of Channel 3. In the present system, there is a strong bias in favour of the conurbations. I represent a part of the country that is commonly described as part of the home counties, and which is not a conurbation. As a result, it enjoys virtually no regional broadcasting. It is beginning to be served by local radio stations, but long after the conurbations. To be fair, Central Television has set up a Central (South) region, which goes some way to meeting the problem, and I congratulate it on that. Nevertheless, I hope that Channel 5 will not observe the same old boundaries.

Most important of all is the allocation of the contracts for Channel 3. The question of auctioning or tendering for that channel is the main problem. Of course there are vested interests, and special pleadings galore. We all know that the existing franchise holders badly want to win the contracts again, and are arguing as hard as they can that that should be so. However, the doubts go beyond that aspect, and I share some of them.

We do not know whether the Government's proposed system will drag down quality. Perhaps it would be worth reaching a compromise whereby only Channel 5 is allocated under the new tendering system. We can then see how that works out, while continuing to operate the present system of awarding franchises for Channel 3—perhaps for a shorter period than five or seven years. At the end of that period, we can make a judgment on whether the tendering system has the drawbacks that have been attributed to it, or whether it works perfectly satisfactorily. I like the idea of more competition, but we should wait to see how the tendering system works in one instance before committing ourselves to a major step, and one that could prove damaging.

Clause 33 seems to me to be unnecessary. It empowers the Independent Television Commission to require Channels 3, 4 and 5 to transmit party political broadcasts. Surely we are here presented with an opportunity to dispense with such broadcasts. We all know perfectly well that they range from the mediocre to the mendacious. Few people in our country, from whatever quarter they may come, would defend them. There is a serious reason for dispensing with party political broadcasts. The current experiment in televising this House is succeeding and the decision to broadcast our proceedings is unlikely to be reversed. It would be far better if, every day, five minutes more could be broadcast from this House, and there were *no more party political broadcasts.*

Perhaps the Bill should be a little more adventurous about impartiality in television programmes. Clause 6 focuses on that important aspect. I do not suggest for one moment that news programmes should be other than impartial, but perhaps we ought to accept the possibility that some programmes should be licensed to be partial rather than impartial. Mention has already been made of "World in Action", which everybody acknowledges is a radical programme with a strong political slant. Why not allow "World in Action" to come clean, but then ensure that a corresponding programme is broadcast with a bias in the opposition direction? Why should we pretend that everything is so dispassionate when that is evidently not the case?

The most important among the points I have made is that concerning the award of contracts, which I hope my right hon. and learned Friend will consider sympathetically.

7.15 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I must admit that my poor dear aunt is no longer with me, and I am unsure how long it will take her to home in on the speech that I want to make. Nevertheless, I draw the attention of the House to one aspect that I believe is tremendously important. Most right hon. and hon. Members, when speaking about television, have in common the fact that, although they talk about television, they never watch it. Most right hon. and hon. Members do not even watch television when they are on it themselves. That is the greatest sacrifice that any politician can make. However, every day a substantial percentage of the population use television as a means of obtaining not only information and education but plain enjoyment. That is not only wonderful but something we should encourage.

The Bill fails to deal with the most important sector of the television audience, which is children. Our country has a long history of making high-quality and varied children's television programmes. Specific attempts were made, originally by the BBC and then by ITV, to programme for different age groups and to produce not only traditional stories but original material. I am deeply concerned that the Bill provides no specific safeguards for that sector.

I have for some time endeavoured to obtain from the hon. and learned Minister of State a guarantee that he is prepared to write standards for children's broadcasting into the Bill. With surprising modesty, he has not been prepared to give me a specific answer. He seems to believe that, if there is lots and lots of television, that must automatically be good for children, but that is neither my experience nor that of many parents.

In fact, there are considerable reservations about the present trend among ITV companies. Some of their original children's programmes have been cancelled, while new material has not been developed. There are clear signs that, as financial horns have been drawn in, children's programmes are suffering disproportionately. The increase in the number of television channels has not brought an automatic improvement in quality but has frequently meant observance of the lowest common denominator. That is noticeable in the BBC as well as among the ITV companies.

Mr. Gale: Surely the hon. Lady acknowledges that there has never been any statutory provision of any kind *in respect of children's entertainment* in the charter of the BBC or the IBA. The only company about which I know a great deal, Thames Television, increased its children's programme staff and produced more children's programmes last year than ever before.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Many considerations are not written into charters. Like many institutions, television operates not to written rules but largely to unwritten rules—for example, in respect of the transmission of foreign material.

When Doreen Stephens was head of family programmes at the BBC, she said that one of her points of principle was

"the duty and responsibility to use the medium of television to enrich and enlarge the child's experience."

She felt that children should be stimulated by the programmes they watched, so that television did not serve purely as an automatic nursemaid. Her other principles were:

"That children should be entertained and enjoy the programmes they watch.

That children should be treated with respect as people, without condescension or concession.

That children should not be over-protected in the choice and presentation of the content of their programmes."

We should take care to ensure that all those principles are incorporated in any future planning for the expansion of television. We must accept that, if we simply allow television to become a matter of open competition, we shall increasingly see an influx of the type of children's material which has the specific aim of selling toys, and developing particular commercial involvements.

Small children and children up to their early teens do not have sufficient experience to be automatically choosy about the quality of the material they watch. That does not mean that we should assume a certain level of censorship, but we must be careful to ensure that they are not subject to sleazy, low quality, narrowly aimed material.

I have considerable doubts about some of the programmes shown now. I do not look at children's television any more; I look at ordinary television. But I have a secret army—mostly called Dunwoody, most of whom have small children—who give me acute accounts of what is shown. They are already concerned about children's programmes that include torture chambers or that use poor English and about a number of game shows in which small children are subjected to indignities that are not in their interest and can upset them. That is already happening.

As the Bill develops, I hope that we shall have a calm understanding that children's material is not cheap to make, but is often as expensive as adult programmes, and that it takes a long time to get a return on the original material.

Children's programmes do not automatically mean cartoon films imported from America. Nor should they be a demonstration of a particular form of game show or, dare I say it, low-quality imported material from parts of the world where they manage to make a series of programmes and need to make a profit by circulating them as widely as possible, irrespective of what that does to the audience.

I want good children's programmes, and I want my children and grandchildren to be proud of an industry that for a long time has put specialised programmes for children of different ages high on its list, and has been appreciated worldwide for the quality of its programmes.

I can see nothing in the Bill that will safeguard the material shown on television. I have heard nothing in what the Minister has said today that makes it clear that the Government intend to build safeguards into the Bill in Committee, and it is for precisely those reasons that I shall vote against the Bill tonight.

A country that sells its children short in culture, literature or in the material that they enjoy daily in their homes, is a pretty miserable, tatty country. We have to ensure that that is not the United Kingdom.

7.22 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I declare an interest as a member of British Equity, a member of the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians and a member of the television branch of the National Union of Journalists.

There are 167 clauses in the Bill. Those right hon. and hon. Members who served on the Home Affairs Select Committee will be gratified to see that many of our findings are reflected in many of those clauses.

Hon. Members who hope to serve on the Standing Committee will wish to consider a number of issues. We shall want to re-examine the "must carry" provisions that will be lost with the abolition of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984, and we may seek to reimpose a must-carry provision for BBC1 and 2. We should reconsider the provisions currently mooted for Channel 4, to determine whether it is realistic to ask the competitor companies that operate Channel 3 to underwrite and promote Channel 4's programmes. We may need to reconsider the Secretary of State's right or need to be able to veto the non-executive directors of Channel 4.

We may need to consider cross-ownership, with particular reference to community radio. My hon. and learned Friend may like to think about the many local newspapers that might be able to provide a better service to the reading and listening public, if they were able to own community radio stations.

We may have to reconsider the provisions for Channel 5 and the network arrangements that will exist in a new Channel 3. Undoubtedly, we shall need to consider further the difference between cross-media ownership and intra-television ownership. We shall certainly want to examine the provisions for deaf viewers. The privatisation of ITV transmission systems will need detailed consideration, and the provisions for broadcasting data and teletext will need to be examined.

None of those issues has been discussed in any depth in the House this afternoon. I am particularly sad that the debate has effectively been hijacked by the self-styled Campaign for Quality Television which largely represents the huge financial interests of some huge companies.

I am a television director and producer by trade and I have produced a large number——

Mr. Walden: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gale: I have very little time, and I know that my hon. Friend seeks to make a speech in a moment.

Mr. Walden: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I support the Campaign for Quality Television,

[Mr. Walden]

and I wish to make it clear, after the rather offensive remark of my hon. Friend, that, unlike him, I have absolutely no economic or financial links with television.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should be aware that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Gale: I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) will endeavour to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and will make his speech in due course. The Campaign for Quality Television has the backing of some large vested interests.

Out of 167 clauses in an important Bill, very few have received more than scant attention from the media, which has sought, or has only been able, to focus on one issue. At the moment, I am reasonably satisfied that the arrangements made by BBC1 and 2, and the provision for the remit of Channel 4, will provide quality television, as I define it, as a producer and director. I am also satisfied that the quality threshold for Channel 3 will provide a satisfactory structure for the future of that channel.

In Committee, hon. Members will need to reconsider the other provisions of the Bill, and perhaps give the ITC the right to take into account the value of quality bids made by those who enter their auction room.

The Bill sets up a framework for broadcasting into the 20th century. By the year 2020, it is likely that every household in the country will have a cinema-style screen, 1·5 in deep, hanging on the wall, that will bring a choice of 20 to 30 channels via satellite transmission, cable head end and interactive cable. A person will be able to sit in an armchair at home watching the television, see an advertisement for a product, recall it at the end of the programme, view it through a mail order catalogue or review the commercial, decide on the merits of the product, order it and pay for it through interactive cable. That is technically possible now, as is the provision of home education—I thought that that would have appealed to my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham—home shopping, home banking and home medicine.

If anyone has any doubt about whether that is possible, I quote briefly from a press release from British Telecom, dated 14 November 1989, which says:

"The Government has given the green light to British Telecom's trial of its pioneering communications vision for the 21st century.

This will use optical fibre 'pipelines' carrying television, high fidelity stereo-radio, telephone calls, information technology and other interactive services to houses and businesses.

The company has been granted a special licence . . . to convey into integrated voice telephony and entertainment television over a trial optical fibre network at Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire.

The licence runs from October 21, 1989 to December 31, 1992."

That system will probably be up and running in homes by the end of next summer. The House is confronted with a colossal potential. An enormous opportunity will be presented to programme-makers, programme-providers and everyone in the entertainment industry, and it is depressing that many right hon. and hon. Members and people outside regard the Bill not as an opportunity but as a threat.

It is vital that we seize the opportunity with both hands, that we try to prevent the waste of time and energy on warring satellite systems, that we pursue in the interests of the United Kingdom the development of satellite delivery and above all, that we pursue and encourage the development of fibre-optic cable systems.

7.30 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) into the realms of science fiction because the Bill seems to me to be essentially about ideology and interference—the Prime Minister's Meddlesome Matty syndrome—in a system which "ain't broke, is doing quite well and don't need fixing".

The Bill is not about pluralism. Pluralism and competing channels are with us already. The Bill will add only one—fifth—television channel, which has unlikely prospects in any case. We welcome pluralism. It adds excitement, interest and diversity. The problem is to provide for standards, for quality and for production in the new pluralistic environment.

Pluralism—having more channels—must weaken basic provision through the duopoly. It drains away money and viewers. On the whole, the effect on the networks in the United States has been adverse. In such circumstances, we should strengthen the basic provision. That is what people will continue to rely on. It will continue to provide the basic continuity of production and the basic quality of television in Britain. We should strengthen it in the face of the threat of more competition and more pluralism. It can survive. I am not saying that it will disappear and disintegrate, but the Government are compounding the problems caused by more competition by aiming a body blow at existing channels, the existing duopoly and the existing basic production facilities.

The Government believe that the market will provide. That just does not work in the media. Indeed, the reverse is the case. The more open and unregulated the market is, and the more intense the competition in the media, the more organisations are driven down market, the more standards fall and the more they are driven to the lowest common denominator. Anyone who wants proof of that should consider the quality of the British popular press, which is totally unregulated and in intense competition, and compare it with the American popular press, which is effectively protected by local monopolies which give it some insulation from competition.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: Contrast British television, which is regulated and not that intensely competitive, with American television and its standards. Those two examples prove that the market does not provide for quality. It drives down to the lowest common denominator——

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No.

We are in danger of producing that in British television. We sustain standards——

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Gentleman is talking so fiercely about competition, would it not be in order for him to declare his personal interest in this matter?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has a financial or other interest in this matter, he must declare it. I am sure he will declare it.

Mr. Mitchell: My interests are declared in the Register of Members' Interests. I present a programme for Sky Television. If that is the only point that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) wants to make, it is trivial and irrelevant.

The remorseless drive down market by intense competition will be compounded by the Bill. The Government are damaging the existing structures of television. They are doing that, first, by the slow strangulation of the BBC through a licence fee which has not kept up with inflation and thus reduces the pool of money available to television and weakens the BBC in the longer term. I am sorry that the BBC has stayed out of this argument, congratulating itself on coming through unscathed in the Bill, because it will suffer in the future.

Secondly, the Bill scoops out more revenue for the Treasury from the pool of money available for television production. That reduces the money available for quality. *The Economist* suggested that money that is siphoned out should be used for production of quality. That is an admirable solution, but it is not what will happen under these proposals. Thirdly, the Bill weakens the existing structure by the insane auction system to which the Government have stuck so obstinately that it must be the Prime Minister's baby. That is the only explanation for the obstinacy with which the Government are sticking to their ridiculous auction idea, which removes all discretion from the ITC and opens the door to the media barons and especially to the continentals, whom we cannot prevent from coming in.

While the Government may not view the prospect of Berlisconi in Barnsley with any great horror, when it comes to Bertlesman in Basildon or Hachette in Harpenden, their electors will begin to take a different view. The bidders will just not know how much to bid. They will be in competition with people who are buying contracts for status, or for other reasons. That will siphon more money out of the pool available for quality production. That clause must be altered. The Minister has suggested that we should take account of the overall interests of the viewer, and that that might be a way to alter the arrangement, because the continuity of "Coronation Street", "Emmerdale Farm" and "The Bill" will be far more important to the viewer. That might allow us a way to alter it, but the clause must be altered.

The fourth thing that the Government are doing to harm existing structures is to loosen regulations. We hear of the light touch, but they do not want the light touch when it comes to matters moral. They have Lord Rees-Mogg free to pursue his masturbatory fantasies across the screen, pursuing the nipple count or the coitus coefficient. There is no light touch there. They want a heavy hand—the sweaty, heavy hand—when it comes to regulation in that respect. The real problem is not that kind of standard, but standards of quality and of production. The Broadcasting Standards Council has no remit there—when it comes to quality, excellence and good television, the Government want a light touch.

The IBA has done a good job. The light touch has worked there. It has provided for the effective development of good production centres in the regions. It has provided for quality centres of excellence in the regions, which it is important to sustain. The Bill does not adequately sustain either by insisting on local production for the regions and for the network. We have to have both. Production has to be local—in Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester—because it is more expensive to do it there than in London. It costs about £100,000 more to produce Yorkshire Television's "A Bit of a Do" in Leeds—to which it brings jobs, and where it adds to the local centre of excellence and uses local skills—than it would in London.

The Bill will undermine such regional production. I am worried about the effect of such changes on current affairs coverage. When current affairs programmes lose about a third of the audience with which they start, why should companies go to the trouble of supporting staff to inquire with the trenchant journalism of "Death on the Rock", which the Government clearly hate, when they can put on a mindless chat show or an import at far lower cost? Why should they produce culture or an arts programme? I am worried by the falling standards which I saw this year in entries to the British Petroleum arts journalism competition of which I am a judge. Why should companies bother to produce such programmes when they cost so much?

The Bill makes no provision for networking, but that is crucial when it comes to costs. How will programmes be networked? Will there be open war between different companies, as there was at the start of independent television, which would be enormously expensive?

I am worried about what is happening to television now. The latest schedules are most disappointing. They are unimaginative. There are no big projects, no interesting ideas and no innovation. Companies are instead taking on a fight with their staff to drive down wages and conditions or to sack a large number of them, thus impairing their capacity to produce programmes. If that is a sign of what is to come, it is a sign of a desire to get more money out so that they can make a bigger bid to keep the contract. It is also a sign that standards are bound to decline because resources devoted to production at regional centres of quality and excellence, where skills feed on each other, will be weakened and undermined. Independent production is no substitute.

I am worried about the basic principles of a Bill which provides for more channels, but not for more revenue, more effective maintenance of standards or close regulation to provide better quality television in Britain. It is a doctrinaire Bill which bears no relevance to the problems of production in Britain. It aims a body blow at the industry in which Britain leads the world and it offers the television viewer nothing but a debasement of standards.

7.40 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Many Christians believe that, if the Bill is not amended, the Christian voice on television and radio will be increasingly gagged in the coming years. I should like to make four points in support of that. First, the Bill denies any religious body the right to own or operate a television station. Secondly, the Bill ensures the sole right of secular ownership of all television stations. Thirdly, the Bill does not ensure that commercial radio or television will continue to include religious programmes. Fourthly, the Bill does not ensure that Christian bodies will have the freedom to sponsor programmes on television.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

The Bill should ensure that commercial radio and television stations are required to broadcast religious programmes. It should ensure that Christian and other religious bodies are permitted to participate in broadcasting in exactly the same way as every other group in society. If political and commercial interests can present their cases on television, that right should be granted to Christian and other religious bodies. Christian bodies are permitted to publish books or newspapers. They have the right to participate in running hospices, playgroups, sheltered dwellings, rehabilitation centres, schools, unemployment projects, AIDS hospitals and community centres, so why not television stations under proper regulation? As many religious bodies aim to strengthen family relationships and encourage honesty, self-sacrifice and discipline, instead of putting up a barrier to them, the Government should encourage them.

If commercial interests alone are to control the spiritual output of commercial broadcasting, how can it be responsible and balanced? If the future of broadcasting is really to offer choice, why are viewers and listeners to be denied the choice of what Christians and other religious bodies can offer?

Northern Ireland, has been well served by the independent broadcasters. Downtown Radio has maintained a very high standard, as has Ulster Television. I agree with my colleague from Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), that there is room and opportunity for other local radio and television broadcasters in the Province.

We are informed that the Government have set their face against a new radio station in the north-west of the Province. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what the Government have in mind for community and commercial radio in Northern Ireland. What is happening? Business interests are now busily engaged in buying up the opportunities that are afforded to them in the south of Ireland. A powerful radio station operates half a mile from the Londonderry border. Commercial interests have to go to the South of Ireland to broadcast. That opportunity should be localised, and business interests in Northern Ireland should have the right to their own broadcasting stations and the ability to present acceptable programmes to the people. I trust that the Government will give that careful consideration, because it is important that commercial and community broadcasting is developed right across the Province and not limited as it is now.

I want to place on record the fact that the two independent services—Downtown Radio and Ulster Television—have provided an excellent service and deserve the praise of the community. I am sorry that I cannot say the same for the BBC in Northern Ireland, which seems to be more interested in spending the money raised from television licences on programmes that cause an outcry across the political and religious divide because of their obscenity and blasphemy. I want to stress that in the House tonight.

It is important that community radio in Northern Ireland is ordered to present to the localities that it serves programmes that will be helpful, good for the children and good for the community. Northern Ireland has a great well of talent, and that talent should be used. How better than in the new broadcasting scheme? Therefore, I trust that the Government will keep those matters in mind when they make their decision.

7.47 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): My hon. Friends have already made much of the fundamental case against the Bill, so, in the short time available, I shall concentrate on its impact on Welsh television and broadcasting.

In one sense, I felt a measure of relief in looking at the Bill, at least in regard to the provisions relating to S4C. In general, those clauses have accepted the continuing role of S4C. The road has not been easy as a difficult and delicate balance has to be struck in Welsh television. In my view, S4C has been successful in the remit that Parliament gave it when it was established—to provide a comprehensive service for the Welsh language.

I wish to draw the Minister's attention to two aspects of the Bill which might endager that success. I shall deal with one now and one later in my remarks. First, during the 1990s, S4C will be greatly dependent on the buoyancy and impact of advertising. If that advertising declines, as many forecasts suggest, there may be a financial crisis for S4C somewhere in the mid-term of its next period of service. Therefore, I hope that the Government will consider the concept of a safety net to deal with such a problem, should it arise. I shall make my second point about S4C later in my speech, as it relates to the role and relationship of Channel 5 to Welsh broadcasting and Welsh television.

Having made those few placatory remarks, on the central issue of the auctioning of franchises and the licensing of the one commercial television station in Wales —it will therefore be not only our regional but national commercial station—I share every one of the fears, worries and concerns that have been expressed, not only for the reasons given by my hon. Friends but for the further reason mentioned briefly by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). At least, under the current system, a television company that seeks the powerful monopolistic commercial television franchise in Wales must justify its presence in Wales. Its studios, board of directors and supervisory management must all belong to and identify with the society that they serve.

The Bill provides for programmes of a regional character, but there is not one provision that will compel the highest bidder for a regional or national franchise to have a regional or national presence in Wales or oblige its board of directors or supervisory management to identify and have roots with the region or nation that they plan to serve. I am glad to say that, under the present arrangements, because the franchise is for HTV West and HTV Wales, the IBA has insisted on dual representation at board and supervisory level and at programme and production level.

I shall no doubt continue to have many quarrels with HTV; there is bound to be creative tension in the relationship between a local politican and the local media. I have no brief to speak for HTV Wales, but I cannot deny that it is rooted in Wales, that it identifies with Wales, that its management are Welsh and that it has a major regional and national presence. I frequently quarrel with it, but I cannot deny its Welshness, its sense of identity, its sense of belonging and its roots in the society from which its money

comes. There is not one provision in the Bill that will ensure that the highest bidder for a franchise will have such a presence, such roots or such an identity.

The lack of identity is reflected in the watchdog arrangements. Except for one measly paragraph at the bottom of the lengthy schedule 1, there is no provision for the ITC in Wales to establish a regional or national presence. I hope that the Minister will assure us that it will have a Welsh identity. Will there be an advisory committee, or a sensitive and able directorate such as that represented by Mr. Eirion Lewis and his staff at the Welsh IBA? The Bill offers no assurance of that, merely a paragraph saying that it may be possible to establish some advisory committee structure.

The public are shut out of such operations. At least under the existing arrangements, however flawed they might be, when franchises came up for renewal there was some attempt at public consultation. The viewers served by the franchise holder were able to express their views. The system may have been flawed and may not have operated as effectively as it should have, but at least a process of public consultation was required.

The Bill makes no provision for proper public consultation on decisions about who shall hold the licence in a region or, in our case, in Wales. Therefore, a large proportion of the Welsh public will be shut out of taking part or being involved in any shape or form in the process of deciding who shall control the national commercial monopoly in Wales and what programmes and schedules it offers.

I want to bring to the attention of the House a matter that has not been discussed so far—the function and role of Channel 5. I have a map showing its predicted coverage and the fact that significant and important parts of the Principality will not receive it. I am sure that the constituency of hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) will not be covered, but neither will most of the valley communities. Most of our television is received through relay stations, and if the proposed system for Channel 5 goes ahead, significant areas of the Principality—and, indeed, of the rest of Britain—will not be covered by it.

The figure of 70 per cent. coverage for Channel 5 covers many problems, but I want to explain to the House the impact that that may have on the delicate balance and consensus that has been achieved on broadcasting and television in Wales. At present, S4C is an alternative to Channel 4. There are many frustrations among people who want to see Channel 4 programmes in Wales, but fortunately we can say that sooner or later, Channel 4 programmes will appear on S4C. However, some of its scheduling is capricious, to say the least. If, on top of that, many people in Wales find that the fifth channel will not be available, the careful and delicate consensus that we have achieved may be destabilised. I can hear the telephone calls coming in now saying, "What is this talk about choice? I couldn't get Channel 4 and now I can't get Channel 5."

Many people along the south Wales coast are turning their eyes and aerials to the Mendips to avoid S4C and to obtain Channel 4. Many communities have not done so and many will not want to do so, but if they have to turn their eyes and aerials to the Mendips to get Channel 5, their anger and frustration will rise and the careful balance that we have achieved in the Principality may be broken.

I should like to refer briefly to the interesting article written by the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), in which he described the Bill as being "towards a thicker Britain". There are many variations on that, because I think that it may lead towards a duller Britain. I was reminded of one of the great 18th-century satirists, Alexander Pope. In his poem, "The Dunciad", he described the Empress of Dulness in the following terms:

> "See now, what Dulness and her sons admire;
> See! what the charms, that smite the simple heart
> Not touch'd by Nature and not reach'd by Art."

That could be an epitaph to the Bill, unless we are able to change the hearts and minds not only of the Empress of Dulness but of her sons, too.

7.58 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I must disclose my interest as the independent chairman of the Broadcasters Audience Research Board, which was set up by the BBC and ITV companies as part of the Annan report's recommendations.

I say to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister that the Government are to be congratulated on providing, in this massive Bill, a wide review of all broadcasting services —terrestrial, satellite and radio. They have brought before the House contentious legislation, which is fair enough, and comprehensive legislation, which gives us the opportunity to consider the spectrum and use of the air waves which, for so long, we have been denied. The release of additional space on spectra and other airwaves was negotiated for ages in Geneva and enables us now to start planning broadcasting's future—for television and radio.

I wholly applaud much of the Bill, including the fact that at long last radio is coming out from under and making its own case. It will now have its own authority and can develop vastly, whether it be nationally, regionally, or on a multi-community basis. We welcome that. It must be of huge interest to all hon. Members and is a matter for congratulation.

It is always a pleasure to hear the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). I welcome the Welshness of HTV, about which he waxed so eloquently. He put absolutely into context the fact that regional television in this country has grown up, flourished and will continue. I am especially grateful that the Bill's discussion of television embodies the commitment to the regional system. I am also grateful to Mr. George Russell, the current chairman of the IBA and shortly to be chairman of ITC, who has confirmed that in his view the map should remain largely unchanged.

Regionalisation is the real key to this issue. We should not be discussing anxieties about the auctioning of franchises and bids were it not for the recommendations of the Peacock committee. If my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State does not already know this, I must confess that there was nothing as surprising as the report of the Peacock committee. After all, the committee was inquiring into the financing of the BBC, but it came up with no recommendations for advertising on the BBC. That was the greatest possible surprise. Even the hon. Member for Great Gatsby—Grimms' fairy tale country as I now know it to be—accepts that it is a matter of total ignorance to many people. As one of those who was involved at the time, I must stress that it was confidently expected that the report would inevitably provide the answer to the ITV-BBC problem. It was said that there

[Sir Giles Shaw]

would be national television advertising from another totally accepted national channel which would bring the ITV and BBC systems into clear competition. However, it was not to be.

Thus, until Channel 4 either has greater audience penetration or until Channel 5 comes along and achieves a national public—albeit of only 70 per cent. of the population—to bring about national competition, we are left with the problem of how to tackle the monopoly of the ITV companies. That is the issue that has given rise to all the fraughtness and fret. It is a duopoly in terms of audiences, but in terms of paid-for advertising space—although I admit Channel 4—we have a major monopoly.

The restraints on awarding franchises to monopolies have put my right hon. and learned Friend into such a twist. That is why we have all these little subtleties of hand, such as the ownership issue and the bearing down on co-ownership. We are saying, "You can have two, but they must not be contiguous," and, "You can have 20 per cent. if you are a newspaper magnate, but you must not touch if you are an advertising agent."

All those funny things are not at all logical. It is absurd to talk about newspapers as though they should be a protected part of the media scene. Good heavens, that was the position way back in 1955 when we first had ITV. There were some anxieties then that television would put newspapers out of business and that they must therefore be given special priority treatment. That was the genesis of this, but now we are discussing "You may or you may not". It is a far-flung thing. I can hear Lord Reith rattling in his urn as he thinks that there is a real threat that the editor of *The Times*—no less than its owner—might become the owner of a television channel. I can imagine what he would say about that. He would probably rely on his old dictum, "The best form of government is despotism, tempered, of course, by assassination."

We now have a great opportunity. When it comes to determining the regional concepts of the Bill, I urge my right hon. Friend to pay particular attention to rooting the new franchises in the regions. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was quite right—production resources must be based in the regions. Therefore, I welcome clause 16(2)(c) which seeks to specify that

"regional programmes so included are made within that area".

I like the sound of that, but I warn my right hon. Friend that accommodation addresses will not do. There must be no brass plates on temporary warehouses. We want regional production facilities.

The other side of clause 16 deals with the question of 25 per cent. independent production. Will it require a regional commitment to that percentage or to a proportion of that percentage? If it does not, like the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, I fear that there will be an enormous influx of trainloads of people coming up from London to provide such services, but going back and producing the material down here. In giving an accolade to the regional system, one side of the coin must be the location of the roots, in programming content and in production, in the regions concerned.

The absolute method of selection is also causing a fuss. Obviously, there is great difficulty when awarding monopoly franchises, albeit under careful restraint. Those who are to prepare bids must not only attach a tender price with an annual rental over the 10 years; they will also have to face a substantial levy on the amount of profit that can be earned. Those people will have to be keen to achieve what they want to achieve, bearing in mind that the next five to 10 years of their franchise will see a steady increase in other media that are capable of carrying advertising. They will face steadily increasing competition at a time of heavily increasing costs and, I trust, a great regional commitment to quality programming.

We must trust the ITC. There can be no question from hon. Members of any party that, whatever the difficulties of the IBA to start with, it is now well accepted. The Government want lighter regulation, a heavy involvement in franchises and the auctioning of franchises—and there is, they must accept, a slight inconsistency in that. The Government should trust the commission to determine the qualitative rating of bids placed before it. Indeed, under the existing arrangement, the Government should encourage the commission to intervene in exceptional circumstances. I was glad to receive a letter from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary stating that, because

"the ITC will have the power in exceptional circumstances to select a lower bid",

the Bill

"will make the award of licences an altogether more open matter"

We want to know just what those exceptional circumstances might be. I hope that they will not be too exceptional. I hope that the exceptional circumstance is that we shall have qualitative ratings much higher than the level of the cash put down. I hope that those ratings will allow the ITC to say, "In our best judgment, it would be wrong to proceed with the highest bid on the table because the second highest bid is worth substantially more in terms of the quality that is offered." I hope that the qualitative commitment will be sufficient to be declared an interest compatible with the provisions.

The selection process is on the periphery of this issue. The real issue is the extent to which public service broadcasting and the ITV regime, which is a proud part of public service broadcasting, may or may not conflict with the public interest. At that stage, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary must consider whether things have gone too far. I hope that public service broadcasting, as identified in the Bill, will largely follow the public interest. The public interest has supported this system of broadcasting. It has certainly supported the regional concept of broadcasting. It has supported governance by the IBA, albeit now with a slightly looser rein.

It would be tragic if the opportunity now presented for the future of broadcasting were to be lost because of an awful disagreement between the regulating body and the industry, between the industry and the advertisers who pay the industry and between the Government and all sides who will believe that they are not adequately dealing with the nitty-gritty of selection or with raising the last penny from the Treasury. That does not matter one rap compared with the glorious opportunity for seeing another chapter of properly supported, well regionalised television. I wholly commend the Bill.

8.8 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) made an extremely agreeable speech, but he has been too optimistic

about the meaning of certain words. For example, "exceptional" does not mean what he would have it mean—it is exceptional. The hon. Gentleman was also too optimistic about the impact of the Bill on regional broadcasting. A system which could cause the contraction of the regions from 15 to eight through acquisition is a threat to the regional basis that we have come to accept and which we regard, as the hon. Gentleman does, as central to the attractiveness of television in this country.

The average person in this country watches television for 25½ hours per week, which is about 60 per cent. of the leisure time available to those in work. It cannot be argued that that figure reveals great dissatisfaction with the quality of television today. None the less, new technologies such as satellite, cable and MVDS delivery systems offer new opportunities to cater for specialist and local interests and to provide a wide variety of dedicated channels. As that capability opens out, the requirements of regulations will alter. Competition for advertising revenue is bound to intensify and pressure on the media to boost audience ratings will be increasingly strong. The ability of broadcasters to provide the mix of entertainment, education and information that has hitherto made up the best of British broadcasting is at risk. Most people will not thank a Government who simply multiply the number of buttons that viewers and listeners can press but subtract from the variety and quality. That is the essential threat posed by the Bill.

More than 3,000 submissions have been made since the publication of the White Paper. Most contain comments on the proposal to award licences for television and radio to the highest bidder. The Home Secretary did not show any support for the proposal in response to those submissions, and his absence for a large part of the debate suggests that he is not interested in the views of the House. The junior Minister also absented himself from the debate and is similarly uninterested in it.

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull): He will be back soon.

Mr. Maclennan: The Government treat the views of those who are involved in the industry with complete contempt. The Government's views are under scrutiny. None of those who submitted an opinion in response to the White Paper have supported the proposed blind auction for franchises. Most of those directly involved in broadcasting accept that competition for franchises should be more transparent than in the past, but they have urged—so far, to no avail—that the licensing authority should be empowered to consider not only the bid price but what is offered for that price. To propose a system for auctioning services which does not allow comparisons to be made between price and quality in the name of consumer choice is simply fraudulent. The system advocated in the Bill will maximise Treasury receipts from broadcasting and minimise the funds available for programme making.

Only in respect of Channel 4 does the Bill seek to require the diverse programme content which characterises current broadcasting in Britain. Indeed, the provisions for Channel 4 highlight the weaknesses of the provisions in respect of other channels. The Bill seems to reflect the Government's hatred of the present independent broadcasters, particularly their handling of news and current affairs. The Government's reaction to "Death on the Rock" and to Lord Windlesham's report shows their prejudices. How else is one to explain the decision—not yet referred to in the debate—to bar the independent television companies from the ownership and editorial control that they now have over the national news service?

The proposal to give the news service to a company or companies nominated by the friends of the Government in the shape of the licensing authorities, brings the Government altogether too close to controlling the news. Incidentally, the provision that the Radio Authority shall seek to require that

"undue prominence is not given . . . to the views and opinions of particular persons or bodies on religious matters or matters of current political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy"

smacks of institutionalised censorship. What is becoming unacceptable in eastern Europe should not become the norm in Britain. How, other than in terms of a vendetta against the media, is one to explain a bidding system which favours large conglomerates over existing specialist television companies? Not only the British conglomerates but European giants such as Hachette and Berlusconi, will be favoured by the proposed system.

The Bill contains no safeguards against takeovers of British companies comparable with the safeguards operated in European countries. It provides no reciprocity. As the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) acknowledged earlier, the Government have been accused of attacking the universities and the Churches as the repositories of independent advice, and that is so, but now it is the turn of independent television to suffer for having offered a platform for independent opinion.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Further to the hon. Gentleman's previous point, does he agree that the danger of using price as the only basis for tendering for new franchises will mean that any European incursion will, by definition, by irresistible because any other method would be ruled out of order by European laws and directives?

Mr. Maclennan: That is absolutely correct. I believe that the solution would be to limit the stake of any one company in a channel. The system of franchise allocation can be explained only in terms of a vendetta. One need go no further, but further evidence is the unbelievably favourable position of the franchisee following the award of a franchise. The franchise is virtually awarded in perpetuity. It can be re-awarded after only six years, without further submission to competition. That gives the lie to any suggestion that the Government favour competition. The arrangements whereunder a franchisee may apply at any time after six years to have the licence renewed are a mockery. All the fears expressed about the prospects of over-bidding for the initial licence are fully justified when one considers how much is at stake when acquiring the initial licence.

The Government cannot claim that the dangers are unreal. The experience in Australia is highly germane, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) explained, but it is not unique. In France the firm Bouygs recently purchased more than 50 per cent. of the major channel TF 1 for 3 billion francs, which has since been recouped by a ratings war to gain advertising revenue. Other French companies are feeling the draught. The Government are having to consider reintroducing regulations.

Further evidence of the Government's political purpose in seeking to oust those whom they distrust is to be found

[Mr. Maclennan]

in the provision that the Secretary of State should have the final say in the appointment of the Channel 4 directors. As Sir Richard Attenborough has said, what is at stake is not the stewardship of public money but the maintenance of independent, innovative broadcasting.

The Bill's proposals on cross-ownership and ownership by newspapers are disturbingly inadequate. They will allow a further erosion of competition, the entry of Rupert Murdoch into independent television and radio and a reduction in the number of television regions from the present 15 to eight. In the United States, under the 1955 Federal Communications Commission rules, ownership of radio plus newspapers and television in the same market is prevented. Under those rules, Mr. Murdoch has been forced to divest himself of two newspapers and a television station. We should follow that route.

The Government claim to be committed to the preservation of regional television. If that claim is to be made good, three major changes are required. First, licensees must maintain full regional production and transmission of facilities within the region. On that, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) was right. Secondly, ownership must be confined to one ITV licence. The Government's proposition that small companies are legitimate targets for large ones is simply not acceptable.

Thirdly, the Bill must make suitable provision for a network. As the chairman-elect of the commission, Mr. George Russell has said that no independent company produces more than 30 per cent. of the programmes that it shows that its ability to transmit high quality programmes depends upon the network. Furthermore, it is desirable to secure fair access to the network for the smaller companies and to prevent the larger franchise holders from reducing competition by exercising complete control over the internal tariffs.

The arrangements allowing for multiple bidding must be changed. They may favour—no doubt the Government hope that they will—the first-time entrant to broadcasting. They would make the maintenance of a network between now and the auction wholly untenable.

Regional broadcasting offers the opportunity to bring the cultural diversions of our regions into everyone's home. The Government, however, have shown their weak commitment to such diversity by their treatment of Scotland. There is no provision for a Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish member of the ITC board—and there should be. There are provisions in the Bill to prevent the takeover of all the English regions, but there is no comparable provision for Scotland *[Interruption.]* The Whip on the Front Bench, the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) may have no interest in Scottish television. That does not surprise me in the least and that may account for the poor support for his party in Scotland. There are many people——

Mr. Meller: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Whip cannot speak for himself I feel compelled to defend him. The point that was being made is one to which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) should address himself. He has fallen outside the 10-minute rule. It would be a courtesy to other hon. Members waiting to speak, especially as the Front-Bench spokesmen are prepared to shorten their replies, if the hon. Gentleman would keep within the reasonable confines of 10 minutes.

Mr. Maclennan: If the Minister had done me the courtesy of coming in to listen to my speech, his remarks might carry some weight. As he absented himself for the greater part of my speech, I shall continue in my own time. I am wholly in order and I intend to take my time. The House will not allow minority parties to be put at a disadvantage in the debate in the way that the Minister would like. The Home Secretary took three quarters of an——

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am tempted not to interrupt this hysterical attack, but it would be right to remind the House that the Minister was outside the Chamber for an extremely brief moment. He has been in the Chamber for the rest of the debate.

Mr. Maclennan: Such interruptions merely take up the time of the House.

The most serious omission from the Bill for Scotland and those other parts of the country where the population is scattered over a wide area is the absence of provision to equalise transmission costs. That absence particularly threatens the future of the radio companies operating in Wales and Scotland which serve the more remote areas. The Bill is also silent about the transmission costs of television. The transmitter at Crystal Palace serves millions in London, but it takes eight transmitters and 68 relay lines to serve the northern half of Scotland. The Government have not promised that their plans to privatise the lines owned by British Telecom will not place intolerable burdens on companies in sparsely populated areas. The Bill makes no provision for Gaelic, but I welcome the step announced by the Secretary of State this afternoon. We shall look closely at the funding offered in support of it.

The Government have sought to remove the sting of the criticism that they are unconcerned about the quality of broadcasting by emphasising the importance of the so-called quality threshold in the bidding process. The only specific consumer protection provided by the Bill is defined in terms of taste and decency. The licensing authority, operating in the shadow of Lord Rees-Mogg's Broadcasting Standards Council—a wholly unnecessary quango—has a duty to codify the rules and to supervise their application.

There is no comparable obligation on the authority specifically to secure the at-risk services—children's programmes, social action programmes, programmes for the disabled and the ethnic minorities and, most notably, religious programmes. Perhaps the Government believe that all that should be left to the BBC. Perhaps those obligations are intended to compensate the BBC for the almost inevitable loss to cable and satellite broadcasters —should the Bill go through in its present form—of major sports events such as the cup final, Wimbledon and the grand national.

Those who have complained about the time taken to set out the points that the Social and Liberal Democrats wish to place before the House would do well to remember that this is the only intervention in the debate from a party which speaks for about a quarter of the electorate.

If there is intensive competition for ratings by Channel 3 and Channel 5, which are not to have any quality or

regional remit, the BBC will be faced with the nasty choice of either going down market or losing its audiences. Either way, the case for the retention of its licence fee will be undermined, which is no doubt what the Government intend.

When the Home Secretary concluded this afternoon, he said that fears about quality were voiced in this House when independent television was established in 1955, and his acolytes have echoed that thought. It is certainly true that fears were expressed, but it is also true that those criticisms were entirely justified. Their justification was made plain by the Pilkington report in 1962, the recommendations of which were acted upon in 1963 when the regulatory system—broadly, that under which our broadcasters operate today—was introduced. It was the Finance Act 1963, not the 1955 Act, which gave the television authorities specific powers over schedules and programme standards.

If the Bill is not amended in the light of our experience and that of other countries which have gone down the deregulatory road, it will deprive the British people of the enjoyment, entertainment, information and education that is at their fingertips today. Otherwise, as in 1963 so in 1993, a further Bill will be required to clean up the Government's mess.

8.26 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson-Smith (Wealden): I must declare that I am a non-executive director of London Weekend Television, and I do not have any shares in it.

I do not share the views of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). I do not know anyone who works at the sharp end of television who subscribes to the gloomy view that he has expressed. In such circles, among those who are looking forward to the change, there is no question of the Government's action being motivated by political malice and all that rubbish. That may go down well with the hon. Gentleman's constituents, but it does not count for one iota with those who are involved in television. On the contrary, they believe that the Government are right to recognise the technological changes that are taking place.

The technology associated with cable and direct broadcasting by satellite was bound to have an impact on the present structure. If the hon. Gentleman is content with the present structure, good luck to him. The British people think that it is pretty good, and they are right. I do not claim for one moment that everything in the Bill is perfect. I shall mention one or two problems briefly, as I know that a number of my hon. Friends want to participate. They have waited all afternoon to do so and they sat here with considerable patience listening to the hon. Gentleman's speech. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister has also displayed such patience while sitting here all afternoon. He disappeared for a few moments while the hon. Gentleman was galloping through a few more paragraphs.

Those who are worried should accept one simple fact —change must take place. There is no way to avoid such change, and if we tried to do so we would be invaded by those who have direct broadcasting by satellite who are not answerable to this House or to any of our regulations. If that happened, British television would be at a severe competitive and qualitative disadvantage. We have to change the structure. There is much in the Bill for regional television and there is a great deal to play for in the House and in Committee.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister has already said that the Bill is not cast in tablets of stone. There are things that can and should be changed. Following the publication of the White Paper, I welcome the Bill, which is far-reaching and which offers an interesting framework upon which we can improve the quality of British television. I do not know exactly how it will all work out. I do not know anyone in British television who knows what the future will hold.

Those who predict doom and gloom remind me far too easily of those who were anxious when the initial Bill on commercial television was presented.

I always remember Lew Grade saying to me, "Why don't you go tell your friends in the BBC"—he associated me with the BBC because I worked there—"to lay off light entertainment, because they don't know the job? We fellows in commercial television know how to do it." We all know what happened. The BBC has often outstripped ITV in quality and popular appeal with some of its programmes in light entertainment, which appeal to what some describe as the lowest common denominator of the British people. The commercial companies, through Independent Television and some of their serious programmes and documentaries, have often outstripped the BBC in audience appeal, as well as appealing to the elite.

We are in open country. Should we embrace it? Those I know in television——

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I really must get on.

Those I know in television, knowing that something has to happen, have looked to the future because they know that it will be more competitive. They have got rid of the restrictive practices that bedevilled British television—and high time too. They also know the wide range of choice which can be achieved if more buttons are available on the set.

The range of choice in British radio and television is not good; it is extraordinarily bad. If I want to listen to a greater variety of music, I shall go to the States—San Francisco, New York, Chicago. If I want television serving a high-density audience—this country could serve a tremendous concentration of people—I would rely not on British television but on American television. In New York there is a far wider range of choice, which is not relegated to the ghetto at 11 pm, 12 pm or after 9.30 pm, but is shown at prime time.

Let us not have this false belief that British television leads the world and will continue to do so. It will not. The choice we have is so limited that people boast of programmes that Granada used to make 10 or 15 years ago. What has it made since? The time has come for a shake-up, and I am glad that the Government are taking this role.

The balance between obtaining quality and paying for the programmes is difficult to achieve. Some people would like to continue with the present arrangement. What is it? There is always some lord on the board who comes forward with a nice menu with no price tag. He would use his lobbying techniques on those on the IBA who decide to award the contracts. Hon. Members from both sides know

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

that, more than once, the proposal could not be afforded and the sums had not been properly calculated. Often, such people were not even asked to produce real figures. In the end, they did not do what they said, and nothing happened.

If we are to give people this great opportunity to make money—they do make money out of this, and if they work for the BBC they also have an interesting living—we are entitled to ask them to put a price tag on their proposals. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister must stick to the price tag proposal. But he has not got the balance right. I shall not give my reasons for thinking that, because many others have given the arguments, and no doubt many other hon. Friends of mine will do so later. I hope that he will stick to insisting that some money should be put down on deposit and some idea should be given of how much their proposals will cost. Otherwise, all sorts of fancy people will come forward with brilliant, beautiful ideas, knowing jolly well that they will not be able to deliver them.

The Economist has come forward with the interesting idea that companies should pay rent to the Government and show that they wish to spend so much money on certain programmes and have them costed. London Weekend Television and other companies have suggested that a requirement of the bidding process now advocated is that a quality hurdle should be linked to what they call a business credibility hurdle. By that they mean that the applicant would have to show signed options for the programmes in his schedules, including provisional contracts with facility companies—the independent companies.

All kinds of ideas are being kicked around; if my hon. and learned Friend the Minister would take some of them on board he could lay the ghost of the quality argument versus those trying to make a quick buck.

8.34 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I doubt if there is a more powerful medium available to man at the end of the 20th century than television. Its power to exercise control and to effect change in society is absolutely immense. Advertisers are prepared to pay vast sums of money for just 30-second slots of television time because they know that with that time they can help to shape, influence and ultimately control consumer demand in capitalist countries like this one.

Only yesterday I read an article in the quality press claiming that the revolutions in eastern Europe were, to a remarkable degree, television revolutions and that television images—whether of western affluence or of mass demonstrations in support of political change—were critical in loosening the grip on power of regimes which, until only a short time ago, seemed impregnable to any kind of reform or change.

We know from our own experience of powerful television documentaries such as John Pilger's on Cambodia, that they make such impact on people that it is possible not only to change attitudes within Government, but even to change Government policy in our own country. When we think about the Bill, it is absolutely essential to remember that we are dealing with a subject of awesome political, social and economic importance. That is particularly true of Scotland. Within the context of the United Kingdom, Scotland has had to learn to co-exist with its much larger and more powerful and dominating neighbour, England. That has already affected the choice available to viewers and listeners in Scotland.

Some of these effects are more important than others. Of less importance is the fact that we are subjected to the blatant bias of English commentators who, when commentating on football games involving the English national team, assume that everyone watching wants England to win. That assumption cannot be made about television audiences in Scotland.

Of much greater importance is the consequence of metropolitan bias in the national news bulletins. In Scotland we are essentially offered what the metropolis believes to be of national or international importance. When the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 passed through the House, it did so without surfacing in any national news bulletins. However, when legislation implementing the poll tax in England and Wales passed through the House, there were almost nightly reports of the poll tax debates in this Chamber. That shows the sort of bias that we in Scotland have to suffer because of the metropolitan nature of so-called national television in our country.

In Scotland we have learnt over the years that the best way forward is to try to ensure that television in Scotland comes increasingly under the control of Scottish-based companies which produce programmes in Scotland and transmit them from Scotland for Scotland. The key question about the Bill is whether it makes more likely progress towards that desirable goal. However, I believe that it makes it less likely, not more. There are a number of reasons for that.

A number of safeguards exists within the present proposals. For example, clause 14 places a statutory obligation on the ITC to construct the new Channel 3 on a regional basis. That is fine. The Minister of State who has responsibility for broadcasting policy in the Scottish Office recently made a statement during the Scottish Grand Committee debate on broadcasting in which he made it clear that he welcomed the prospect that, under the new proposals, Scotland would continue to enjoy the benefits which the present regional structure of three ITV companies provides. That is good.

Yesterday, in *The Observer*, Mr. George Russell, the chairman-designate of the new ITC, confirmed that it was the commission's intention to retain the broad pattern of the ITV map. That is all welcome, but is it sufficient? Does it guarantee a continued existence for the Grampian area television service, the Border area television service or the Scottish area television service? It does not in any way guarantee it.

There is an extraordinary contradiction in the Bill. In clause 14(6), the Government have found it necessary to include a safeguard that prevents the ITC from determining that the whole of England shall be one regional area, but it has not found it necessary to include a similar safeguard for Scotland. Given the relative sizes of England and Scotland and the number of regional companies in Scotland, I should have thought it far more necessary to include a safeguard for Scotland than for England. Yet clause 14(6) makes it possible for the whole of Scotland to be one region. The only conclusion to be drawn from that is that, somewhere down the line, the

Government do not rule out the merger of the existing three regional companies in Scotland into a single regional company——

Mr. Martlew: My hon. Friend talked about the Border Television region, which covers areas on both sides of the border. Will my hon. Friend consider the position of a television area dominated by Strathclyde and the fact that people on the Scottish border would object to that? I am glad that my hon. Friend supports the existence of a television station spanning the English and Scottish sides of the border.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. We are not raising this as a fanciful idea or as a spectre. Mr. George Russell, the new chairman of the ITC, has made it clear that the ITC is not committed to the existing map of the ITV areas—it is committed to it merely in broad terms. Mr. Russell has not ruled out the possibility of fine tuning around the fringes—we can only hope that he does not mean the Celtic fringes—of the ITV regional map.

Mr. Russell went on in yesterday's article to say that the Government have allowed for the ITV companies to bid for any—or, if they wish, for all—of the other areas. Today the Home Secretary gave an assurance that no licensee would be allowed to bid for two contiguous areas, but his predecessor made it clear in an answer last May that the restrictions on ownership of Channel 3 areas were only an initial limit. So the Government do not rule out in the long term the possibility that Scotland might be left in the same position as Wales and Northern Ireland—areas which will have single regional channels to provide their services.

There are important lessons to be drawn from commercial radio in Scotland. In the beginning, there were four independent commercial radio stations in each of the four major Scottish cities—Radio Clyde in Glasgow, Radio Forth in Edinburgh, Radio Tay in Dundee, and Radio North Sound in Aberdeen. I understand that Radio Clyde has now taken over North Sound and I know that Radio Forth has already taken over Radio Tay. I read only recently in the *Financial Times* that Radio Clyde is now set to take over Radio Forth, too. So, of an original four independent stations, two now dominate the Scottish scene and ultimately there may be just one. If that can happen to radio in Scotland, I see nothing to suggest that it could not happen to television.

Nothing in the Bill rules out the possibility of the concentration of ownership and control of commercial television in Scotland—and not necessarily in the hands of someone from Scotland. An outsider might come in; nothing in the Bill prevents outsiders from bidding for franchises in the regions of this country. Nothing in the Bill will prevent one of those bidders from subsequently concentrating all the franchises in Scotland under one ownership and control. Nothing in the Bill will prevent the new licensees from dismantling existing production facilities in Scotland; nor will anything in the Bill require them to establish equivalent production facilities of their own.

The Government may argue that these are the consequences of opening up the market in television and that ultimately the viewer will benefit from them, but few Opposition Members share their complacency. We believe that the consequences of the changes outlined in the Bill will be that money will be everything—enough money to outbid rivals for a franchise, then enough money earned from the franchise to pay back the initial outlay for winning it. All this will mean choosing programmes with high viewing figures—programmes that are capable of producing high revenues. That means going for the cheaper option of buying in programmes from the network and not investing in locally and regionally produced television of high quality. In the end, this will mean undermining the financial basis of smaller regional companies such as Grampian and Border.

The Home Secretary said that the Bill will not mark the demise of public service broadcasting in this country, and that may or may not be true. However, it certainly marks the demise of independent, locally produced commercial television in areas such as Scotland. For that and many other reasons, I shall vote against the Bill tonight and hope to amend it later.

8.45 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I hope that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) will forgive me if I do not follow his path, although it is clearly a matter of great concern to him and his constituents.

I speak as chairman of the all-party cable and satellite TV committee, which I joined four years ago because we have in my constituency the oldest, and one of the best, of the cable companies operating in this country. Swindon Cable was established in 1984, and it provides an excellent service for a growing number of my constituents. I want to speak mostly about part II of the Bill, which refers to cable broadcasting.

Before doing so, I should comment on quality and diversity, themes which have concerned a large number of hon. Members on both sides. One of the effects of the increased diversity of available television is dear to my heart—the fact that later this winter we shall be able to watch live, ball-by-ball coverage of the English cricket games against the West Indies on Sky Television. That may not appeal to all hon. Members but it commends itself to those of us who regard cricket as one of the finest flowerings of the English character—and, to a lesser extent, of the Welsh and Scottish characters. I hope that many in this House and elsewhere are pleased at this development. Let us be prepared to accept that we have already derived great benefit from what has happened.

Cable television is predicted to reach half the population by 1995, but clause 70 constitutes a snag in its steady progress. Clause 70 proposes a percentage levy on qualifying revenue of cable companies set up and licensed by the ITC. If this levy is pitched too high, it may discourage investment in the spread of cable; indeed, it may put off future investors altogether. Do the Government want to encourage such investment? We have already heard about the inevitable growth in the provision of television in this country, but that growth could be stultified, and so I seek an assurance that that is not the Government's intention.

Will my hon. and learned Friend also consider the effects of his proposals on cross-ownership, and the prospect of foreign ownership of United Kingdom television companies? There is a real chance that the 20 per cent. maximum share ownership will mean that Yorkshire Television, for example, could become an Italian company, or that Grampian could become a West German company. I am not being xenophobic when I say that this

[Mr. Simon Coombs]

will not be in the interests of television watchers in parts of the country that are affected. Is my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State prepared to look again at his proposals, to ensure that such a situation will not arise?

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways to deal with that would be to augment and reinforce the quality criteria?

Mr. Coombs: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will address himself to that during this debate or in Committee. Can he also say whether he has ruled out retrospection in terms of the way in which he proposes to treat non-DBS companies? What role does he see as suitable for the Monopolies and Mergers Commisson in dealing with questions that arise in the course of the development of the legislative framework proposed by the Bill?

In the course of his excellent speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) mentioned religious broadcasting. He also mentioned my constituency, because one of the religious channels in this country is available for my constituents who are viewers of Swindon Cable. Schedule 2 needs to be rethought. There is a danger that, if we allow the Bill to go forward as drafted, religious broadcasting will be severely curtailed. I do not think that the House wishes that to happen; nor do I think that it is the wish of many people in Britain. I urge my hon. and learned Friend to look carefully at what is proposed in the Bill.

Will my hon. and learned Friend tell the House when the transitional arrangements for cable companies will be announced and whether existing cable systems will continue to be required to carry the four existing terrestrial television channels? That matter is causing a great deal of concern to cable companies.

Will my hon. and learned Friend justify to the House the apparent disparity in the level of fines that can be imposed on television companies under the Bill? A maximum fine of £50,000 is proposed for the non-DBS companies, such as Sky Television, whereas Channels 3 and 5 and DBS companies would be required to pay in the first instance 3 per cent. of revenue and in the case of subsequent offences 5 per cent. That could amount to many millions of pounds, and there is a case in justice for it being looked at again. I am extremely happy to support the general framework of the Bill. There is no doubt that the changes in technology that have been developing over the past few decades make it inevitable that we should have a fresh look at the whole question of broadcasting. That makes this Bill inevitable, and I wish it well.

8.53 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): The factor that has come through to me in this fascinating debate is the elitist nature of the forum. We are all political activists and that tends to make us a small minority in society. I was a bit disturbed to find proof of that elitism in the amount of exaggeration by hon. Members. They have exaggerated the role of television in human communications, especially at a higher intellectual level. No one has said that, as well as having virtues, television in terms of communication has important defects. For example, it is far too visual. The pictures presented, even in current affairs programmes of so-called high quality, are far too often more important than the content. We have had good examples of that in the coverage of United States presidential elections, where television has been open to considerable manipulation by the participants.

Mr. Buchan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sillars: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, so he need not bother to try to intervene.

We have had the problem of perhaps one of the most vacuous presidents of the United States coming across on television to the American electorate as pretty reasonable. Television is like other methods of communication in that it has virtues and defects. It seeks to serve us in terms of entertainment, information, education and stimulation of the intellectual process. When we talk about quality we are really talking about getting the right balance between television's propensity to entertain and our perceived need for it to inform, educate and stimulate intellectually.

I should like to make two points in the time available to me and I shall be brief to allow other hon. Members to take part in the debate. The points relate to part II and especially to the proposed Channel 3. I and my hon. Friends oppose in principle the concept of blind auction licences, even though the Bill modifies them by calling for some requirement of a quality test.

Perhaps one of the most effective attacks upon Rupert Murdoch's McTaggart lecture appeared, paradoxically, in *The Times* of 30 August in an article by Brian Appleyard. He gave the real answer to Rupert Murdoch when he said:

"The BBC and ITA were established on the basis that the market was morally and socially inadequate".

That is why we require tests for quality, and we cannot simply open up television or any other system of broadcasting to the marketplace.

Like other hon. Members, in recent weeks I have heard the rumours and read press speculation about the Government conceding on the question of quality tests. I had hoped that we were heading for a two-stage test and that applicants for a licence would submit programming propositions for a test of quality. Only after they passed that programming test would they proceed to the blind auction.

Leaving aside the argument about whether the money should go to the Treasury or into television for better programming, if there were a two-stage test, more hon. Members would be much happier. However, that is not the case. The cash bid and the so-called quality test are combined in clause 15 and the legislative language in clauses 16 and 17 gives additional weight to the cash bid factor over the quality factor. Clause 17(2) is the giveaway, because if says that, if two bids are equal in terms of cash, the licence is put back out for another cash bid. If quality really mattered, the bids would be tested on the quality of the programming. It is almost inconceivable that two organisations putting forward exactly the same cash bids would be absolutely equal in every respect in terms of programming.

I have heard the Government say that the quality test will be the Becher's brook. Will it be the first-time round Becher's brook or the second-time round one? As everyone who has watched the Grand National knows, on the second-time round, there are big holes in the fence because horses have fallen through it the first time. It is possible to have a test, but one full of loopholes.

My second point concerns the Bill's failure to give statutory recognition to the regional make-up in Scotland. Here I am at one with the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), although I am not at one with him about what happens to the England football team. I may be in a minority in Scotland, but I supported England in the World cup in 1966 and I was pleased when it won. I cannot guarantee that I will watch every ball rolled in the cricket in the West Indies because I find cricket boring, but I am a great admirer of the skills and structures of English football.

As I said, the Bill fails to give statutory recognition to regional make-up in Scotland, and fails to ensure that a regional structure exists, not simply through publishers' contract methods but through companies with a full regional facility base, anchored in their community. As the hon. Member for Dundee, East said, clause 14 recognises that England is not a region. The point that we are making about Scotland, and this goes well outwith the ranks of the Scottish National party, is that a nation has regions in its make-up and it is important that those regions are recognised, and manifested, in a broadcasting system.

The history of independent television in Scotland shows that there is a great deal of worth in having more than one company operating within the nation. We are seeking Government recognition of the regional variations and of the need to have that reflected in statute.

I urge on the Government the need to guarantee in the Bill regional and national access to the network because there are considerable jobs implications in that. Scottish Television is a good example of the benefits of greater access to the network. STV has increased the amount devoted to programmes for network from £3 million to £15 million in the past three years. This has allowed 300 well-paid, highly skilled jobs to be retained in Scotland that might otherwise have been lost. Access is extremely important.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one of the most positive aspects of S4C in Wales is not only that it supports the Welsh language as the minority language of half a million of our people, but that jobs in television provide an extended base from which we can take advantage of opportunities to develop the cultural industry?

Mr. Sillars: Yes, and we must understand that we are moving away from the old industrial revolution and metal-bashing and into a different era of human activity, in which the intellectual processes are extremely important, as is one's ability, within a region, nation or larger grouping, to add value to the intellectual processes and bring enormous economic benefits to the people so engaged. I hope that the Minister will take those points on board.

My hon. Friends and I will vote against the Bill because there is a fundamental difference in philosophy as to where the market should operate. We wish to put on far more restraints than the Government do.

9.2 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I am glad of the opportunity to speak on this most important Bill. Sadly, I have no financial interests to declare. I am not a consultant to anybody and I have never been an employee of any broadcasting company, but I was a member of the BBC general advisory council, I gave evidence to the Peacock committee and I must have appeared on virtually every television or radio programme with any claim to serious content, and more than a few without. I support the Bill, and I should very much like to be a member of the Committee examining it.

The framework provided by the existing legislation is out of date, and reform is absolutely unavoidable. This reform seeks to widen choice, not restrict it. It will regulate with a light hand and not with endless bureaucracy, although in one or two places the heavy hand of excess bureaucracy is there.

I put it to Ministers that, as a Conservative, deregulating Government, we should start from the proposition that we should interfere as little as possible. I say that with some passion, having listened to speeches from the Opposition Benches, particularly from members and erstwhile members of the Labour party, say that Government should control the media. I think that we should always be wary of Governments who want to regulate the media, whether from the highest motives or not. It is always dangerous for politicians to start telling the press what they can or cannot do.

Let there be no mistake—the broadcast media are moving away from the narrow, tight, licensed arrangements of 30 or 40 years ago to something much closer to the print media in which there is a much wider variety and a bigger range of choice. My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), when he was Home Secretary, likened it to a book shop in which there is a much wider range of choice. The simile probably goes too far, but there is no doubt that the kind of controls that were appropriate in the 1950s and 1960s are no longer appropriate.

It is my view, indeed, that we are bending over backwards a little too far to prevent monopoly ownership. The Bill requires all broadcasters to keep quiet about their own opinions. It provides that licence holders must not express their views on matters which are in current political or industrial dispute. I recognise that that provision has been placed in the Bill in the interest of balance, but why should licence holders not express their views? Is that not a recipe for greater blandness and not greater choice?

In the print medium, there is no such requirement. As a result, we have *The Sun*, which the Opposition hate, and the *Daily Mirror*, which Conservative Members hate. We have *The Daily Telegraph*, which turned me into a Tory many years ago, and *The Guardian*, which had exactly the same effect. Because we do not make such rules in the print medium, we have far greater diversity, and the result is a much livelier pattern of publishing. We are in danger of saying that we shall have many more television channels, but they will all produce the same bland material, the same opinionless stuff, and that is not real choice at all.

Then there is the argument about quality. I listened to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) with great care. He really talked a load of poppycock. We in this place should be careful about setting ourselves up as standard setters for the rest of the nation. We watch hardly any television at all, and when we do, the odds are that we are watching only ourselves. There are only three rooms in the House for watching—BBC 1, BBC2 and ITV. There are no facilities for watching Channel 4 and none for cable television, satellite television or regional stations—radio or television. For most of the time we do not have the foggiest idea what our

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

constituents are watching anyhow. We should be extremely wary, therefore, as we sit on these green Benches, of setting ourselves up as people who watch a lot of television when we do not, and telling those people who watch a lot of television what they should be watching. It is a very dangerous business.

Quality is like sovereignty—it means a lot, but it means different things to different people. There are those—the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is one—who talk of the need to maintain quality. I sometimes think that what such people mean is the right to maintain the quality of the programmes that they like, preferably with public money.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) talked about Radio 3, and I appreciate that he was honest in his approach. When the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that maximising quality and maximising revenue were mutually exclusive, he was talking rubbish. I put it to him—he did not really answer the question—that soap operas, murder mysteries and quiz shows which we all like to see, do attract huge audiences and huge export income and win many prizes. About 11 million people watched the Ruth Rendell mystery last night, and about the same number watch ITN on a Saturday night, as I know to my cost. We should be aware of that. There is no conflict between what is good and what is popular.

We should also reject the point that has been made about "major events". There is some question-begging about what constitutes a major event. Those of us who are interested in racing might regard the Cheltenham gold cup and the Arc de Triomphe as choicer events than the grand national. The question of whose choice is a major event, the circumstances of, and arguments about opening all events to the highest bidder demonstrates to me that the Opposition do not understand how anybody ever makes money or anything, particularly in the mass media. That is not done by restricting the audience and making it as small as possible. It is done by making the audience as big as possible, especially if the finance is coming from advertising. The logic of the Opposition's argument for the wider availability for major events is that such events should all be shown on all channels simultaneously. That is such a preposterous notion that it demonstrates the paucity of their argument.

The Opposition's view that there is a conflict between quality and finance also suggests that we should look only to public service broadcasting for quality. That is nonsense. The most commercial organisation operating in the broadcasting medium is the BBC. If we are looking for who pays huge salaries to personalities on television, we should not look to Sky Television: we should look to the Wogan show and one or two others we could think of. If we are looking at who is bidding up the price and the costs of sports programmes, we should look to the BBC. It does a cracking good job, but it is doing it with our money. We should be wary of simply assuming that that is necessarily the way to do it in future.

BBC Enterprises Limited is the world's largest exporter of television programmes, with a turnover of more than £150 million last year. Like others of my hon. Friends, I have sat in hotel rooms in San Francisco and turned on the public service broadcasting channel, paid for by subscription, and watched "To the Manor Born", "Yes, Prime Minister" and the BBC wildlife programmes. They earn a mint overseas, and they were all made with our licence fee money in this country.

Mr. Bechan: Will the hon. Lady concede the obvious fact that the programmes that she is praising, and which are praised in America, are often the products of regulated broadcasting?

Mrs. Currie: On the contrary: the kind of programmes I am talking about are the product of mass marketing media. They are designed to attract millions of people—*[Interruption.]* They, like the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* I intend to pay the hon. Gentleman a compliment, if he will only shut up long enough to listen to me.

Mr. Bechan: The hon. Lady does not understand.

Mrs. Currie: Programmes like "Yes, Prime Minister" are designed in a commercial world by mass media for a mass audience of people with the taste and intelligence of the hon. Gentleman. There are millions like him. It does not need to be done with taxpayers' money.

I have one suggestion to make. Much of the argument about the sale of franchises arises because the money is to go to the Treasury. I suggest that a proportion of that money, which goes to the Treasury from the highest bidder—and I think it should be from the highest bidder—should be allocated to what we currently call public service broadcasting. We already give money to schools broadcasting and Open university broadcasting—indeed, we have just allocated a chunk of money to Gaelic broadcasting—and it is all tremendously popular. If we did a little more of that, the Opposition would not be screaming at us for choosing the highest bidder—they would be urging us to choose the highest bidder and would then be arguing about where the money should go to. Then there could be some public service broadcasting on all the channels, the importance of the licence fee to the BBC would be reduced, and people would be more interested in and favourable to the system.

The proposed changes are in good Tory tradition. We introduced ITV in the 1950s, independent local radio in the 1970s and channel 4 in the 1980s. Armageddon was threatened each time, but it did not happen. I support the Bill.

9.12 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Broadcasting is the most influential medium of mass communication; no more effective means of communication has been devised. Even before the Bill was published, members of the Home Affairs Select Committee and others recognised the great changes in the technology of broadcasting and its management.

It is a great pity that the Bill, which was the Government's great opportunity to introduce landmark legislation, does not put excellence and quality at the top of the agenda. There is no doubt that the auctioning of the franchises to the highest bidders will affect quality. At the heart of the Bill is not a commitment to excellence or quality, but a desire for money.

We do not need a crystal ball to see what the future holds for broadcasting; we need only look at what has happened in America since deregulation. I and other members of the Select Committee were transported, on

taxpayers' money, to America to watch television. We saw the experience of programme makers. The 14 channels that I sampled on New York television all consisted of game shows and advertisements. We looked forward to returning to Britain to watch "The Sooty Show" and other programmes made here.

I oppose the suggestion that companies should be able to bid for more than one franchise at a time. I believe that that will be a recipe for chaos and will destroy the network of independent television companies at a time when there needs to be stability. I do not accept the proposals and the schedule concerning cross-ownership. It is sufficient for a legal person to own one franchise, but he should not be allowed to own any other franchises in the network or any newspapers.

I welcome the proposals for the establishment of Channel 5 but regret that it will be received by only 70 per cent. of the country. I do not accept the basis on which the channel is to be scheduled. It would be more appropriate to provide for mega-regions in the franchise or to allow the affiliation of local television stations on a citywide basis to a national channel. I disagree with the proposals that will allow the channel to be sold off to the highest bidder. If the Minister is looking for a home outside London for Channel 5, there is no better place than the quiet midlands city of Leicester, which lies modestly in the heart of England.

I regret that there has not been greater emphasis on regional broadcasting. The current franchise areas are too big. The east midlands—Leicester, Nottingham and Derby in particular—lose out to competition from the west midlands. Although I accept that people in Leicester and the east midlands identify with midland personalities and issues, when awarding the franchise it will be necessary to be more certain that the local nature of regional broadcasting is reviewed.

I accept that there was a need to create a separate radio authority. However, I do not believe that it is right for the franchises to go to the highest bidder. I commend the proposals of the Independent Broadcasting Authority in its recent granting of 23 commercial stations. I visited one of those commercial stations—Sunrise Radio which covers the whole of west London,—and I consider that the targeting of the audience had been extremely important.

I welcome what the Minister said about access to television for deaf people. There are 4 million deaf viewers and I accept the need to increase subtitling and sign language. The Minister should make it clear what he means by "greater access" to broadcasting. A specific percentage should be mentioned above the 10 per cent.

I regret that nothing in the Bill will help those who will not be able to afford the benefits of the technological changes that have occurred. I am thinking particularly of the pensioners in my constituency. I had hoped that there would have been a clause in the Bill—I accept that it is not necessarily to do with the BBC—to exempt pensioners from the payment of television licences. With the arrival of cable, pensioners in Leicester will have to pay roughly £10 a month to obtain the benefit of cable television. In addition to the television licence, they will have to pay an additional £120 a year. For many pensioners, television and radio are their only forms of entertainment. If we are serious about extending the choice available to all sections of our community, we should ensure that pensioners have greater access.

No one denies the Government's desire to open up the airways to improve broadcasting. We support that, but we do not support the proposals before the House, which will put the interests of the Treasury, advertisers and the television companies above those of the listeners and the viewers who know exactly what they want from good television and radio. The Bill is guaranteed a stormy passage. With the threats of a rebellion by Conservative Members, there is a danger of it becoming a soap opera in its own right, with the Minister of State cast as Jason Donovan and the Prime Minister as the Finchley version of Mrs. Mangle.

The Government say, "Never mind the quality, feel the bank balance." I say that the values of a nation can be judged by the quality of its broadcasting. Let us give our people the best, and create the climate and conditions that will allow broadcasting talents in our country to flourish.

9.19 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I begin by declaring an interest as a director of a local independent radio station. I welcome the Bill because it will provide more choice in radio and television, and more choice will always be good news.

This country's commercial radio industry was slow to develop because of restrictions and unrealistic demands by an IBA backed by a Government system which did not encourage the development of commercial radio. I do not blame the IBA for the difficulties and restrictions under which it was compelled to work, in the form of the legislation that founded commercial radio. The IBA also achieved many good things, and it should be congratulated on the quality that it introduced into commercial television and radio.

Commercial radio had a difficult time establishing itself in this country because the services that the public wanted proved to be very different from the proposals contained in the original franchise applications. As a consequence, many applications promised a lot but had to be amended when the radio stations began broadcasting and needed to meet the needs of the market. Today, people enjoy listening to commercial radio, and the number of hours that it broadcasts has increased steadily. That change has come about through the passage of time and by people in the marketplace correcting the faults of the original concepts.

The new light touch Radio Authority will be good news for radio and should enable the expansion that the Bill foretells. Over the past few years, listening hours have climbed steadily, and that will continue as new stations go on the air. In the years from 1974 to 1979, under a Labour Government, commercial radio had a difficult time. It was not encouraged to expand, and the system established by a Conservative Government in 1973 was capable of being stifled. However, commercial radio has expanded considerably in recent years and now provides a much better service.

I turn to the problems that television may face as it expands under the Bill's proposals. The danger is that the number of violent and sexually explicit programmes could increase unless there is proper control. A proper Broadcasting Standards Council will be necessary to achieve that, and to ensure that the right sort of people end up in control of our television stations. It would be a major

[Mr. David Shaw]

mistake if the standards that we see in newspaper journalism today are mirrored by the television companies of the future.

More and more newspaper journalists are contemplating joining the new TV stations. Already, we have seen the fabrication of news programmes on existing TV stations. Will the Bill be able to handle that type of situation? Does the journalist who organised the Jeffrey Archer frame-up, for example, and who is currently a director of a television station, represent the type of journalism that the Government will allow on television in future? Should someone found to be a liar in open court or to have committed perjury be a director of a TV station broadcasting to children and others? Should someone who has twice been guilty of contempt of court or who has been involved in tax evasion through Netherlands Antilles and Cayman Islands companies be permitted to become involved in providing television services in this country?

Such problems can easily arise in the case of satellite television broadcasting, because in that instance the fiscal control and management of revenues is impossible to achieve. When people direct revenue through Netherlands Antilles and Cayman Islands companies, the Government, through the Home Office and the Treasury, must consider legislation to ensure that the Finance Bill covers that.

I hope that the Government will realise that maintaining television standards also means maintaining the standards of the directors of television companies. High standards are required.

In America, Rupert Murdoch's station, Fox Television, had a consumer revolt. Violence in their programmes was so bad that people got together and boycotted the advertisers' products in the supermarkets. It was an extremely effective revolt because the advertisers contacted the television station and said, "We do not want our products boycotted. We will not advertise on your station unless you stop violent programmes." Ultimately, violent programmes were stopped.

Perhaps viewers in Britain who are not satisfield with the standards of new television broadcasters—for example, Sky—will have to envisage boycotts of the advertisers' products. It is effective. If we find that the Broadcasting Standards Council has become a toothless wonder like the Press Council, and that it is not effective, we must introduce powers for fines through the right legislation.

Advertising revenue pays for programmes and supports the stations. Therefore, that revenue is the best thing to withdraw, as it will ensure that the providers of programmes stand up and say, "We must have better quality programmes". If they do not provide better quality programmes, legislation will ensure that their revenue is withdrawn. Withdrawal of advertising revenue is the only effective sanction on the provision of bad programmes.

We want high-quality television programmes produced by the right people—people who do not fabricate news programmes. We do not want some of the present standards of newspaper journalism in television programmes. The best way to ensure that programme standards are maintained is to ensure that there are lavish penalties on providers of television programmes that do not reach the right quality and standards.

9.27 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I thank the Home Secretary for what he was able to say at the beginning of the debate about the provision of extra subtitles for people whose hearing is impaired. That is a great tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who has led a campaign with support from right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I was very pleased that the Minister was able to spell out that the Bill is a first year target, and that it is expected that it will be built on year by year. Naturally, we want the period of progress to be spelt out, properly to enfranchise those people whose hearing is impaired and to give them more access to television.

I also thank the Home Secretary for what he said about Gaelic broadcasting, which is not just of interest in Scotland. We want to ensure that the body will be generally representative of the Gaelic community, and that it will be properly independent when it makes decisions on commissioning and scheduling. I also welcome the extra-terrestrial and satellite channels that new technology has made possible, but, unlike the Government, the Opposition are not mesmerised by the prospect. We want to try to ensure that it will be used to widen real choice and diversity, to protect and promote quality and to stretch interest.

There has rightly been praise for much of our television system. Across and between four channels, it has achieved a programme mix, variety, range and quality which has two essential features. First, it enables us to talk to each other, to think aloud and to be heard, to be tempted and teased into new interests, whether about the environment and nature or about snooker and darts, and to be entertained and reminded of our distinctive culture and —yes—our Britishness. Secondly, it has, by and large, kept a balance between the broad and varied interests of viewers and the demands of advertisers. All this has been achieved on the basis of sensible regulation. It was not delivered by the naked market forces that the Bill would unleash and which have so damaged television elsewhere in Europe.

Regulation was recognition of television's special nature and powerful influence in the shaping of minds and opinions. We should also remember that the commercial network grew and developed beside standards set by the BBC. Most important of all, at peak viewing hours it was required to screen a mix of programmes in specified areas —news and current affairs to inform and educate, and drama, arts, children's religious programmes to entertain and reflect our cultural beliefs and values. True, too many voices and views remained unheard or not heard enough, especially among disadvantaged groups and our ethnic communities. True, the voices and cultures of our nations and regions are inadequately heard on the network. True, too, under the present Government there has been too much Government interference with the broadcasters.

Let us consider the following:

"Any community must have some settled purpose",

wrote Mr. Robin Harris, a new policy adviser to the Prime Minister in a remarkable post dated job application published in the *Evening Standard* on 11 December. It seems that his job is to cloak the iron lady in a velvet dress

while she deals with the problems of society and community, the existence of which she earlier denied. With a whiff of perestroika, Mr. Harris added:

"I believe it possible in general terms to state the kind of life people should lead"—

wait for it——

"and which the state should encourage and help them to lead."

Not social engineering—perish the thought—but wise words in regard to the Bill and what it will allow us to watch on our screens. He continued, perhaps with children's programmes in mind:

"should not the state publicly and systematically discriminate positively in favour of families?"

To underscore the point, he added:

"Education is above all the way in which one generation introduces the next into their common culture."

He then singled out religion as most important, and described it as

"the single most important continuing influence on society."

Mr. Harris has clearly not read the Bill in which his employer, the Prime Minister, had such a large hand. It rejects the idea of any settled purpose and relieves commercial television of any obligation, in or out of peak hours, to carry programmes about current affairs which help to shape our society, or to carry children's programmes or religious programmes. It abandons any notion that commercial television has a role in offering a guide to the kind of life which Mr. Harris says that

"the state should encourage and help".

Far be it from me to cause any dissension between a No. 10 policy adviser and the Prime Minister, especially as the two senior Home Office Ministers here owe their present jobs to such a dispute, but instead of the approach advocated by Mr. Harris, the Government propose that commercial television should be advertiser-pushed rather than viewer-led. That is what the preposterous system of blind auctioning will mean.

As one experienced television producer told me,

"There is more to making a programme than simply filling screen hours."

Those who make programmes decide when to show them and those who watch them are entitled to ask, "What did that add to my quality of life? Did it make me laugh or cry? Did it tell me something that I did not know? Did it excite or stimulate me? Did it entertain or astonish me, or was it a mixture of all or some of those?" If a programme—any programme—cannot meet such a quality test, we might as well as watch a moving roll of wallpaper.

Let us be clear that the argument is not about snobbery or elitism. Research shows that, despite the groups into which advertisers divide us according to how much we have to spend, there is very little difference between what we watch on any evening. Readers of *The Guardian* or *The Independent* are just as likely to watch a games show or a soap as readers of the *Daily Mirror* or the *Daily Mail* are to watch a factual programme.

Under the Bill, it is certain that Christmas television 1989 will be better than Christmas television 1993, which will be poorer, less varied and more of the money-making same than now. As advertisers demand the largest audiences for their particular products, quality will be pushed down and real choice and variety in peak hours will be restricted. That is not guesswork—it is the inevitable consequence of the idea that what we watch on our television screens will be decided by a blind auction among those with access to the largest amount of cash and, as has been said several times in the debate, extra cash spent off screen will mean less cash on screen. Television is to be sold in the same way as second-hand cars or unwanted household items. Buyers of such articles make a quick quality check before they bid, often with the same disappointing results as the Bill will ensure.

We know from France, Italy and West Germany what deregulation has meant—not what it might mean, but what has actually happened since deregulation. It has lessened real choice for viewers and served up more of the same with fewer factual programmes and more soaps—usually foreign—and game shows. In France there is a move to restore some regulation due to the poorer quality television.

The Government say, "It will not happen here because we are different—we have the so-called quality threshold." But the quality assurances in the Bill are worthless. For example, the Government say nothing about what the IBA calls "streams" of programmes to be shown in peak hours. They are totaly silent on the matter of networking, on which the federal ITV system is built. Networking—how much and when it will be available to smaller stations—is essential, as it will give them a bite at higher audiences and often more costly programmes.

Mr. Gale: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the independent television companies are working on a policy of networking by consent which is to be put to the Minister later?

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming my point. The Bill contains nothing about networking. No one can make a sensible bid for a franchise without knowing what networking there will be. The proportion of factual and entertainment-based programmes on the new Channel 3 and Channel 5 is critical to make a reality of choice in peak and non-peak viewing hours.

Now on the ITV stations, about one third of the screen time is devoted to factual programmes, inviting viewers to see and better understand what is going on around us. An impressive 84 of every 100 people rely on television as their main source of information about the developing world and the environment. In part, those programmes are made because the present rules say that they must be. Without those obligations, there will be fewer of them because they are expensive to make and they will probably not get as much peak-time showing when they are pushed down or off the schedules.

An important point is illustrated by the fact that Third-world and environmental programmes shown at peak hours on ITV and BBC have an average audience of 4 million to 5 million. When they are shown off peak, they have an audience of between 1 million and 1·5 million. When they are shown at peak time on Channel 4, the audience is about 1 million to 1·5 million—about the same as the off-peak audience for BBC1 and ITV. The new Independent Television Commission needs powers to influence programme range and diversity during peak-hour viewing if the Government are to fulfil their stated ambition to protect choice and variety. Otherwise, as we have seen in Europe, advertisers will try to grab those slots and design programmes to attract more viewers or the viewers whom they think they need to buy their products.

Audiences are more loyal to commercial radio than to television. It is essential that commercial radio is able to continue and to expand social action broadcasting and citizen broadcasting, which offer help to those who need it

[Mr. Corbett]

and encourage others to give it, and to promote speech-based programmes. Radio has an important educational role to play which is of value to people from childhood to old age.

In Committee, we shall try to give the Independent Television Commission those and other extra powers, and to enable the new Channel 5 to be set up in the north and to be based on a regional mix of networking and home-made regional programmes.

So much of the future of what will be on our screens is left open in the Bill, which is perhaps why the Minister of State has said that he will listen and respond. He can do so tonight by joining us in giving the Committee that will consider the Bill the power to hear evidence before decisions are taken which will last into the next century.

Instead of building and developing our broadcasting best—especially in the face of new competition from satellite, which will take years to become of more than marginal viewing and will not be available to all—the Government want to demolish the foundations of much of the broadcasting system. They put cash ahead of quality and they invite the promotion of the trivial as they treat viewers and listeners as no more than parcels of people to be sold to advertisers. That insults the range of their tastes and their intelligence.

Under the Bill, viewers and television stations are for sale to the highest bidder—choice, diversity and variety can go hang. The viewers and listeners should be in the driving seat, but the Government want the advertisers to reign. That is why we shall oppose the Bill.

9.43 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): Notwithstanding the valiant efforts of many hon. Members, I am disappointed that a number of hon. Members had to sit through the debate without being able to participate in it. Despite the efforts of Front-Bench spokesmen to shorten wind-up speeches, I am sorry that that happened because it is a deeply frustrating experience. I single out one hon. Member who I suspect may have been mildly critical of the Bill, but I am particularly sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) did not catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Apart from a few minutes, I sat through the debate and regret that I will be unable to deal with all the points made. I shall try to deal with as many as I can.

It is appropriate to recollect the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). He began by saying—*[Interruption.]* Ah, here he comes, making an entrance like a real trouper. He said that it was a matter for congratulation that the Government have introduced such a comprehensive Bill.

Before I deal with the detail—a lot of which, I acknowledge, is very important and which will give the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and his team and myself a great deal to talk about in Committee—it is right that we should recognise that this is a truly comprehensive Bill. It represents a great leap forward for British broadcasting. It contains many issues on which we all agree. No one has thought to challenge the desirability of a major expansion of radio, with three new national independent radio channels and a host of local radio channels to cater for the wide range of tastes that we know exists out there.

Already, the IBA has been able to grant 23 additional radio licences under its existing powers, for which it received over 500 expressions of interest. The announcement made just a day or two ago that another licence in London had been awarded showed the range of groups applying. For instance, no fewer than eight groups wanted to run a classical radio station in London. In fact, the winner was an "easy listening" franchise, whatever that may mean. The fact that the IBA had to discriminate between one lot of music and another is a sign of how invidious is the task of picking between one group and another.

These matters of quality do not speak for themselves. I have have heard some hon. Members refer to "quality" as though it were a "speak your weight" machine that would automatically register a precise quality rating so that one could make relative quality judgments between different bids. Beyond a certain point, it is difficult. I should not have chosen to have to make a distinction between any of those classical musical applications or to put all of them on one side and choose "easy listening" instead.

The other point on which we all agree is that the framework of public service broadcasting should remain around the BBC, as it does, and that the Bill should take the opportunity to make Channel 4 even more secure in its remit. To those who make unduly pessimistic assertions about the future of television, even if—it is a very big "if"—one accepts the pessimism about Channel 3, which of course I do not, it must be relevant to our consideration of the future of British broadcasting that three of the four main terrestrial channels remain exactly as they always did——

Mr. Grocott *rose——*

Mr. Mellor: I am afraid that I do not have time to give way. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have been allowed only 15 minutes to reply. That being so, I think that I should be allowed to answer the debate.

It is interesting that only one point can be challenged about the way in which we have dealt with Channel 4, and with respect to those who hold those views, their point seems a little wide of the mark. At the moment Channel 4 is entirely the creature of the IBA. The authority broadcasts its programmes, approves its schedules and decides its income. Under the new arrangements, for the first time Channel 4 will broadcast its own programmes, decide its own schedules and, to the extent that its advertising sales are successful, fix the level of its income. With the greatest respect to those who hold contrary views, I believe that for the Government to have the right to approve nominations put forward by the ITC is not excessive, having regard to the prime desire and requirement of Channel 4 not to be privatised, but to remain as a public corporation, which it will.

Another thing with which hon. Members agree is the enhancement that we have given to Gaelic broadcasting and to the maintenance of S4C, about which the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) spoke. I had a meeting with the managing director of S4C the other day and he is well satisfied with the remit that he has been given.

Interestingly, there has been no challenge to the fact that for the first time we shall regulate what appears on satellite television. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) suggested that the Bill was about deregulation. With the greatest respect, we could not have produced a Bill with 167 clauses and 12 schedules if it had been about deregulation. It may be about modifying the manner in which we regulate but, for example, it extends regulation for the first time, to non-DBS low-powered satellite channels which at present are outside any direct United Kingdom regulatory control.

The regulation in the Bill goes beyond matters of taste and decency. Channels will be required not to editorialise on political or controversial matters, to preserve due impartiality in dealing with such matters, to present news accurately and impartially and to control advertisements. That is far from a move towards deregulation. We assume that we have the right to stop innovations. We do not. They will happen anyway and it is sensible to set them within a framework of regulation. That is what the Bill does.

I understand that there is a good deal of anxiety about our proposals for Channel 3. Having established that, there is a great deal in the Bill on which hon. Members of whatever party affiliation agree. That is why I regret that there will be a Division on the Bill tonight. I acknowledge that serious issues will need to be addressed in dealing with Channel 3 franchises.

I was sad that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell)—who is pointing towards me but not listening—said complacently, "If it ain't broke, don't mend it." I should have thought that we were all agreed on one matter in this debate, wherever else we may part company. There is precious little about which to be complacent when we consider the performance of Channel 3. That is no fault of the IBA. We have set the statutory framework.

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: No, I shall not give way. I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's point.

Many of the people who apply for franchises will have to consider seriously the performance of Channel 3. If it is to be a worthwhile business to be in, they will have to improve the performance. In 1984, ITV 1—Channel 3, as it will now be called—had on average 48·7 per cent. of the audience. That has fallen in the space of five years to 41·7 per cent. in the first three-quarters of this year. Channel 3 is supposed to be a mass audience channel.

The figures become even more striking when we consider the percentage of families who own a television who watch a channel at peak times. In 1984, on average 15 per cent. of families with a television watched BBC 1 at peak times. That remains the case in 1989. For ITV Channel 3 the figure was 21 per cent. in 1984 and 16 per cent. in 1989. If we are worried about quality, the first thing that we should ask ourselves is whether—I believe that there is a strong case for it—the quality of Channel 3 should be improved. Viewers are voting with their feet in increasing numbers. Or do we believe that Channel 3 is a monument of our culture—touch not a hair of its head? I hope that we shall be able to explore the reasons behind that thinking.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: No. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is persisting when I have given up 15 minutes of the time for my reply. The hon. Gentleman spoke for almost as long as I have to reply. I am trying to reply to the debate.

In the Bill we have sought sincerely to set out the basis upon which we can more sensibly allocate Channel 3 franchises. We have sought to find the basis on which a quality threshold can be erected which George Russell, chairman of the IBA, described as a Becher's brook. Only those who are able not only to satisfy the ITC as to the credibility of their programming, but, as my hon. Friend for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) said, able as never before to produce business plans and show the financial wherewithal to undertake such programming, will be able to participate in the tendering procedure that will allow a bid to determine the issue.

It is not envisaged that the quality threshold will be anything other than a high fence to jump. It is not envisaged that those who jump it will display the wide range of quality bids suggested. The purpose of that threshold is that it should pose a genuine obstacle and a lot of people should not be able to get over it.

I understand and appreciate the anxieties that have been expressed by hon. Members and I appreciate that the question of quality goes to the heart of the Bill. The balance between quality and money is a matter of great significance. In clause 16 we believe that we have set forth a basis upon which the ITC can properly regulate the system. The fact that in "exceptional circumstances" the ITC will not be obliged to accept the highest bidder means that we have provided an important area of discretion.

I repeat that the wording of the Bill as it presently stands is not set in concrete. There will be plenty of opportunity in Committee to consider the wording as it relates to the quality threshold and to consider whether the discretion given to the ITC is adequate. I take up the offer made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook of sensible debates in Committee on this issue.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister tell us the answer to the question that intrigues us all—what are the possible exceptional circumstances in which the highest bidder might be turned down?

Mr. Mellor: It is interesting that George Russell has also refused to deal with that—*[Interruption.]* The reason is simple; he does not want to bind his hands in advance of seeing the bids as they come in. The right hon. Gentleman asked me the question and, having answered for George Russell, I shall answer for me. If it were possible to define what we meant by "exceptional circumstances" we would not need an exceptional circumstance provision—*[Laughter.]* One would have a list, but a list is restrictive and does not give one scope for the exercise of discretion. One would be tied down unnecessarily. Opposition Members laughed more loudly than I suspect many of the Channel 3 comedy shows would have allowed them to do. If they can come up with a sensible alternative I put them on notice to do so. It is not as easy as all that.

In the end we assume that it is up to us to save our British broadcasting, but in reality it is up to us to allow British broadcasting to develop. It is up to us to put the minimum number of problems in the way of viewers and listeners getting the choice that they want. In our enthusiasm to do good we should be careful of patronising

[Mr. Mellor]

the public. I believe that the public are infinitely more sophisticated than we give them credit for. When given the opportunity the public will not settle for the lowest level of pap. I do not believe that most of us, if we are sensible, say when we meet our constituents in the high street, "Because you are only capable of settling for the lowest level of pap we have to spend hours in this place saving you from yourselves."

Some people have complacently said that all we need do is retain the status quo. The IBA carried out a survey, however, and asked the public about their viewing preferences—49 per cent. said that there was nothing on the television that they wanted to watch at the time they wanted to watch it.

The Bill stands in the great tradition of developments in broadcasting, all of which took place under a Conservative Government. I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 238.

Division No. 25] [at 10.00 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'Y'a)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony

Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Hertfs N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Begg, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'lw'n & R'dale)*
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(GT Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'de E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Corbett.]*

Question put:-

The House divided: Ayes 237, Noes 303.

Division No. 84] **[10.15**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Allon, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'ld'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carter-right, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamble, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Leslor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rose, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Mont'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walden, George
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stam'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*

Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hat'd)
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon (Bury St E')
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth N)
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie (Epsom)
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. (B'ham H'll Gr')
Hargreaves, Ken (Hyndburn)
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heyward, Robert
Hesseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen (Wolv' NE)
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Howarth, G. (Cannock & B'wd)
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'ldford)
Howell, Ralph (North Norfolk)
Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (Herts W)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Keith-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger (B'ham N'field)
King, Rt Hon Tom (Bridgwater)
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg (Derby North)
Knight, Dame Jill (Edgbaston)
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John (Pendle)
Leigh, Edward (Gainsbor'gh)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian (Havant)
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew (E Berkshire)
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meller, David
Mayer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Rt Hon P (Chester)
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris (Bath)
Patten, John (Oxford W)
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn (Conwy)
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Mrs G. (Norfolk SW)
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim (Dorset W)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
Stewart, Andy (Sherwood)
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian (Herts N)
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. (Calder Valley)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill (T'side North)
Walker, Rt Hon P. (W'caster)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Broadcasting Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Broadcasting Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses of the Secretary of State under the Act;

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

10.29 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall not detain the House for long. As I understand it, the resolution is fairly broad and, therefore, I can raise a number of issues based on the resolution and on the financial effects of the Bill which are outlined on pages ix and x.

The Secretary of State is empowered to make out of money voted by Parliament—which we shall no doubt be agreeing to shortly, on the nod—a start-up loan not exceeding £5 million for the Independent Television Commission and £3 million for the Radio Authority. As to the money that is to be spent by the commission, under the terms of clause 26 it will examine the provision to be made for Channel 5. I have no doubt that a number of regions will make representations, but Yorkshire and Humberside, with a centre based in Bradford, should be given serious consideration.

Clause 128 establishes the Broadcasting Standards Council, which will have annual running costs of approximately £1 million, and which will deal largely with a code of sex and violence. Hon. Members have already mentioned the very light hand with which the IBA has guided the running of commercial television stations. In fact, it has done so with an extremely light hand. I hope that the Broadcasting Standards Council will turn its attention not just to sex and violence on television, although I do not deny that control of those aspects is important.

The IBA completely ignored the legislation affecting natural breaks. When feature films are given their theatrical release, great efforts are made to ensure that they suffer no interruptions. But when shown on television, they are arbitrarily chopped about, to allow for the insertion of advertising. The BSC should introduce some form of regulation covering the intrusion of advertising, so that it is kept separate and distinct from programmes. Several film makers have been appalled at the way in which their efforts have been mutilated by the arbitrary insertion of commercial breaks at intervals that are convenient not for the viewer but for advertisers. The powers of the Broadcasting Standards Council should be amended in Committee to cover that problem.

Clause 5, dealing with the Bill's financial effects, is the Bill's most controversial section, because it provides for the auctioning of licences. It is suggested that the revenue thus yielded will total at least £210 million. I suspect that that is one of the main reasons for the legislation.

There is one curious aspect of the bidding procedure, about which the Broadcasting Consortium has expressed reservations. I quote from that consortium's circular, which I imagine has been sent to a number of right hon. and hon. Members. The consortium comprises a number of concerned organisations at which one would be hard put to cavil. They include Age Concern, Alcohol Concern, the British Council of Churches, Community Service Volunteers, the Deaf Broadcasting Council, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the National Council of Women, Oxfam and Save the Children Fund.

The consortium comments:

"The auction process (Clause 17) whereby the licence goes to the highest bidder will give money to the Treasury but will therefore take out of the system finance, that could and should be spent on improving the range and quality of programmes. This bidding process encourages higher bids than may be affordable. The incentive for prospective licence holders is to put in a higher cash bid to the Treasury rather than invest their resources in more than just meeting the quality threshold. There must be a danger that the highest bidder will have overbidded and have insufficient finances left to fund the range and quality of programs received. If a price can be fixed for the franchise renewal, why can't it be fixed at the outset?"

That comes from an organisation that does not have a financial vested interest, and has only the concerns of the consumer at heart. It is an important representation that goes to the heart of the Bill.

There are also some curious side issues regarding the tendering procedure. The Minister can issue qualifications for the licence by order including those, for example, for what I am sure will come to be known as the 20 per cent. rule.

Clause 163 empowers the Minister to issue orders, but it does not state whether they will be affirmative orders whether the negative procedure will be used.

Clause 163(1) provides:

"Any power of the Secretary of State to make regulations or an order under this Act shall be exercisable by statutory instrument."

Clause 165 gives a number of definitions, but they do not include a definition of a statutory instrument. Therefore, it seems that the Secretary of State will be able to alter the various qualifications for licences, and the orders that he may issue are contained in schedule 2(2)(2), which provides:

"The Secretary of State may, in the case of any category of relevant services not falling within sub-paragraph (1), by order prescribe the maximum number of licences which may at any time be held by any one person to provide relevant services falling within that category."

The House has debated ownership of the media tonight. Here is a snippet from the Bill, which shows that the Minister may change, by order, the degree of ownership. Schedule 2(2)(5), defines the category of 20 per cent., stating:—

"The Secretary of State may by order—

(a) amend sub-paragraph (1), (3) or (4) by substituting a different percentage for the percentage for the time being specified there;"

Those sub-paragraphs (1), (3) and (4) relate to the proportion of ownership that may be held by the proprietors of national and local newspapers. They are quite important powers.

I suspect that clause 163 means that the statutory instrument will not be subject to parliamentary procedure, and I realise that that is of academic interest to the House. The Minister can correct that if he chooses. If that is not the intention, he may say so.

A Bill normally includes information about whether the affirmative procedure is required. That would be most desirable because under it, the matter comes before the House, is debated and there has to be a resolution of approval. Where the negative procedure is used there can be a prayer.

Many statutory instruments do not go through the House and are not subject to any parliamentary

procedure. If the Bill is passed, containing that facility for the Minister, an important part of the power of the Bill can be exercised by him. The power is given by the House without its ever seeing the instrument. We are considering an important part of the media, and that aspect of the Bill is less than satisfactory. I hope that the Minister can give us an assurance that he will alter that in Committee, to ensure that the relevant delegated legislation comes before the House.

Clause 17 suggests another curious set of circumstances, because the commission will have powers to issue rules governing the circumstances where a person who has submitted a bid cannot take over the bid because of a breach of the commission's rules. Clause 17(8) provides:

"Any such rules shall be published by the Commission in such manner as they consider appropriate, but shall not come into force unless they have been approved by the Secretary of State."

That is not just delegating powers to the Secretary of State, it is delegating powers to the Secretary of State which he delegates to the commission; but the commission makes the rules that the Secretary of State can approve. The clause does not say that he has to approve a draft or that he has the right to refuse, although that might be implied by the fact that he has to approve them. Nevertheless, these rules, which govern an important part of the Bill—cash bids—will not come before the House. I see no requirement for the Secretary of State to bring such measures to the House by way of affirmative instrument or the negative procedure so that hon. Members have at least a slim chance of debating the issue for an hour and a half.

The power in the Bill lies in clause 17 and the cash tender provisions. It is wrong that Parliament should hand over powers over which it can no longer exercise any scrutiny. Powers such as that to determine when an Act will come into effect are delegated all the time. The House hands over many such powers to Ministers. They are routine and technical and nobody would cavil at them. I suggest that these powers, however, are germane and central to the operation of the Bill and that we should make the alterations that I have suggested.

I do not think that present arrangements for the control of delegated legislation are satisfactory. Even the minimal scrutiny that we have now is being sidestepped here. I hope that the Minister can give us an assurance. I regret that the Bill has been given a Second Reading. I voted against it. There is obviously plenty of room for improvement in its detail to allow the House some involvement in its application.

10.42 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): The Bill is predominantly about money—perhaps a little too much so. My main anxiety follows that of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—it concerns the auctioning of franchises.

One thing that nobody can say about the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is that it was well structured. He began by paying tribute to the best traditions of British public service broadcasting and ended by mocking the ghost of Lord Reith, who was the inspirer of those best traditions. I wonder whether that is a precedent—the first time a Conservative Home Secretary has mocked the ideals of Lord Reith. For my pains, I have been dubbed, with others, a Jeremiah. I tabled a motion, as have others, which together collected about 80 expressions of reservation about the Bill. That is an awful lot of Jeremiahs. It is perfectly reasonable to be pessimistic about the future of British broadcasting in view of the way in which the Government have handled not only the Bill but, much more importantly, the White Paper.

Despite the arguments put by interested and non-interested people against the franchise option right from the start of the discussion when the White Paper was issued, the Government have gone ahead with it. One is entitled to ask why they have gone ahead, having so comprehensively lost the argument.

I was shocked by the sheer shoddiness of Ministers' arguments in defence of the Bill. First we heard the contention that we had encountered all this pessimism and all those Jeremiahs 20 or 30 years ago when commercial television was introduced. That is an extremely shoddy argument because, as the Government acknowledged with their next breath, we now face a technological revolution, which quite obviously and self-evidently poses far greater threats to the quality of broadcasting than were posed in the completely different circumstances of 30 years ago. That is a shoddy and shameful argument to come from Ministers.

The Government then assure us that there is no threat to the BBC or to Channel 4, that the Bill is not concerned with them and that we are preserving the tradition of public sector broadcasting. That, too, is a shameful and misleading argument. Anyone who has spoken to people high up in the BBC and Channel 4 knows perfectly well that those people are aware that if the quality goes down in ITV—that fulcrum of British broadcasting in the centre ground—the BBC will be dragged down after it. That is what we should be debating. If we had not had such a disgracefully intellectually shallow White Paper, that issue would have been tackled right at the start. Of course the quality of the BBC and Channel 4—such as it is—is in danger. So it is quite shoddy for the Government to take the feeble line that somehow the BBC is safeguarded by not being mentioned in that context.

ITV and the terrestrial and commercial channels as they now exist are and will be at the fulcrum of the broadcasting revolution. On the one hand there will be the public service channels and traditions as exemplified best by the BBC, and on the other hand there will be satellites and all the new forms of broadcasting made possible by the advance of technology. If that central fulcrum is tipped downwards —and that is what the Bill will do—the whole industry will slide. The process has already begun. Opposition Members were quite right to point out that some broadcasting companies are already spending less on programmes in anticipation of the Bill.

We have faced a barrage of extremely cheap and shoddy arguments from the Government which, frankly, are totally unworthy of them, particularly relating to a Bill of such enormous social consequence. Why have the Government got themselves into this position? Here I stress that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State is not responsible for the Bill. He is the victim of legislative inertia which has come about because the Government, for reasons best known to themselves, cannot face the prospect of admitting that they are wrong, even when they have been proved wrong by the overwhelming body of opinion.

How did they get themselves into this corner? Let me offer three explanations. I regret to say that the first one obviously involves the animus against the broadcasting

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establishment. It is sad to say that, as it implies that the spirit of the Bill is affected by political pique against the duopoly—the broadcasting establishment—but that is the only conclusion that I can draw. The resentment against the present broadcasting establishment is, to some extent, reasonable because it has been complacent on quality, because it has shown gross efficiency—to be fair, that has now been corrected—and because there has been political bias on the BBC.

One could argue, therefore, that the Government's evident resentment against the duopoly is reasonable. But —this is the main point—we must surely look wider than that. On such a major Bill, it would be wrong and irresponsible of the Government to be influenced to the slightest degree by political pique because they are setting the future standards of British broadcasting. If they are to be influenced by political pique, let them remember that they are taking it out on the public, not on the broadcasting duopoly, and it is the public who will suffer.

The second thing that strikes me when considering the Government's motives is the sheer narrowness of their concept of broadcasting. There is a philosophical misunderstanding of how the cash nexus is applied. In the Bill, the doctrine is that the cash nexus must prevail above all—we are debating the money resolution—and considerations of public service are secondary.

The Treasury wants to make as much money as possible from broadcasting. It is completely naked about that, but what does it mean? What will it do with the few grubby extra fivers that it will get from the debasement of the British broadcasting system? It may spend them on remedial lessons for the semi-literate. That is my humble suggestion as to how it might dispose of some of the money. The Treasury—I specifically stress "the Treasury" because I do not believe that this is a Home Office point —is cynically saying, "Why cannot everyone benefit from the debasement of public service broadcasting?" That is the kernel of its argument, which is why it is such a shallow and despicable argument for a Tory Government to put.

The third motive is the most depressing. I detect in the attacks on Lord Reith, which I suspect mark a new and very sad stage in the development of the Tory party, what I call a "bread and circuses" philosophy. I do not believe that the Government care much about the quality of television that people watch. The unspoken philosophy is, "They watch trash, they like trash, so we shall give them more trash." That is what is behind the Bill, because no one who had thought about it in historical or social terms or who had read a book about popular culture, of the kind that people have been writing for hundreds of years from Dr. Johnson onwards, could put their name or subscribe to this cheap and shoddy Bill.

The Government are at a stage from which they cannot retreat, and that is sad. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister made noises about possible compromises, which I considered carefully, but they do not go to the heart of the matter. If they had any imagination or sense of responsibility—that is what it amounts to—they would study hard the alternatives put forward, particularly by the Campaign for Quality Broadcasting. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has courteously received and talked to those people. All that the Government would have to do is show a modicum of political courage and say, "No, we haven't got it right; this time we aren't right just because everyone else is taking the opposite view." This time the Government should have the courage to stand their proposal on its head.

Perhaps the Government do not understand what I am making such a fuss about, or even what I am talking about. In that case, I have no means of conveying my meaning to them, but if they do not make a fundamental change in their attitude on this auction of franchises, not just a mealy-mouthed compromise, and if they want to know what I am going on and on about, let them imagine how the history books in 10 years' time, at the turn of the millennium, will look back at the present Administration. The history books will say, "They did well in the Falklands, they raised the standard of living and they gave Britain back a bit of self-confidence", but then they will say, "but they also made it a cheaper and nastier country" —because that is what this Bill is all about.

In conclusion, I want to explain why I voted against the Bill, bearing in mind that we are discussing the money resolution. I do not find the talk about compromise at all reassuring, because the Government in their despicably shallow White Paper started from such an extreme position on the cash nexus alone that even if they move to the middle ground they will not have moved very far towards sanity. I do not hold out much hope to my hon. Friends who, like me, are disturbed by the Bill, in terms of what will happen in Committee. I am sorry to say that I suspect that the Government will not show sufficient political courage to say, "Look we've got it wrong, so we're going to turn the proposal on its head and take a lead."

I leave the Government with one bit of advice about their future speechwriting if they do not take that course. To start with, they will have to take out all the stuff about "family values" because people will laugh in their faces if they go ahead with the Bill and continue to preach about family values. The sort of people who are interested in these franchises are not very interested in family values.

Secondly, the Government can stop suggesting that the Church of England is falling down on its spiritual duties to the nation. That sort of high-sounding stuff will have to go out of their speeches, too, because one cannot sell the most powerful cultural medium in the country for a few bits of silver and then blame it all on the bishops.

Finally, the Government's speechwriters will have to stop all the stuff about how the teachers must do a better job in the classroom. One cannot take that line if one is simultaneously dishing the dirt on the selfsame children in their homes.

One way and another, we can look forward to some pretty thin speeches on political subjects from the Tory Front Bench. Rather than get themselves into the absurd and hypocritical position of going on about moral and spiritual values and the rest while selling out to the cheapjacks in broadcasting, I suggest that the Government think again.

10.58 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) made a brave and courageous speech. I hope that his hon. Friends who disagreed fundamentally with what he said will at least admire his courage in saying it. His speech clearly came from someone who believes strongly in the subject which

he was debating. I am glad that I stayed long enough to hear him. Knowing how the Conservative party is intolerant of opposition, especially in its own ranks, I hope that nothing untoward happens to the hon. Gentleman on the way home this evening. When the ancient cry of "Who goes home?" goes up, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will select a couple of stalwart friends to accompany him across the park or wherever else he is going.

During the previous debate—I am now speaking on the money resolution—it was interesting that Conservative and Opposition Members agreed on several issues. At one stage, I felt sensitive about being considered to be unadventurous and something of a conservative. It put me in mind of a poem that Christopher Logue wrote in 1966. In a debate on the money resolution I shall not go through it, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it is exceedingly long. It gives a serious of reasons why people should vote Labour. It said, for example:

"I shall vote Labour because God votes Labour.

I shall vote Labour because my husband looks like Anthony Wedgwood Benn."

That rather dates it.

"I shall vote Labour because I want to shop in a covered precinct stretching from Yeovil to Glasgow.

I shall vote Labour because if I don't vote Labour my balls will drop off;

I shall vote Labour because the Queen's stamp collection is the best in the world."

It concludes by saying:

"I shall vote Labour because deep in my heart I am really a Conservative

The standard of public sector broadcasting in Britain is genuinely admired not only here but around the world. In attempting to conserve it and move away from the ludicrous idea of auctioning franchises, Opposition Members are conservatives on the grounds that we recognise that certain standards and institutions are worth conserving. That is the whole point; that is why I welcome the words of the hon. Member for Buckingham, and associate myself closely with them.

I do not intend to cover all the points made in the Second Reading debate. Opposition Members are worried because, if we are wrong, we may be embarrassed in a few years, but no damage will have been done. But if the Government are wrong, enormous damage will have been done to something important. It is not for us to disprove the Government's position. It is for the Government to prove their position because they propose such a fundamental change in the structure of broadcasting.

The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) said that television was better in the United States. I have seen television in the United States, and I cannot say that I thought that it was better than British television. No Conservative Member has pointed to a country where the standards, choice and variety on television is better than in this country.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I am fortunate to spend a good deal of time in southern California. The range and intellectual content of programmes and the choice available to the public is vastly greater than anything in Britain.

Mr. Banks: I had been wondering where the hon. Gentleman had been in recent months. I have now discovered that he was in southern California. I hope that he was serving the interests of his constituents well. The United States is an enormous country, and television in southern California might be better than that——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: In London.

Mr. Banks: No, in Washington and New York. My experience is based not on frequent visits but on several visits on parliamentary business such as fact-finding tours. I watched television in New York and Washington, and I did not find that the standard or variety was better than here. The hon. Gentleman will not find support for his view among members of the population who have seen American television.

We oppose the Bill because more channels do not necessarily mean more variety. More television does not even mean better television. If there are to be 57 varieties of the same and more chewing gum for the eyes, we shall not be any closer to obtaining the standards of excellence and variety that we expect.

We want to conserve what is good, but we are not reactionary and just resisting the idea of change. Many things could be done to the structure of television and broadcasting to improve it immeasurably. So far, nothing in the Bill or in the money resolution offers us such improvements.

We will resist the Bill in Committee. In view of my modest contribution tonight, I hope that the Committee of Selection might even contemplate putting me on that Committee. I should like to cross swords with the Minister. For the moment, however, we are united in grief as Chelsea supporters. I am sure that that small common point will be lost when we get down to discussing the Bill.

We believe that the Government's proposal will undermine standards that are accepted in this country as being among the finest in the world. On this occasion I am proud to say that I am a conservative with a small "c".

11.5 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I share the hesitations of those who are pausing for thought before they vote the moneys for the Secretary of State to operate under the Bill now it has received its Second Reading. I share some of the anxieties encapsulated by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) and by other earlier speakers.

As Conservatives we are rightly proud of the system that we set up about 30 years ago, which combined the BBC services with those of the new ITV companies. That system was approved despite ferocious opposition from the Labour party, and by luck as well as by judgment the mixture has worked extremely well. I share the dismay about the encomia expressed for American television, as I think that, apart from Australia, its television is the worst in the world. I allow myself to be chauvinistic about our television, which is unusual for me, as I am a true internationalist and a keen European. By luck and by judgment, we have the best television in the world and we are rightly proud of it.

When the Minister replied to the debate, he had the opportunity to refer to the possibility of giving serious reconsideration to the tender, auction, maximum-bid, sealed-envelope system proposed in the Bill. That is an obnoxious system if ever I heard one and it is a pity that my hon. and learned Friend did not offer the House the concession that, in Committee, profound amendments would be made to the proposal, including the

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augmentation and reinforcement of quality considerations and criteria. With his usual adroitness, all that my hon. and learned Friend referred to was the possibility of rewording some of the threshold descriptions. That is inadequate to those of my hon. Friends who share my genuine hesitations.

I am not one of those Conservatives who would attack the Archbishop of Canterbury—I do not need to create a macho image by doing so—because I support him. He said that broadcasting is not just like an ordinary business and that there is a big difference between making programmes to make money and making money to make programmes. Mostly by luck rather than by judgment, we have achieved that unique combination contained in the latter phrase. That has benefited the public interest and has provided the essential balance in the duopoly system produced by the right kind of competition. Channel 4 is living proof of what can be done by mixing intelligent commercialism with the necessary subvention.

Most of my colleagues were keen to criticise Channel 4 when it started, claiming that it was subversive and that it would be inimical to the political opinions that we might represent. Now I find that, virtually without exception, most of my colleagues praise Channel 4 and regard it as a great success. It has contributed to the general average quality of television.

What a shame that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister was unable to give those necessary concessions. That is why we should hesitate before we vote on the money resolution, and why I urge colleagues with my feelings of hesitation to vote against the motion or to abstain on it, as on Second Reading.

11.12 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Before voting on the money resolution, the House should consider a few matters. When the previous Home Secretary spoke on the original White Paper, one theme of his speech was the notion of regulation with a light touch. As one who has worked for two ITV companies, I find that notion one that fills me with horror.

I have experienced regulation with a heavy touch. I worked for an existing ITV station, TV-am, which was regulated with a heavy touch. I remember the day when the man from the London electricity board came round to cut off our electricity because the company had not paid the bill, and the month when nobody received their salary on time because the money was not in the bank.

I remember, after we had had perhaps possibly our third change of ownership, sitting at my VDU when the new chairman, Lord Marsh, came round. We fell to talking about the previous chairman, Peter Jay. Lord Marsh said to me, "Funny thing about Peter Jay—we" —meaning the board members—"knew he knew nothing about business but thought that he knew all about journalism." I said, "Funny you should say that. The journalists knew he knew nothing about journalism but thought that he knew all about business."

Those were the kind of people that the old, unregulated system allowed to run ITV companies. Within months of TV-am getting the franchise, it was able to dump virtually all the proposals with which it won the franchise. If that was heavy regulation, Opposition Members look forward with trepidation to light regulation.

The other issue that we should consider before voting on the resolution is the concentration of ownership, which was raised on 7 November. The then Home Secretary said that there should not be a concentration of ownership. Mr. Ruper Murdoch owns four national daily papers and one satellite television company and is widely rumoured to be in the running to bid for LWT when the auction takes place. If that is not a concentration of ownership, I do not know what is.

If the Bill will not address the position as regards Rupertt Murdoch, it is idle to talk of its ensuring that there is not a concentration of ownership. It will not do for the Minister to mouth "Robert Maxwell" over the Dispatch Box to my hon. Friends. We do not care who has the concentration of ownership. The sort of concentration of ownership that people like Rupert Murdoch currently have in British broadcasting and media is inimical to the interests of a free press and democracy. We want the Government to come forward with serious proposals against it.

Many Conservative Members do not understand how regulation works. It is not enough to say that the companies will be obliged to do something about children's programmes and regional programmes. The reason why regulation has worked in the past is that it is quite specific about when those programmes go out and about their quality. Under the Bill, companies will be allowed to get away with their obligation to children's television by putting out dirt-cheap, ages-old Popeye cartoons in the middle of the night. The Bill contains nothing to stop a company getting away with that.

It seems that, in the headlong pursuit of market values, Conservative Members are willing to throw away all that is good about British television. Having worked for an ITV company, I would not go overboard pontificating about standards——

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Broadcasting Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses of the Secretary of State under the Act;

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.

Broadcasting Bill *[Ways and Means]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Broadcasting Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise the inclusion of—

(1) provisions under or by virtue of which holders of licences granted under the Act by the Independent Television Commission established under the Act are or may be required—

(a) to pay or forfeit sums to that body in connection with such licences;

(b) to pay sums to that body as contributions towards the expenses of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission; and

(c) to make payments to the Channel Four Television Corporation established under the Act;

and provision for sums falling within sub-paragraph (a) or (b) to be paid into the Consolidated Fund;

(2) provisions under or by virtue of which holders of licences granted under the Act by the Radio Authority established under the Act are or may be required—

(a) to pay or forfeit sums to that body in conection with such licences; and

(b) to pay sums to that body as contributions towards the expenses of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission;

and provision for such sums to be paid into the Consolidated Fund;

(3) provisions under which the Welsh Authority (within the meaning of the Act) are required to pay sums as contributions towards the expenses of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, and provision for such sums to be paid into the Consolidated Fund;

(4) provisions requiring the payment of any other sums into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, this is an entirely separate debate. I know that the Minister is aggrieved at not having been able to reply to the earlier debate, so may I ask for your indulgence in this debate, and ask you to allow the Minister to answer some of the points from the earlier debate, given the wideness of this motion?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Both motions are wide. If the Minister seeks to catch my eye, I shall certainly call him, and I am sure that he will respond to this debate.

11.15 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Before I come to the detailed points in the motion—as I shall—it would be right to comment briefly on the extraordinary speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden).

I very much admire my hon. Friend's clarity and passion, but his speech—I say this with the greatest affection and respect—was studded with an arrogance that did him no credit. He is not in a position to deliver a lecture to his fellow Conservative Members in the terms that he did.

My hon. Friend said that the duopoly showed many signs of complacency, inefficiency and occasional bias. That is true, but he did not suggest what he would do about that. Many of us feel that it is the public, whom he seeks to protect from what he described as filth, who require some protection against the complacency, inefficiency and bias—to use his terms—that are evident in some of the programmes broadcast by the BBC and the independent television companies——

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham) : Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I will not. I sought to intervene in my hon. Friend's speech, and he did not show the courtesy of allowing me to do so. My hon. Friend's speech went way over the top, and I want to record the fact that he does not speak for many Conservative Members.

What we seek for our constituents—this motion will give them it—is a much wider range of choice, because they are for the most part adult, sophisticated people who are perfectly capable of forming their own judgments. I remember the famous phrase, "Trust the people". I am prepared to trust the people to make their own judgments, provided that they are given a wide range of choices.

British television—I am as entitled to my opinion as anyone else—has been the best in the world. A great deal of it remains incomparably so, but we have been overtaken in some areas, notably by the United States and, to a lesser extent, by the Federal Republic of Germany.

There is a much wider range of choice of good and bad programmes in the United States. I spend a good deal of time there, as does the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), in pursuit of British interests, and I want to mention some of the programmes that are available in America but are not available here.

In California, which takes services from across the country, there are about 50 channels. I concede at once that about 10 or 15 of them purvey trash—the same sort of trash as the BBC and ITV buy from the Americans to show here. I want nothing to do with those programmes; but there is, at the same time, a range of other quality and minority channels that people in this country cannot even hope to receive.

For example, in southern Calfornia, there is a channel wholly devoted to the environment—to nature, animals and forestry. We sometimes buy bits of that marvellous programming. Another channel is wholly devoted to the Hispanic and Mexican minorities in California. Another is devoted to the Japanese minority, who pay for it—and good luck to them for doing so.

Cable News Network is a well-known 24-hour-a-day news programme which people can turn on and get direct news from the whole world of a quality that at the moment we do not match. I regret that, but it is true.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No. I want to deliver my speech as quickly as possible.

Another programme confines itself to verbatim debates not only in the two Houses of Congress and the state legislatures but to debates in universities on the most esoteric and complex subjects. Such programmes are not available here. The American public are not more intelligent than our public, but they have a wider choice and they exercise it. I hope that the Bill, enabled by the ways and means resolution, will give the British people more choice so that they can make their own judgments.

I shall end as I started, with my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham, who spoke at length——

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman is outlining in great detail the qualities, as he perceives them, of American television. Will he give the House some validation of his view by telling us how much time he has spent watching

[Mr. Cryer]

American television? Has he visited America casually or does he visit it regularly? Has he gained his information over a regular period of many months?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am happy to oblige the hon. Gentleman. I spent 17 years in the United States as an editor of *Time* and *Newsweek International* and of the *Washington Post*. I frequently go back to the United States to deliver lectures at universities and I go there on business trips. I keep close contact with American television and I think that I speak with knowledge of the subject.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No, I must get on with my speech.

If the Reith standards of the BBC had remained at the core of our broadcasting I would be perfectly happy with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham. However, time has moved on and, unfortunately, the BBC all too often engages in what my hon. Friend described as bias and in what I would call occasional vendettas.

A large proportion of the American air force is in my constituency. A year or 18 months ago, the BBC suggested in a programme that the pilots of its F111 aircraft were sex-crazed maniacs who for strange psycho-sexual reasons were desperate to "nuke" the Soviet Union. That programme was a total travesty. It was then virtually repeated in the BBC's own publication. Protests were made at every level, but at first the BBC arrogantly refused to have anything to do with them.

In the past week, too, the BBC once again produced a travesty of the truth when it suggested that the American air force had interfered in the business of the House by suggesting that, if the Government privatised the Property Services Agency, the American air force would object in some way or another. The American air force did no such thing. The BBC lied and knew that it was lying.

That is one of the problems that we have to face. One cannot discipline a broadcasting organisation. Having been an editor, I would resist any effort by politicians to do so. However, it is necessary for our people to have a wider range of choice so that, as sophisticated individuals, they can make up their own minds. My complaint about my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham is that he simply will not trust the people.

11.23 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I rise to deliver a brief speech. In so doing, I declare a financial interest in the broadcasting industry. Above all, the Bill tackles the technological advances which already face us. I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) because I do not think that there is any attempt on the part of the Government to "dish the dirt". As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said, the aim is to trust the people. After all, with the vast amount of choice that is to become available, the individual viewer and not the executive of the television company will become the programmer.

Technically, quality is a relatively easy thing to get a grip on. The essential problem is one of programme content, and it is vital because of the enormous power and influence of television. We have seen growing evidence of the fact that bad language and violence on television are beginning to affect behaviour in real life, so this is a most important issue, and one that is difficult to define.

Quality also varies according to individual taste. When the golf enthusiast sees a lot of golf on televison, he feels that he is seeing television on high quality, but the tennis enthusiast seeing endless golf might feel it to be low quality. It all depends on the individual tastes and interests of the viewer.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): As a golf enthusiast, I cannot allow my hon. Friend to get away with that. The quality of golf reporting in Britain is superb. In America, it is awful.

Mr. Browne: I shall not disagree with my hon. Friend, who is a far better golfer than I am. None the less, the definition of quality varies according to the taste and background interests of the individual making the judgment. Quality is a subjective, individual value judgment. It also varies with time. A television audience 40 years ago, before golf was widely played or American football widely known over here, would have considered programmes on such sports to be low-quality television.

I hope that the Government will allow the ITC tremendous flexibility. If they appoint people with good and proven judgment, of varying backgrounds and interests and representing a wide spectrum of age groups, the flexibility permitted in the Bill will be important in allowing those people the freedom to exercise their judgment.

It has been said that competitive tender bidders will outbid themselves, and that quality will suffer. I do not agree, and the most important reason for my disagreement is the single word "competition". Competition will come from DBS, cable and the other terrestrial stations, such as BBC 1, BBC 2 and Channel 4, which will remain—and they will remain as benchmarks. The competition in television is for viewers. If viewers do not like a programme, they will switch channels. Effectively, the viewers will become the programmers. If the programmes are no good, the viewers will not watch them. If, in the viewers' perspective, the standards of programmes drop, they will switch to other programmes. The Bill caters for that in a clever way, by allowing that flexibility for the ITC.

Control is an important issue. I accept that cross-ownership has existed for some time, but with global information societies, this is an increasingly serious problem. Cross-control is a more serious issue, so we should keep looking at the 20 per cent. hurdle. In a company with many small shareholders, a 20 per cent. shareholder can exercise "effective" control. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister should examine that aspect in Committee.

Another important sector is religion. We have to ask ourselves exactly what counts as religion and to ensure that cults with religious titles do not creep in under the guise of genuine religious organisations. That is another important matter for the Committee.

All in all, I think that the Bill tackles a difficult subject in a way that will correctly adapt to the technological change that we now have to accept. The Bill allows for flexibility and for real choice to be exercised by the viewer. By trusting the viewer, we shall have the best quality that we can possibly get in the circumstances. The flexibility

being allowed for the ITC will be greatly to the benefit of maintaining that quality. I think that the Bill should be supported.

11.30 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I shall intervene only briefly in this debate. It might be slightly repetitious, but I do not think that it would be out of order to express the hope once again that even at this stage my hon. and learned Friend the Minister might refer to the possibility of concessions being made in Committee. That would help hon. Members on both sides of the House who have genuine and profound anxieties about the proposals as they stand. We are not nit-picking or being difficult for the sake of it. We are not trying to appear to be pseudo-intellectuals, which is always difficult for any politician, anyway.

I ask my hon. and learned Friend to accept that we have serious problems to resolve in our own minds, having had conversations with many people about these matters. It is a fact, not merely an opinion, that if the maximum tender system comes into play only a long time after the quality threshold has been passed, those with the most financial muscle are bound to secure tenders for the new franchises, without any exception that I can discern on any near horizon.

Although the House has voted against the Bill being considered by a Special Standing Committee—I voted against the proposition because I think that the Bill can be perfectly well dealt with by a normal Committee—I think that it would be helpful to the House, even at this late stage, when we are considering the more technical aspects of the ways and means motion, for the Minister to offer some assurances about the proceedings in Committee. Over the years we have become used to consideration in Committee being meaningless, save for one or two exceptions in the form of significant and principal Bills in recent Sessions. Consideration in Committee has become a ritual. The argumentation is supplied by either side and one or two minority parties chip in occasionally.

Nothing else happens. Divisions are of no significance, as the Government always win because of the Committee's composition. I am old-fashioned and naive, perhaps. I thought that, occasionally, a Government would accept genuine and improving amendments when it became clear that it was important that certain changes should be made. Surely there should be intellectual adjustments in Committee when there has been serious reconsideration. That does not mean that the Government would be surrendering the commanding heights of their favourite proposals for the greater development of the market economy, and surely broadcasting must be an example par excellence where such changes could be made on that basis in Committee.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister has already told the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), with enthusiasm, that he will welcome genuine discussions, and perhaps even some changes, in Committee. We are used to Ministers saying that sort of thing at this stage. When the Bill goes into Committee, however, the old ritual starts again. The Government Whips say that nothing must be changed, because all Conservative Members voted for the Bill on Second Reading. In effect, they say, "This is just going through the motions. We must get the Bill through Committee as quickly as possible." Most of the hon. Members who are supporting the Government get on with their correspondence and pay little attention to the debates. That is the reality of Committee proceedings nowadays.

Perhaps this debate is being televised. I doubt it, because those who are responsible for the cameras tend to go home now. I think, however, that it would be a good idea if the public knew rather more about these matters. It would be interesting if the proceedings of the Committee that considers the Bill were televised. I think that only two Select Committees have been televised so far. The Public Accounts Committee was televised once or twice, and I think one other Committee during this Session. If those who are responsible for the broadcasting contract in the House read my words, perhaps they will consider that the Committee that considers this Bill would provide excellent television. That would enable the public to take a closer interest in the Bill and hon. Members would not necessarily feel obliged to read their letters and to undertake their correspondence.

If anyone thinks that I am criticising my colleagues, far from it. Hon. Members are overworked and they have to do their correspondence in Committee. They receive so many letters and there are only a certain number of hours in the day. They do not have time to be in Committee for long hours and—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a long way from the ways and means motion.

Mr. Dykes: I shall return immediately to the theme of the motion, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is the way in which hon. Members do their work, and it flows over into the Committee stage.

With great respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), I think that he misunderstands the notion and definition of quality. He meant the subjective pleasure, or lack of it, which any viewer can get from different types of programmes, depending on his cultural propensities—and I know that my hon. Friend has many, as do other hon. Members. Others were thinking more of the element that is included in the financial considerations for the potential new franchisee, which is a definition of quality that should be decided and implemented at that stage, not at a previous stage when there is some uneasy definition of a Becher's brook threshold of quality, well before the actual financial application in a sealed envelope is made.

I hope that my hon. Friend now understands the important difference between those points. I think that others have also misunderstood. Again, it denies us the opportunity to hark back to what has been best in the British combination of television. With all due deference to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), with his great knowledge of the United States, and therefore also of American television, the general opinion of most well educated Americans to whom I have spoken, and many Americans who have travelled to other countries and are, in a sense, the man and woman in the street, is that by and large they have Mickey Mouse television. Advertisements take 15 or 16 minutes of every hour, which is double what is allowed under United Kingdom regulations. The advertisements, unlike those on British television, are not witty, amusing and self-effacing in promoting the sale of products, but just monotonous slogan advertisements.

[Mr. Dykes]

My hon. Friend—with justification, in view of the argument that he deployed—quoted a number of more esoteric public interest programmes. They certainly exist in the USA, often subsidised and subvented by the state governments. The CNN international news network is a great success, but my hon. Friend and I know what happens when we flit between the 30 channels on the New York service. The minority channels might strike us as better because they are in a foreign language, but they are usually the same programmes—the quiz shows, the soaps, the rubbish and the cartoons. That is the fate of American television. We are going down that path with these proposals.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I do not think so, as my hon. Friend was not here for most of our debates.

That is the danger that we face with these proposals, unless there are central alterations to what my hon. and learned Friend enunciated earlier of just sticking to the financial tender system.

There are many aspects to which, if there were time, I would refer, but it would be out of order. Hon. Members should hesitate before approving this motion. I understand that this debate has no time limit, so they should oblige the House to think profoundly about the dangers before voting on the motion.

11.38 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I shall be brief. At the end of a day's debate on this subject, I am almost astounded at the way in which the House seems to have been gripped with some sort of fervour of unreality. Many of the speeches have been over the top. If we look back on this debate in 10 years' time, some may be somewhat ashamed of the Armageddon pictures that they have painted.

All my family, apart from me, have made their livelihoods in television. Many of the programmes that they made were successful, and many of them were forgettable. It is remarkable that most hon. Members' memories today have been selective. They have remembered the good programmes and called them "quality", but they have forgotten the bad programmes. It is almost as though the bad programmes never existed—as though the programmes on every channel which died the death, often after hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of pounds worth of development, have been entirely forgotten.

Many right hon. and hon. Members also seem to forget that speeches of the kind heard today were made on the introduction of the IBA, BBC 2, and Channel 4. Today we are merely helping the process of developing a fifth channel of terrestrial television, and thereby broadening the broadcasting base, by using a technology which already exists. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) stated specifically that the Broadcasting Bill is leading us down the road to cartoons, soaps and quizzes. How can he take such a view when we are clearly already in the era of cartoons, soaps and quizzes? We are also already in the era of vast choice in broadcasting, and an extra channel will make no difference.

The terms of the ways and means motion are similar in many respects to the existing system. The Government are not tearing up the existing system but leaving in place the majority of its provisions and maintaining its funding for the foreseeable future. I ask the House to consider whether allowing extra choice means going down the path towards total destruction of our children's lives. Is there really any truth in Miss Biddy Baxter's claim that children's television programmes will hardly be able to be made once the Broadcasting Bill becomes law? There will always be dedicated broadcasters producing children's programmes and every other type of programme. Many of those programmes will "pay", and many will not. Happily, however, there will be a broad range of channels, some of which will "pay" and some of which will provide a public broadcasting service.

A sad aspect of today's debate has been the way in which quality has largely been dictated by those who already make television programmes—almost as though people currently unable to do so have no understanding of what quality means. Nor has it been mentioned that the existing structure allows certain individuals working for the BBC to receive salaries as high as £350,000 or £400,000 per year from public funds. If more channels mean that competition among broadcasters is lessened, so that the price paid for them is lowered, I for one shall welcome that.

I find it somewhat obscene for a broadcaster to criticise my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for paying judges and generals £70,000 per year from public funds when other people are unemployed while the broadcaster himself is receiving a salary of four or five times that amount from public funds. There is a great deal of hypocrisy, cant, needless fear and exaggeration—and many speeches which will not mean very much in the long run, thanks to the programmes that will continue to be made by our excellent established broadcasters and by others new to the profession.

As for Sky Television, I defy anyone to watch Sky News and to argue convincingly that it is biased one way or the other. I must declare an interest in that my sister occasionally presents a programme on Sky Television, but I am sorry to say that I have not watched it—only because it is not the kind of programme that I usually watch. My preference is for news and sport, and Sky's news and sports channels are excellent. If they are examples of the "degradation" that television will suffer, right hon. and hon. Members must have their interpretation utterly wrong.

I will raise one sticking point with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. The extra choice in radio will be welcomed by many minority and regional groups and by other dedicated interests throughout the country. However, although I support the Bill, the quality threshold must be examined in Committee. For me, the sticking point will be that, if ball-by-ball test match commentaries are no longer broadcast on the radio, I may change my mind about the Bill.

11.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) declared an interest in television production, but I think that he understands that most right hon. and hon. Members represent the interests of the viewers.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. I said that most of my family are involved in television production, but that I am simply a viewer.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful for that clarification, and, as a viewer, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in my remarks and in the questions that I shall put to the Minister.

This debate is something of a curiosity. We are used to money resolutions by which the House authorises money to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund to implement the purposes of a Bill if it becomes an Act of Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) quite properly specialises in drawing the House's attention to that. However, we are now discussing a Ways and Means resolution, and that is the opposite, as it is concerned with raising money.

For example, the Chancellor's Budget is concerned with the ways and means of raising revenue. A ways and means resolution is unusual in a Bill because it means—the Government have made no secret of it, although it has not been a major feature of the debate so far—that they expect to get revenue for the Consolidated Fund as a result.

Paragraph (4), the final paragraph, of the ways and means resolution refers to

"provisions requiring the payment of any other sums into the Consolidated Fund."

The ways and means resolution makes provision for money to be so raised for payment to the ancillary bodies —the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, Channel Four Television Corporation and the new radio authority. The Government clearly envisage a substantial payment into the Consolidated Fund, and the Home Secretary said as much, in an aside, when he opened the Second Reading debate. He said that the Bill was designed to get as much money from television as possible to pay into the Consolidated Fund, and he stated that as if it were a virtue.

Colleagues in the Chamber now may remember that I challenged the Home Secretary, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), about how much it would amount to per person per week in taxation. The individual amount is small, but the income to the Consolidated Fund is not known.

What sort of sums does the Minister expect to raise each year from what must be seen as a tax on television? Perhaps he will correct me if I am wrong, but at the moment television costs in Britain are paid by the licence fee, which funds the BBC, and by advertising revenue. As I understand it, the Bill maintains the BBC, which individual licence holders pay for, but reverses the flow of money in to the Exchequer, because as a result of advertising, the Exchequer will take its cut.

Clause 114(1) makes it plain that,

"Where the Authority receive in respect of any licence any of the amounts specified in subsection (2), that amount shall not form part of the revenues of the Authority but shall"

be paid into the Exchequer. In other words, the authority deducts what it costs to keep itself going, and pays the surplus into the Exchequer.

Clause 114 refers us to two other clauses—the Bill is complicated—one of which, clause 96(1), refers us to clause 80(1)(c) in respect of fees. A money collection mechanism is hidden in the Bill. It is not written clearly on the face of it, but is done by reference to previous clauses.

Clause 110 is about the cash bids that will be put in to obtain a franchise. As I read it, clause 110 provides that that money also will go to the Exchequer. We have here a system of television taxation. It is hidden. It is not clearly on the face of the Bill, but it is an integral part of it. I invite the Minister, when he replies to the debate on this important motion, to tell me whether I have got it wrong. If I have not, we are imposing a tax on broadcasting analogous to a tax on newspapers or books. If the Minister would like to tell me now that I have misread the Bill, I shall be pleased to give way to him. If he does not, I can only assume that I am correct.

So far, this matter has not received the attention it deserves. If we pass the motion, we are surely agreeing in principle that the Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister, some political adviser or the Government communications publicity manager should specify what sums should be paid over. We are taking out of the common ether, which is surely public property, a system of hidden taxation which means that the taxes can ultimately be paid for only by advertising revenue.

Mr. Hanley: Could revenue not also come from the sale of products and other merchandise?

Mr. Spearing: I understand that the television authority which the Bill envisages is not a marketing concern. It is a marketing concern only in respect of awarding licences for transmission. I am not aware of its being involved in the production or sale of articles or anything else. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it has such authority and wishes to correct me, I shall gladly give way again. If it has such authority, I suspect that it is in respect of transmission stations, electrical equipment or something ancillary to its main function. It is unlikely that substantial revenue is involved.

Clause 157 was mentioned briefly on Second Reading. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook properly said that it would be possible for one of the satellite stations which is not covered by the monopoly 20 per cent. limitations to put in a bid for one of the listed national events. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent such a bid from being successful. Clause 157(1) provides:

"The Independent Television Commission shall do all that they can to secure that any programme which consists of or includes the whole or any part of a listed event shall not be included on pay-per-view terms in any service provided by the holder of a licence granted by the Commission under Part I of this Act."

I emphasise the words

"shall do all that they can".

On Second Reading, the Home Secretary himself made it quite clear that the ITC does not have the power to stop it. So the phrase "do all that they can" is uncharacteristic of any Bill that I have seen, because it does not provide the powers to prohibit.

Will the Minister of State kindly give me his attention? He has had plenty of time to consult on these matters before tonight. Is it not a fact that the proprietor of any satellite station, but in particular Sky Television, which is not covered by the 20 per cent. rule, could make a bid for the cup final or any other major sporting event—the cup final probably commands the greatest potential viewership —and pay a substantial sum? Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether that sum goes to the Independent Television Commission or straight to the Exchequer. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook described that sum as a loss leader, but he did not go on to say why it might be a loss leader.

[Mr. Spearing]

Although I am not well informed about technology, I understand that one needs a bowl to receive those television stations, particularly Sky. Therefore, some capital investment is required. At present, that station faces the difficulty that its viewership is limited and there are not all that many bowls around, although the number is probably increasing. If the proprietor of Sky Television or any other station—I am not singling out Sky, although it has different status under the Bill—goes to the Football Association and puts in a massive bid for several million pounds which tops any bid from any public corporation, that station would get exclusive rights.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said that he would not like choice to be restricted, but if such a station won, he would not be able to choose to watch the cup final on a BBC or existing ITV channel. He would have to buy a bowl or use some other subscription service.

There would be great encouragement for people to invest in one of those bowls. I am old enough to remember how people saved up to invest in televisions so that they could see the coronation. People would invest in satellite bowls so that they could see the cup final and they would say, "It is a lot of money just to watch the cup final, but it will give us viewing afterwards." That would be to the considerable advantage of whichever contractor won, because people would get the bowls, and the potential viewership of that contractor would immediately shoot straight up.

That is the possible effect of clause 157 as drafted. Of course, that has revenue implications, because, under the mechanism which I have just mentioned, the Exchequer would be able to get more money out of that contractor via the Independent Television Commission.

I shall conclude by reiterating the two points that I have raised. First, it appears that the Bill contains a means of hidden taxation on the British people via the television system of the future. It means that Her Majesty's Government can assess the Independent Television Commission, the viewers and the sellers of merchandise for an unspecified amount. Inevitably that will have a secondary effect on quality, as the mass of merchandise and viewership will be in a better position to pay such taxation.

Secondly, by not providing powers to limit the listed events to the existing public television services, the Bill could give a shot in the arm to any satellite broadcaster who wishes to invest in a loss leader. I invite the Minister of State, in his reply to this important debate, to correct me if I am wrong in either of those broad assertions, as I believe them to be true. I challenge the Minister to tell me whether they are true. If they are, the Bill contains something far worse than has been recognised so far tonight, and there have already been enough speeches on those lines.

11.59 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I do not wish to detain the House, but I want to make a few remarks on the ways and means resolution.

Having listened to the speeches, I support the Bill because the general impression that I have from all the wise pontificating is that the Bill will not make much difference to broadcasting standards. It might make them a bit better or a bit worse, but I think that it is unwise for anyone to reach any conclusions about that and, by and large, I think that it is a more sensible business arrangement.

I wish to ask the Minister a question, and I hope that he will think carefully about it. Under the resolution, much cash will be given to the Consolidated Fund and to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. Is there any way in which it might be used to deal with the greatest threat to standards in Britain—the programmes that will be launched to this country from other countries by satellites featuring soft and hard pornography and the most dreadful violence? I appreciate that that is a difficult problem. The Government have imposed minor rules, whereby, if a pornographic programme advertises Coca Cola, we can have a bash at Coca Cola in Britain, but the Minister must be aware that that is a limited control.

It is a waste of time talking for eight or 10 hours about minor changes in the standards of British broadcasting when we face a horrific and savage assault on them purely as a result of satellite activities. It is not as though they will transmit from far distant places. We know that in some European countries plans will shortly be announced to transmit soft and hard pornography. Is there anything that we can do to arrest that trend? Can we do anything through the United Nations? We know that resolutions of the Council of Europe are entirely ineffective, because some are being widely disregarded.

If the Minister cares about broadcasting standards, as every father of young children does, will he do anything to restrict or control the activities of friendly countries—some on the continent of Europe and some a bit further away—which will be sending pornographic programmes into the homes of Britain? If we care about broadcasting standards, we should regard that as a crusade and not spend hours discussing what may be marginal changes in standards arising from the provisions of the Bill.

12.2 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I should like to detain the House briefly to place on record two technical matters arising from the ways and means motion. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will not reply to them tonight but will take the opportunity to discuss them with colleagues at the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry and perhaps mention them in Committee later.

The first relates to the development of cable television. Some people have said that the installation of cable in this country has been slow. If that is so, and I believe that it is, those who served on the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 bear some responsibility, because it was they—I was one of them—who prevented foreign investment in cable in Britain. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister has sought to make provision in the Bill to rectify that, and I hope and believe that investment will be encouraged and that the development of cable will be swift.

In the motion and in the Bill there is the possibility of a levy on cable. I ask my hon. and learned Friend to consider with his colleagues whether that might be a disincentive to investment and whether it is wise.

My second point relates to the Consolidated Fund provision. Money will go not only into the Consolidated Fund but from it, and through the Department of Trade

and Industry, into the Eureka project and the development of high-definition television. It has become apparent during that programme that HD television has been and is being overtaken by the development of digital television transmission. It is technically possible to transmit enhanced definition television that is receivable by sets currently owned by the British public. I should like my hon. and learned Friend to discuss with his colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry the possibility of withdrawing from that element of the Eureka programme and pursuing as swiftly as possible the introduction of enhanced definition television and the development of a British digital television industry.

12.4 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): In deference to those who have spoken, I shall respond briefly, but in deference also to those who did not expect that the debate would last for so long after Second Reading, I shall keep my remarks brief. There will be a long Committee stage for those who wish to deal with these matters in greater detail, as perforce I shall have to do.

I recognise that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is a great expert on statutory instruments. Indeed, he chairs the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments. I enjoyed his remarks about the powers of secondary legislation under the Bill. A constant dilemma of legislation is that, wherever possible, one wants to avoid secondary legislation that involves loss of parliamentary control. Equally, if some elements of the regulatory regime were included in the Bill, there would be the danger of setting in concrete on the face of the legislation matters of regulation that might with advantage require changing as circumstances change.

I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the adequacy or otherwise of parliamentary scrutiny. I have served on Standing Committees with the hon. Gentleman, who knows that I am always prepared to take seriously any suggestions about adding in parliamentary scrutiny to proposals for delegated legislation and I shall consider the Bill in Committee in that light, and with great room for those points.

Like the hon. Member for Newham, South, (Mr. Spearing) and others, the hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned the financial arrangements. With respect to the hon. Member for Newham, South, there was nothing novel in the proposition that the Government take a significant sum—it will be about £150 million this year—by way of a levy or tax from the ITV companies. Labour Governments did that—there is nothing new about it. Indeed, it would be novel if Governments were not prepared to do that, because the grant of a franchise is the grant of a monopoly or near-monopoly of selling television advertising, which is an extremely valuable boon. The late Lord Thomson of Fleet was rash enough to describe it as a licence to print money—something about which proprietors of other ITV franchises have always been rather embarrassed—but as so often with a pithy phrase, it conveys an essential truth. Governments have always thought it right that, for the benefit of the taxpayer, they should have a share of that money.

The difficulty is in determining how the share should be assessed. Governments have had different stabs at it—for example, using profit and net advertising revenue, or NAR as it is inelegantly known, or some combination of the two. All that we are proposing is that it should be a dual figure, comprising the lump sum in the tender that is made to those who cross the quality threshold and a sum of money representing a proportion of advertising revenue that will be fixed by the ITC. As has been said, clause 156 does that.

On the point about major sporting events, I do not think that I can do better than simply to repeat the point that I made to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). At the moment, Sky or any other satellite channel could bid for one of the major sporting events and the only right that the present law gives to the BBC and ITV is the right to match that bid. Thus far, no such bid has been made.

I confidently expect and believe that major sporting events will continue to be seen on the main channels. That will come about, first, because it is profoundly unlikely that satellite television could mount the sort of bid necessary to secure such coverage. Secondly, as a number of sporting bodies have made clear, they are interested in the projection of their sport into as many households as possible. They are not interested in restricting access to their sport, and their sponsors are certainly not interested in anything other than the programme being shown in a large number of homes.

I am not sure how much more we can debate the matter at this point, because it comes down to a simple issue. Because we are afraid of the effects on public opinion of the scare campaign that we shall not see the FA cup, are we to perpetuate the system whereby, in effect, the state intervenes to prevent the proprietors of large sporting events from selling their product as they see fit, or are we to rely on the common sense, on the reality, that if is unlikely that large sums of money will be made available by others? That could have happened under the present arrangements. Proprietors of major sporting events have the same interest as the rest of us. They want their sport to be seen widely.

Mr. Spearing: I am sorry that the Minister is worried about the time that the House is taking on these fundamentally important matters. Some of us are elected here as a Parliament, not a charade.

I take it from what the Minister said about sport that nothing that I suggested is impossible. I am grateful to him for his explanation about taxation. In Committee, does he envisage putting a limitation on returns such as the Consolidated Fund which are consistent with the returns that he alleges have been made under certain Governments since the foundation of the IBA?

Mr. Mellor: I will do the hon. Gentleman the honour of considering that point, but I shall not give a detailed response now. I assure him that I do not consider that I am taking part in a charade. I confidently expect to spend many hours on the detailed consideration of the Bill. I am not sure that we should conduct a Committee stage at 12.10 am on the night of Second Reading. That is a fair point and, having sat here for eight hours, I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am aware that I am not participating in a charade.

It has saddened me enormously to find myself, for the first time since he became an hon. Member, on the other side of a debate from my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Meller]

Buckingham (Mr. Walden). Clearly, he feels deeply about the matter and that is why he spoke in the terms that he did.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was fully entitled to say that Lord Reith likened the introduction of commercial television to the introduction of bubonic plague. That is an uncomfortable fact but nonetheless true. All the major changes in broadcasting since the war have come about because people were prepared to ride on in the face of tarted-up worst-case scenarios, which were claimed by critics to be the natural and inevitable consequence of what was proposed. Although that point is not a complete answer to any proposal, it is well worth making. We are faced with similar allegations today.

I should have thought that it was to the Government's credit that BBC1, BBC2 and Channel 4 will remain the same. My hon. Friend was perhaps caught in a downward spiral of logic when looking for a reason to damn the Government's proposals on the BBC. He said that the BBC would be dragged down by what was happening to Channel 3. I do not accept that anything detrimental will happen to Channel 3. The BBC has a secure income from the public, which has no choice about paying and has to pay ever-increasing sums. The BBC, properly, also has a large income from its commercial activities. The idea that it will be dragged down is well wide of the mark. It has a public service remit. It is not much of a compliment to the BBC to suggest that it would be dragged down.

The key point that my hon. Friend must understand is that Channel 3 is not such a monument to our civilisation that it cannot be improved. Whether or not he or others think that it is a monument, it is clear that increasing numbers of British people do not. Its audience share has fallen in absolute terms on every indicator. The key message is that there is a great deal of room to improve Channel 3. That will come about first because the quality threshold is a genuinely serious severe hurdle for people to surmount. Secondly, for the first time, the ITC will have powers to regulate the system rather than just having an ultimate power which, because it is ultimate, is never used to remove a franchise.

The ITC will now have the power to hold people to account and to look at a group's plans to see whether it is capable of sustaining the big promises that are made. I believe that that represents a far more sophisticated power, and it will give us a better Channel 3.

I am surprised that my hon. Friend does not see the glaring defects, as I do, in the present arrangements. When Southern Television was replaced by TVS, three or four groups sat in different hotel rooms. They were told from the cloistered meeting rooms of the IBA that X had got it, not A, B or C. We knew not why. Once we have a more open process, with a quality threshold and the possibility of people making a commercial bid, we shall have the openness and accountability that is presently missing. I know that my hon. Friend disagrees, but it is not worthy of some of the extraordinary adjectives that he employed. I am sorry about that because it pains me as I deeply approve of my hon. Friend's stand on many issues.

I hope that I have not outstayed my welcome. I hope that the House will accept the way and means motion and will wish the Bill on its way to the undoubted scrutiny that it will rightly receive in Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Broadcasting Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise the inclusion of—

(1) provisions under or by virtue of which holders of licences granted under the Act by the Independent Television Commission established under the Act are or may be required—

(a) to pay or forfeit sums to that body in connection with such licences;

(b) to pay sums to that body as contributions towards the expenses of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission; and

(c) to make payments to the Channel Four Television Corporation established under the Act;

and provision for sums falling within sub-paragraph (a) or (b) to be paid into the Consolidated Fund;

(2) provisions under or by virtue of which holders of licences granted under the Act by the Radio Authority established under the Act are or may be required—

(a) to pay or forfeit sums to that body in connection with such licences; and

(b) to pay sums to that body as contributions towards the expenses of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission;

and provision for such sums to be paid into the Consolidated Fund;

(3) provisions under which the Welsh Authority (within the meaning of the Act) are required to pay sums as contributions towards the expenses of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, and provision for such sums to be paid into the Consolidated Fund;

(4) provisions requiring the payment of any other sums into the Consolidated Fund.

Package Travel

12.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5382/88 and 7996/89 relating to package travel; and endorses the Government view that any proposal must strike a balance between consumer protection and the need to avoid undue burdens on the travel industry, which would adversely affect the price and range of holidays available to consumers.

Next to the home and the car, the family holiday must rank as one of the most important items of expenditure in the average British household budget. As might be expected with an island nation, a large proportion of holidays are taken abroad, and during 1988 some 13 million overseas package holidays were taken. This makes the United Kingdom one of the largest exporters of holidaymakers in the Community, and it is difficult to over-emphasise the importance of this sector.

The sheer popularity of the package holiday is a tribute to the success of the package travel industry and to the excellent value for money which the large majority of holidays sold represent. It is possible for consumers in this country to find packages to just about every conceivable destination and, increasingly, covering just about every conceivable activity. As has been highlighted by the European consumer body, Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs, the United Kingdom package tour operator is able to market a much less costly package holiday than his Community counterparts—comparable packages can work out up to 30 per cent. cheaper. We have been concerned, therefore, to give very careful consideration to the proposals emanating from Brussels for a directive in this area.

The consumer is particularly vulnerable when he books an overseas holiday, pays in advance for the service and then has a substantial part of it performed overseas. Clearly, there is a balance to be struck between some clarification and strengthening of the consumer's rights and increasing prices to the point at which ordinary people can no longer afford them.

The Government have held that the consumer is entitled to expect that the tour operator will provide him with precisely the holiday that he booked and not an approximation to it. He should get the hotel that he chose from the brochure and not one up the road. He is entitled to expect that he will pay the price quoted in the brochure and not be surcharged unless it is made crystal clear to him at the outset that surcharges may be made and in what circumstances. He is also entitled to expect the services comprising the package to be performed to a reasonable standard. In extreme and, I hope, very rare circumstances, the deficiencies in services may lead to death or personal injury. Damages are potentialy very high and the extent of the tour operator's liability is important.

The consumer will not be best served if, in providing him with increased protection, the tour operator is forced to increase prices beyond the consumer's reach or to forgo inclusion of certain holiday destinations or holiday activities. Nor are consumers well served if newcomers are discouraged from entering the market. The Government have been equally concerned, therefore, that any increased liability imposed on the tour operator should be equitable and insurable.

That brings me to the array of proposals which have come out of Brussels and on which we have tried to keep the House informed. I should like to bring the House up to date on what has been happening.

Recent discussions have centred on a proposal under development by the current French presidency, which it hopes will form the basis of a compromise for adoption by the Commission. The presidency is to be congratulated on its strenuous efforts to pull this more balanced proposal together, even at this late stage of negotiation. I warmly praise the work of officials at the Department of Trade and Industry who have borne the brunt of the negotiations. They have done a magnificent job to represent the views of the Government, the consumer and the industry in some difficult and complex negotiations. During those negotiations, the Government have been mindful of concerns which fall broadly under three headings.

With regard to the scope of the proposal—article 2—we believe, first and foremost, that the directive ought to be confined to tour operators and their direct competitors. That statement requires some elaboration. To apply widely the stringent provisions envisaged would mean the severe limitation, if not the complete demise, of activities such as day trips to an event or activity and the rental of holiday cottages with ancillary services such as fishing rights. In that respect, the effects on small enterprises could be catastrophic. It would also mean that the likes of schools, clubs and churches would have to think carefully about continuing with traditional outings and holidays. One also has to question the wisdom of embracing ad hoc business travel arrangements in a directive intended to apply primarily to package holidays. We shall continue to negotiate with those principles in mind.

The presidency proposal is therefore a step in the right direction——

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way on this important point. Will he tell the House why he would resist the safeguard for those who go away on a trip for 24 hours, whether they be members of Church parties, political parties, or others? They need that fundamental protection and it seems inexplicable not to give it to them. Why is the Minister seeking to remove it?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend touches on a difficult point, on which neither the Council of Ministers nor I have totally made up our minds. Either one forces the full protection of this directive on anyone who, in any circumstances, arranges a trip of any kind, and there is something to be said for doing that, or one recognises that a wide range of innocent, one-off, non-profit-making activities could be brought to an end if we forced on them the full rigours of the directive. It is a finely balanced argument on which we wish to await the exact proposals of the Council of Ministers before making up our minds. However, I am mindful of the difficult choice which must be faced.

The presidency proposal is a step in the right direction in that it seeks to omit from the definition trips lasting less than 24 hours. We believe that this will take day trips such as a coach trip to the zoo out of the scope of the directive. We also welcome the stipulation that, for an additional

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service to count towards the definition of a "package", it should not be ancillary to transport or accommodation and should be significant in relation to the contract as a whole.

With regard to the liability of the package organiser —article 5—the liability provisions lie at the heart of the proposals for a directive on package travel. The Government believe that an acceptable proposal would need to strike a fair balance between the interests of the parties, be insurable at acceptable cost and not reduce the range of holidays available. We accept that the organiser should be strictly liable for the provision of the services agreed, but where consequential damages, death or personal injury are concerned, the extent of liability should be limited in some way. I submit that the vast majority of consumer concerns about their package holidays have to do with just that principle, and I have a steady flow of correspondence on which to base that conclusion.

The presidency proposal is also a great step forward on that central issue. It proposes liability for proper performance of the contract, including non-performance due to faults of suppliers such as hoteliers and carriers. We hope, however, that the final proposal will include defences for contributory negligence, acts of third parties and unforeseeable events which could not be forestalled. In our view, inclusion of contractual limitations set by international conventions is fundamental.

As for the financial guarantees—article 7—if the liability provisions lie at the heart of the proposals on package travel, to continue the visceral analogy, those on financial guarantee must be the guts of it. The Government believe that the essence of a workable provision must relate to a free and informed choice, not only for consumers, who must be able to see by what means the organiser intends to cover his liabilities if things go wrong, but for organisers, who must be free to make the most appropriate and cost-effective arrangements. To introduce compulsory licensing of all organisers within the scope of the directive would mean excessively bureaucratic and expensive intervention by the state.

Compulsory insurance for every claim which might arise is also unreasonable and ignores the plight of very small enterprises or new companies in the sector without a track record to enable them to get insurance at economical cost. This would do no favours to consumers because, inevitably, it would drive up prices unnecessarily and reduce competition. Most packages in the United Kingdom are sold through organisers who are fully bonded against insolvency and there might be a case to require others to make arrangements which would provide protection for consumers in those circumstances. We would welcome a proposal which would underpin that approach but allow organisers flexibility to make appropriate arrangements.

At the outset, the Government placed reservations on the proposals for a directive on package travel, not only on the general content of the Commission's proposal but also on the chosen treaty base, article 100A. That is the base which was established by the Single European Act and is designed to facilitate the rapid achievement of the single market. We have been sceptical about whether there is a strong case for choosing that treaty base for this proposal, which struck us as very much a measure for the protection of consumers. On the other hand, however, package travel is a highly specialised area for a number of reasons, and in the light of the final compromise proposal and whatever justification is put forward in the recitals for a Community measure in this area, we may reach a different view.

The reasoning in favour of a balanced set of proposals which take due account of the needs and wishes of both parties must be self-evident to everyone. I invite the House to agree with the motion.

12.26 am

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): This directive is, in a number of areas, a pale shadow of the original draft and it offers only limited protection for holidaymakers. I do not recognise the rosy picture that the Minister has just painted, and nor do hundreds of thousands of holidaymakers who annually run the gauntlet of surcharges, airport delays, overbookings, dangerous facilities, switched destinations and unsuitable accommodation.

I welcome the efforts of the travel industry to ensure that more than 10 million people enjoy package holidays every year, but I also share the concern of the 1 million holidaymakers whose holidays have given cause for complaint.

The Minister has never made a secret of his desire to ensure that the directive gives less protection to the tourist than to the tourist trade. It comes as no surprise that the Government cannot welcome unreservedly even the modest package of measures to protect the travelling public that this directive offers.

Sadly, when the Commission suggested measures to protect holidaymakers, the Government lobbied to weaken the proposals, not to strengthen them. This directive allows people's holidays to be cancelled up to 24 hours before departure. It now offers no protection to the person crossing the Channel for a day trip—the first draft did. It sanctions bigger surcharges on the consumer than did the original, and provides no right to written reasons for surcharges. It burdens the consumer who has suffered with the need to prove negligence in some areas. It removes the requirement for brochures to detail contract conditions and for local tourist authorities to assist in resolving disputes.

There are some safeguards, which the Minister quaintly describes as burdens on the trade, but we want to know from the Consumer Minister about the burdens on the consumer—the burden of buying a holiday paid for in advance, with no guarantee of specific accommodation or even price. I am told that, when things go wrong on a package holiday, it is difficult to find anyone to take responsibility.

In six key areas, this directive is defective and far weaker than its original draft. The 1 million holidaymakers whose holidays were spoilt last year are entitled to know why a directive that offered them so much better provision has been watered down.

The Government have never made a secret of their concerns, not for the travelling public but for the travel trade. On 22 April, the Minister's predecessor spelled out his key fears in a letter. He said:

"Another important implication of the directive from the tour operators' point of view is that it may circumscribe their present abilities to restrict their liabilities when a third party (eg. a foreign hotelier) fails to provide the service contracted."

By 22 August we had a new Minister, whose comments on this directive to protect holidaymakers were even more hostile. He wrote that his Department

"considers that the proposal . . . is unnecessarily burdensome and fails to strike a fair balance between consumer and supplier interest."

I note that the Minister nods in assent. That was followed by three months of the most disgraceful lobbying by the Minister to weaken the directive. By 8 December the Minister had failed the consumer. He was able to write that the proposal

"has moved towards a more acceptable balance between consumer and supplier interests."

He has used similar words tonight.

The changes in the proposals were severely criticised by consumer groups. The European Union of Consumers deplored what it called

"sabotage on behalf of government experts".

It spoke of

"compromises which are less and less favourable to consumers."

With more and more people going abroad, the need for consumer protection has never been greater.

My attention has been drawn to the plight of Mr. Clement, who booked a five-person apartment in Corfu. The total trip cost over £1,300 but the apartment was already occupied when he arrived. When he eventually got in there was room for only four beds, the kitchen was filthy, the shower was broken and when the toilet was flushed waste came up through a grille in the bathroom floor. The company representative was unhelpful and when he asked for compensation Cosmos offered nothing. He wrote again and was offered £50. He eventually had to resort to a court summons to receive a higher amount. He needed on-the-spot help from independent local tourist authorities to ensure that his holiday was satisfactory in the first place.

Under the directive, tour companies can still limit their liability to supply the holiday as booked and paid for. It appears that one can spend £400 on a holiday and the blame for failure can be shifted to some foreign supplier, often with impunity. The seller of a £400 television cannot legally tell the purchaser to seek redress in Japan or West Germany. In that respect, perhaps the travel trade is getting off lightly.

A holiday is bought on trust and paid for in advance, yet is subject to changes that may appear arbitrary and without a guarantee that the item supplied is the item that was purchased. The Minister should investigate whether practices such as surcharges and combining holidays when there are not enough bookings should be permitted unless they are advertised as such. He should spell out what redress is available to tourists at the holiday location.

In May, the Consumers Association carried out a study on travel agents. It asked a number of them for the cheapest flight to Europe and four out of five got it wrong. The *Which?* verdict was "appalling". The association asked for a holiday on an island suitable for an elderly grandmother and only two out of 36 got it right. The Consumers Association concluded that most agents were poorly informed.

The Minister recently gave his verdict on the travel industry. In a long-distance video presentation to a world conference in Mexico on the travel trade, he said:

"The industry has set itself a standard which is going to be very difficult to maintain."

To hear the Minister one would think that this country has the highest standards, the best public protection and the lowest levels of consumer dissatisfaction. That is simply not the case. A survey of package travellers by the European Commission shows that while 27 holidaymakers in every 100 interviewed in Italy experienced problems with their package holiday, the figure for Britain was 37 in every 100. Those surveyed in France and Germany had lower dissatisfaction ratings, of 31 and 32 respectively. The Commission revealed a serious crisis of confidence in the British travel industry.

That fewer than 5 per cent. of people pursue their complaint raises a major question about the current complaints procedure. The Commission stated:

"The reason . . . is that the consumer, having paid the price in full before departing on his holiday feels that by making a formal complaint he may well find himself involved in an endless argument which if it has to be terminated in a courtroom may cost him more money than he can afford."

Article 6 in its original form would have helped to tackle that problem.

I pay tribute to the work of the Association of British Travel Agents to try to monitor and improve standards. The revised ABTA code of conduct will give welcome protection to its consumers after November 1990, especially against negligence resulting in injury or death, and it makes provision for higher compensation in the event of a holiday being cancelled or altered. There is still scope for the trade to substitute holidays on a massive scale. Holidaymakers can still get a holiday in a hotel different from the one that they booked, and cannot cancel the holiday if the hotel is in the same category in price. Holidaymakers may still be forced to accept changes, such as the absence of advertised child care, because these are not seen as material alterations.

Welcome though the codes of conduct are, powerful trade regulations and sanctions are no substitute for Government-led consumer protection. Only last year, the Director General of Fair Trading had to step in an warn ABTA that holidaymakers were being surcharged for fuel price increases when world fuel prices were falling. In spite of the Minister's much-loved codes, supposedly prohibiting this unjustified type of surcharge, it went ahead. In his latest report, the director general, Sir Gordon Borrie, says:

"Examples of costing subsequently submitted by ABTA failed to convince the Office that unjustified surcharging had not taken place."

Before this revised directive, surcharges of under 10 per cent. of the cost of the holiday were to be absorbed by the tour operator, and the reasons for surcharging were then to be set out in writing. Now, there are virtually no limitations on surcharging.

We have no specific legislation that exclusively protects the holidaymaker. Despite the enormous scale of our holiday industry, the United Kingdom lags behind several other European states in establishing specific legislation on the holiday trade. Other countries have specific laws that define the rights of the consumer and the obligations of tour operators. France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain all have such laws. In this country, the operators do not require a licence from the Government. The only licensing of any part of the trade is carried out not by the Government but by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Some countries have laws to protect the travelling public. In some—Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain—those laws are backed with licensing of all travel companies. The laws exist not because the consumers there

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have more need of them than we do. France and Italy, which featured so much more favourably in the Commission's study than the United Kingdom, also have laws and licensing. They have laws because their Governments aspire to give holidaymakers greater protection than ours will give.

Although ABTA covers 90 per cent. of the holiday trade, that still leaves more than 1 million holidaymakers with minimal protection. In his video from Acapulco, the Minister made it clear that he has no plans to force travel companies to abide by ABTA's new code of practice, but the need for protection has never been greater. That number of 1 million holidaymakers with complaints is growing, not shrinking. Standards are not improving, they are declining.

The Consumers Association published its survey on holidays in January. A fifth of holidaymakers reported that the tour operators made a change in their holiday arrangements, and half those changes were made during the actual holiday or within a fortnight from departure. Two thirds had their flight time changed, and for nearly one third, the resort itself or the accommodation was changed. The survey found that most holidaymakers were perfectly happy with their tour operator, but it also reported a significant drop in people's rating of tour operators since the last survey in 1986, with 9 per cent. expressing clear dissatisfaction with the operator, as against 7 per cent. two years previously. Sadly, when the Commission suggested measures to protect holidaymakers, such as an arbitration service by local tourist officers, the Minister, to use the words of the Secretary of State, felt for his wallet.

This is a minimum directive. When the legislation is implemented here, the Minister should seek four safeguards for the consumer. He must consider banning surcharges. He should ensure that the holidaymaker does not have to establish negligence so as to obtain redress. He must examine the need for joint liability between the operator in the United Kingdom and the agent abroad, with the appropriate on-site advice and help. He should enshrine in legislation the standards that ABTA applies to its members where these are higher than standards in the directive, including strict liability for property damaged.

The Minister began by stating that British holidaymakers get the cheapest holidays. We know, however, that cheapest is not best and that value for money is not synonymous with cheapness. Thousands of holidaymakers believe that they are not getting value for the money that they have paid. That is because they did not receive the holiday for which they asked, not because their expectations are too high.

We do not endorse the Government's hostility to EC directives that are designed to strengthen consumer rights. Travel organisers should provide the holiday that is booked. The price at the time of booking should be the price that is finally paid. On-the-spot, independent arbitration should be considered. If an hotel is not the one advertised, there must be immediate help if the holiday is to be saved, not the right to register a complaint on return after the holiday has been ruined. To put it simply, people want the holiday that they have booked at the price that they have paid. Sadly, neither the directive nor the Government are backing the holiday consumer.

12.41 am

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I do not agree with much of what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) said, but in this short debate, I want to refer to a specific matter and a different one from those mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

First, I declare an interest in the Guild of Business Travel Agents, a body which I have had the honour to advise for many years. The guild consists of about 50 of the largest companies that specialise in business travel. The companies have a turnover of £2·8 billion and they are responsible for four out of five business flights to and from the United Kingdom.

The guild is not to be confused with ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents, although many of the guild's members have shared membership and on many issues the guild and the association go along the same path. If my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will be able to speak better than I can on behalf of the association.

Following the Single European Act, the Guild of Business Travel Agents took the initiative in an endeavour to form a European guild dealing with business travel exclusively, but the business travel agents in the United Kingdom are not happy with the directives as drafted. We are a trading nation. We depend on exports and it is essential that we manage to move our business men about the world speedily, efficiently and economically.

I noted that the Minister said that he considered the proposals as a whole unnecessarily burdensome and added that they failed to strike a fair balance between consumer and supplier interests. I think that he was probably right. Therefore, I congratulate the Minister and Europe on achieving some amendments. I say to my hon. Friend that we do not help the ordinary traveller by crucifying the agent who has to move him. There is a balance to be struck, and the Government are right to draw attention to the overburdening nature of the proposals that are before us.

Even more inappropriate is the directive on business travel itself. I was pleased when the Minister said, in emphasising the changes that would have to be considered, that the implications of including some business travel in the directive required further consideration. So they do. I do not believe that the Commission understands business travel and how the proposals will affect business travel. The basic intention of the scheme is to place liability on the tour organiser, the person who assembles two or more components of the package.

As drafted, business travel appears to be caught up in the articles. The Commission has not dealt with a number of issues—for example, it has not considered the composition of business travel and the definition of "package". Article 2 defines "package" and the commentary on the articles refers to all sorts of matters that are not relevant to business travel. It refers to travel to and from the holiday place, excursions to places of interest or pleasure, sporting holidays, school buildings and sporting equipment. All those relate to holiday traffic and are not relevant to business travel.

The Commission paid no attention to the move towards management fees. Business travel agents are increasingly operating not on a commission basis but by fees charged

to their large corporate clients. The Commission also did not deal with the fact that in business travel, the customer often specifies his choice of what he wants to do.

Nor did the Commission consider the question of incentive travel. For example, Ford or any other vast organisation may wish to have an incentive travel scheme to send its dealers or salesmen to a certain place. It will instruct a well-known business travel agent to arrange that. The business travel agent will have no direct dealings with those who are travelling; its contractual basis is with the large corporate client. In any event, most businesses that engage in business travel are already covered by insurance.

If the proposals come into force, they would inhibit proper business travel and lead to the detriment of our economy. They would increase costs, and the insurance would inevitably be passed on to the consumer. The protection of the business traveller comes not from European directives or bureaucrats in Brussels, but from the vigorous and healthy competition that already prevails in the business travel sector.

It would be quite absurd for the liability arrangement for poor Mr. and Mrs. Snooks going on their hard-earned holiday to be applied to, for example, ICI ordering flights, hotels and cars for its salesmen throughout the world. Article 5 is inappropriate and unacceptable to the business travel world. I hope that ad hoc business travel will not be included and that the Minister can give me a few words of encouragement about that. If not, when he goes to the Internal Market Council at the end of the week, I hope that he will press this case with his customary forthrightness.

12.47 am

Mrs. Lilo Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I have looked long and hard for an opportunity to raise a certain matter, and I think that this debate is an appropriate time to do so. Two years ago there was a sad case of a young constituent of mine who died while away on holiday. There was a problem with the insurance cover, as that young person was not insured for death by natural causes, but only for accidental death or for any sort of accident.

The parents brought the young person home to Britain after a pathologist in the EEC country that she was visiting had carried out a post mortem. A British pathologist told me that such was the quality of that post mortem that the body was not in a fit state for him to carry out a proper examination.

I am concerned about this. Most people do not realise that when they take out additional insurance cover it does not cover death by natural causes. Quite often, when a pathologist abroad has done the post mortem, he comes up with some inconclusive reports, and it is unclear whether the death was accidental or due to natural causes. That distinction can make an enormous difference in an insurance claim or in any claim against the tour operator, who usually subcontracts the additional insurance.

I wonder whether that aspect could be taken into account. The cover that is provided and not provided could be clearly set out. With more and more elderly people going abroad for their holidays—often for two or three months at a time—it is becoming increasingly important that they be made aware that death by natural causes is often not covered by the insurance policies offered by tour operators.

12.50 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): The House debates this matter at a significant time. Package holidays numbered fewer than 4 million in 1977, but by last year the figure had increased to 13 million. The Office of Fair Trading, in statistics to which my hon. Friend the Minister did not refer—perhaps significantly—reveals that one in five of those package holidays resulted in complaints. I am full of praise for my hon. Friend the Minister for bringing this important EC matter before the House in advance of any final decisions being made, and he will go with our best wishes to round up the matter on 21 December under the current presidency.

I also praise the Commission for taking the initiative to protect consumers. Many right hon. and hon. Members will recall that last Monday, the European Year of Tourism received its official send-off in Strasbourg in the presence of that mystery man, the tourism Commissioner, Antonio Cardoso E Cunha. Although we have not yet seen him in the United Kingdom, we shall welcome him, if and when he comes to this House. It is jolly nice to know that the Commissioner, together with the 12 Tourism Ministers of EC member states and representatives of the six EFTA countries, was present on that occasion, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will eventually meet him and use the opportunity to praise him for attending the launch of European Tourism Year.

In that connection, I praise the European Member of Parliament for York, Edward McMillan-Scott, on being one of the leading lights in European tourism.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will recall the remarks of my noble and learned Friend Lord Broxbourne in a debate in another place on 15 December, when he quoted Laurence Stern's remark that

"an English man does not travel to see English men."

I declare an interest as vice-chairman of the Conservative parliamentary tourism committee, secretary of the all-party tourism committee and as a consultant to Consort Hotels, which is the largest consortium of independent hoteliers in the United Kingdom.

It is ridiculous that consumers cannot take out a contract via a travel agent that incorporates all the necessary safeguards. As my hon. Friend the Minister correctly said, after the lifetime or perhaps twice-a-lifetime purchase of a house, the next most significant purchase is a motor car, and the third—the second most regular purchase—is a holiday or package tour. However, there is great consumer dissatisfaction with them.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) made a very forthright speech, and what a change it is for the Opposition to take tourism seriously. His predecessors referred to it, quite unnecessarily, as a Mickey Mouse industry and one fit only for those who appreciated the subject. I am glad to see the change that has occurred in the Opposition's attitude, although I would still like to read a definitive statement from them on the subject.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I want to place on record the fact that my right hon. and hon. Friends do not take the view that the hon. Gentleman suggests. We appreciate the employment consequences of tourism and we know that it provides a great many people with pleasure and recreation. We take tourism very seriously, and I welcome the hon. Gentleman's acknowledgement of that fact.

Mr. Gregory: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are extremely welcome. One of my wishes is to read the Labour party's statement on tourism, which has not yet been forthcoming. Perhaps I may look forward to receiving it in Santa's stocking..

The problems to which I refer should not be shirked. One is disability. Members of the Association of British Travel Agents in Yorkshire encountered a problem. Relatives of a young couple advised them of a wish to go on holiday, but one relative had problems with asthma, and needed ground floor accommodation. When they got to their holiday destination, that request had not been fulfilled. Perhaps the agent was not putting the information through correctly to the operator. I suspect that he was, but that it had not got through to the ground handler, and to the accommodation on time.

Changes in flights are another problem. Many couples, particularly pensioners, like to travel in the middle of the day in daylight, and will undertake a holiday only on that basis. Will the directive safeguard that, and will people get adequate compensation? I am afraid that in most cases the brochures state that compensation is payable only if there is a delay in excess of 12 hours. Pensioners may go to the airport one or two hours before their flight and can be delayed for 14 hours before they get a single penny in compensation. They are not like my right hon. and hon. Friends, who rush there 45 minutes before their flight.

Will the Minister say, "Yes, that is in the implied terms but it will not lead to greater compensation," or will we see more consumer safeguards?

Another problem is when holiday dates are changed. People who work at the Rowntrees or Terry's factories in York, or in other important factories in Britain, have specific dates for their holidays and they have agreed them with their partners. A few days before their holiday, they find that the dates are changed.

Luggage delays are another common problem. I recall the rather nice cartoon in which a gentleman goes into a travel agent, probably on Boxing day when holidays feature on television, and says that he would like to go to a destination in a sunny spot, but he is not too concerned where as long as his luggage can accompany him. When one loses one's luggage, or it is damaged, the airline compensation amounts to the staggering figure of £13·80 per kilo. Frankly, that is a paltry figure if one loses a suitcase full of clothes.

I would hate to see my hon. Friend the Minister—if he had gone to Acapulco rather than Brussels and had lost his suitcase—have to stand up in the same clothes throughout the ABTA convention, with compensation of £13·80 per kilo. The figure is inadequate, and he would know that if he had attended that international conference.

Overbooking is another problem. A Yorkshire couple booked a holiday through an ABTA operator and found that the floor area of their hotel bedroom measured 7 ft by 3 ft. If either of them wished to change, the other had to leave the room or get on the bed. Is that the sort of compensation that will be covered by the directive?

There is a lack of information in brochures about such things as how many Mediterranean hotels have fire doors, or safe lifts. I could continue in that vein.

I have contacted the president of ABTA to see whether it could put the matter right. Travel agents are the experts. Did they enjoy good facilities and travel en route to their recent convention in Acapulco, Mexico? To my surprise, I found that Mr. Ron Ellison, managing director of Square Deal Travel, said:

"We do not want excuses. We want explanations. Even if just one thing went wrong, that would be one too many. We are supposed to be travel professionals."

He was commenting on some of the problems in Acapulco. Mrs. Beryl Wilcox, of Jones Travel, also an ABTA member, said:

"I have enjoyed the convention but I have had problems coping with the heat. And I have just found out that my flight in the morning is not there."

I could go on with a series of complaints from ABTA members. If they cannot get it right, who can?

The Consumers Association questioned travel agents for accuracy of information and unbiased advice. It found that 83 per cent. quoted the wrong fare in answer to its request for the cheapest scheduled flight to Geneva, Paris or Brussels and that 27 gave a completely incorrect fare —in six cases it was £82 too much. The moral is that those who want independent, good and accurate information should go not to an ABTA agent but to the public library or ask around. I made inquiries about a flight at one of the travel agents in my constituency and was quoted over £250 more than by another, although the young lady had a brochure which showed a quite different price within 2 ft of her. That shows that training is at rock bottom in the trade.

There are, of course, non-ABTA agents. Some 10 per cent. of people who book package holidays do so without the safeguards of ABTA. One example involves Sunseeker Holidays, which operates from Leeds and Hull and left 700 tourists stranded abroad in September. It was not bonded or a member of ABTA. What advice would my hon. Friend the Minister give those people about how far they will be helped by the directive? I am aware that the new ABTA code is to be much wider and will include the total package. That is good. If people go on holiday to Greece and the coach does not turn up, they cannot be expected to get their solicitor to sue the Greek coach operator. The agent and the operator should take on that responsibility.

Insurance is inadequate. Under the insurance offered by most companies and by ABTA agents—the silver and gold schemes—people have to be stranded in an airport for more than 12 hours before one penny is coughed up. The message that should go out from the House tonight can be summed up in one sentence. This is marketing hype and there is not enough honesty or training. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister to correct that.

We should consider the legal safeguards. There is no holiday legislation, so major regulatory control lies in the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, section 1 of which provides strict liability offences for the false description of goods. For the majority of complaints about the holiday trade, however, the important provisions are in section 14, which provides offences for recklessly or knowingly making a false statement about

"services, accommodation or facilities in the course of any trade or business".

The inclusion of the key words "recklesaly" and "knowingly" means that, to obtain a conviction, the prosecution needs to prove an element of guilt or guilty knowledge on the part of the maker of the statement. That

compares unfavourably with the strict liability offences created in relation to goods by section 1 of the Act. I appreciate that skill and care—implied terms, in other words—are contained in the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982, but we should consider the false statement. There have been several cases to help the House in this respect.

There are two precedents to which I would like to draw attention. The first is that a false statement about a future event needs to be false when it is made. That is the case of Beckett *v.* Cohen in 1972. The second is that it is not reckless if events happening subsequent to the making of the statement render is false. That was the case of Sunair Holidays *v.* Dodd. We should consider amending the law to ensure that we introduce either holiday legislation or strict liability offences for services, with appropriate definitions under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. The proposed directive goes further than the ABTA codes as it imposes on organisers a strict liability for the package.

In conclusion, will my hon. Friend the Minister clarify two points? Paragraph 3 of article 6 states

"that in each of their territories there is available whether provided by public or private bodies a rapid, efficient, inexpensive and independent procedure for use by the consumer in dealing with his complaints ".

Can my hon. Friend throw some light on the identity of that rapid, efficient, inexpensive and independent person or body? Does he look favourably on the idea of a tourism ombudsman?

There is before the House an early-day motion signed by right hon. and hon. Members of all parties calling for a tourism ombudsman, drawing attention to the sad inadequacies of the Association of British Travel Agents and stressing the fact that we want the independence of a tourism ombudsman. We have one in banking and we had one in insurance. I was one of the Members of Parliament responsible for getting the building societies ombudsman on the statute book. We now need that safeguard for those who buy package holidays abroad.

Even at this late hour, we should mention those who holiday in the United Kingdom. I believe that they have better safeguards than holidaymakers anywhere. If someone who lives in the west country and sensibly chooses to take his holidays in Yorkshire, and in particular York, finds that the hotel accommodation and services are inadequate or not to the level that he has expected, he can contact the regional tourist board, and if the person or organisation is a member of that board, it can take appropriate action and provide compensation. That is a big plus.

I hope that when my hon. Friend or his representative goes to Brussels on 21 December, he will stress the fact that in Britain we take complaints very seriously and we expect our counterparts in the EC to do the same. He goes with our blessing, but with the caveat that we would like him to fight as strenuously for the consumer as he has done so ardently for the travel trade.

1.6 am

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I begin by placing it on record that I am the parliamentary adviser to the Association of British Travel Agents that has been referred to once or twice during the debate. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for the courtesy and attention he has given members of the travel industry whenever they have come to see him to discuss the directive.

It is a touch difficult to talk directly about the directive because, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) said, it has been a moving target—and sometimes a fast moving one—which was constantly changing shape. However, it is now slowing down and starting to assume a definable profile. There has been a general welcome for the aims of the directive in the House and in the travel industry. If other countries in the EC had organisations such as those in Britain, matters would have been dealt with more speedily and there would not have been such a need for the to-ing and fro-ing that has taken place in the past year. I wish to make two or three points about the directive, mainly arising out of the need for definition. The first relates to scope.

I should like to follow the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) about business travel. I believe that it was never intended to bring business travel into this holiday directive. However, I recognise the great difficulties in definition. I suggest that when my hon. Friend goes to Brussels he regards it as though it were a suit of clothes. One can have either a bespoke suit of clothes or one can buy one off the peg. Bespoke business travel is when a business man orders individual, special travel requirements which should not be covered by the directive. However, if there were business travel agents or operatives advertising package business travel of a standard nature to a standard destination, those arrangements should be swept into the terms of the directive.

There is a need to define accurately what is a package holiday. In the United Kingdom, we tend to think that travel is an essential part of a package holiday. We do not recognise the differences between a package holiday in this country and on the continent. Many people in continental countries do not regard travel as part of the package. They book their accommodation and excursions but make their own travel arrangements, as we see when we are foolish enough to travel in France at the end of July or the end of August. Many Frenchmen book a package holiday but make their own travel arrangements.

As I understand it, under the directive two out of three categories—travel, accommodation, excursions—will constitute the basis of a package holiday. It is important to remember, therefore, that it goes a little wider than we at first appreciated. Someone booking a cottage in the Lake District with a little pony trekking included will be subject to the requirements of the directive and will receive the protection that it offers.

A further aspect is the need to define an organiser. As I understand it, he is someone who organises package holidays on a regular basis. Immediately, we run into the problem of defining "regular". My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) has already drawn

[Mr. Richard Page]

attention to the possible spread of that definition and to closed groups, such as someone taking scouts on their annual holiday or a local clergyman taking people to Lourdes. That definition must be clearly understood so that people know whether they are protected by the directive.

Another major aspect which must be considered comes under article 5. The Minister must be congratulated on bringing the article more into line with United Kingdom law. The reverse burden of proof is removed, so there is a requirement to show negligence. That offers a defence to any liability such as force majeure. It is important that, wherever possible, we remove the element of doubt from the directive so that people know exactly where they stand. I do not want woolly definitions which allow people to change their interpretation as things develop.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) made some points with which I agreed and, he will not be surprised to hear, many with which I did not. I should like to point out the dangers of the superficial attraction of, and his enthusiasm for, on-the-spot arbitration or treatment when one is abroad. The holidaymaker would be far better served seeking redress against the travel operator back in the United Kingdom in a slightly calmer amd more reasoned atmosphere. He would do better to progress his case through the necessary procedures rather than trying to do so in a great rush in a foreign country, where language may also be a problem.

Much reference has been made to the new ABTA codes, which have been approved by the Office of Fair Trading. They offer improved protection for the consumer and show a steady uplift in standards. Many holidaymakers and possibly some hon. Members do not appreciate that there is already a procedure whereby people who have a feeling of grievance can get independent redress. If they feel that they have an objection or complaint, provided that they booked through an ABTA agent, they can go to the conciliation service, and if that fails they have the opportunity to go to the independent arbitration system administrated by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators with the cost subsidised by ABTA.

I understand from the figures given to me that in 1988 some 411 cases were referred, of which 320 were found in favour of the consumer. As I have said, it is an independent system and I understand that the costs are subsidised by ABTA members.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way on the important point about the procedures that are available. He referred, correctly, to two procedures—conciliation which, with great respect, is not independent because it is funded by ABTA, and arbitration which is, indeed, independent. If it is such a good procedure, however, why is there no travel bible to which an individual can refer to see past cases and judge whether there is a precedent and to see what level of compensation might be payable or whether it is frivolous? I understand that seven fully trained lawyers undertake this work, but that each works in a vacuum without any published records. If the system of independent arbitrators is to continue, does my hon. Friend commend the idea of their having the benefit of past judgments?

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend makes his point, but he has pre-empted the next stage of the process, to which I was about to refer in passing. There has been much reference to the idea of an ombudsman. I know that ABTA is examining the need to revamp or reorganise the arbitration system. To that end, it has called in independent experts to advise on the effectiveness of the arbitration and how it could be improved. It is not for me to pre-empt the findings, but no doubt, in the fulness of time, the independent auditors will make their report.

In March 1988 the then draft directive estimated the package holiday market at 25 million. A series of figures have been quoted and each time they have increased. The figures given to me, however, outbid the lot because I understand that the package holiday business in West Germany totals about 18 million holidays, in the United Kingdom it is just under 14 million and the rest of the Community makes up 6 million. We are therefore talking about 37 million package holidays per year. The sheer size of the market demands the protection of a directive across the whole of the EEC. In reading the directive and all the changes that have taken place, I ask the House to endorse the Government's view as encapsulated in the motion.

1.18 am

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Every hon. Member who has spoken has had a great deal to say about the directive itself. I do not want to say a great deal about it because the points have been well covered. Listening to most of the speeches made me realise that I am rather lucky that our family goes on holiday only to either Scotland or Pakistan, where problems simply do not arise.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will clarify the point that he made at the end of his speech about article 100A of the Single European Act when he seemed to speak faster than during the rest of his speech, thus giving me the impression that something significant was happening. When I looked around me and saw the smiling faces, I realised that something dramatic had happened. The Minister knows that the legal advice given to the Government and the Select Committee on European Legislation is that there is no question that this could reasonably be regarded as an article 100A proposal.

The legal advice given to the Select Committee on European Legislation on the directive was:

"The internal market element is insignificant—or even theoretical, if one looks for evidence about just how the proposal would affect 'the free movement of goods, persons, services . . .' . . . If an element of such dimensions is sufficient to found recourse to Article 100A, then the scope of that Article is virtually limitless. Neither the context of nor the background to Article 100A suggests that this could be right."

Some people may think that that is simply an attempt to find a legal quibble. I was fascinated that the Minister has spent all his time corresponding or talking to officials since I raised the point. He must feel an element of guilt about it. I never thought that the day would come when the Minister, of all people, would apparently serve the interests of people, such as Mr. Delors, who propose to expand the extent to which the Community makes laws which apply to countries and leave domestic parliaments out.

The Minister must be aware that, when the Single European Act was passed, it was made abundantly clear to the House and to our people that some internal market issues would be decided by majority vote but that the majority of issues would be decided by unanimous vote. The Minister must be abundantly clear from all that has been said by legal advisers and on the Single European Act that this is not a 100A directive. At the end of his speech he said, "Yes, we had doubts about it in the past, but on reflection we think that it may be a 100A." If the Government cave in on this one and do not put up a battle on article 100A, the House of Commons may as well shut up shop and call itself a county council. Mr. Jacques Delors has said that in his view 80 per cent. of all legislation will be made through the Community's non-democratic institutions. If we allow this directive to go through under article 100A without a battle, the figure will be well above 90 per cent.

Why have the Government apparently changed their mind? Will the Minister be willing to go along on 21 December and fight or will he say, "The directive has been moderated so we shall not fight"? I hope that he will regard the matter as serious because it is desperately serious for our democracy. He knows that the directive cannot be passed under article 100A. If the Government are not prepared to battle on this, I wonder if they are willing to battle on anything.

1.22 am

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to all hon. Members who have come here at this late hour to guide me in my deliberations on this important matter. It is important, if for no other reason, than that so many British people avail themselves of the holidays offered by our package holiday industry. As always when EC directives are considered by the Council of Ministers, we shall end up—if at all—with a directive which will inevitably be the result of a compromise among 12 different member states.

In this case some member states, such as Britain, send many of their citizens on package holidays each year. Other states receive them. Given that difference of perspective, the House will not be surprised that it has been difficult to reach consensus on the directive. If we end up with a directive, I counsel hon. Members that it may not meet all their exact requirements. That may explain why, should a directive emerge from the Council of Ministers, it may be less than ideal and may not meet all the views expressed this evening. I assure hon. Members that we shall endeavour to take account, as far as we can, of the reasonable points that they have made.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) and I may have to agree to disagree about almost every aspect of this matter. That difference starts with the industry, which the hon. Gentleman painted in a black way. I have an upbeat and optimistic view of that industry, and he was right to quote what I have said unashamedly about it. It has served our people well and it provides a large number of holidays for many people. Perhaps I should declare an interest as I take a package holiday every year. I have already booked it for next year and I have always been happy with those holidays.

Sir Anthony Grant: Did my hon. Friend holiday in Acapulco?

Mr. Forth: I never got to Acapulco. At the time that I might have been there I was in Brussels representing Her Majesty's Government and our people to the best of my ability in the Council of Ministers.

Although I have often praised the British holiday industry, I am not blind to its faults. There may be a place for a directive of the kind under consideration now so that perceived loopholes either in our law or in the more general provisions relating to the holiday industry can be filled in. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South when he talks about a crisis of confidence. I share his praise, however, for the ABTA code of practice, which has been updated and improved. That code takes our industry a stage further and the latest code provides standards in most respects superior to those provided by the directive.

The hon. Gentleman was busy criticising me for single-handedly removing most of the directive's effective provisions. He appeared to forget that I sit in solemn conclave with representatives from 11 other member states when I consider such things. I must reach agreement with them. Whether the directive has been watered down, strengthened or whatever is the result of what 12 Ministers from 12 different member states have been able to agree.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: When the Minister introduced legislation on this matter, will he embody in it the higher standards of the ABTA code, which we both believe to be desirable?

Mr. Forth: No, I will not give that assurance. If the directive is agreed and put in place by the Community we shall be obliged, as a member state, to put the appropriate regulations in place. That answers one of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page). We will endeavour to fill in the details that he has identified as missing from the directive. If those details are not clarified once the directive is agreed we shall have to clarify them in our regulations. We would attempt to do so responsibly—no doubt after consultation with the industry and consumer groups as is our practice when seeking to make regulations.

I cannot give the undertaking asked for by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South as I envisage that our regulations would reflect the wording of the directive. If the industry chose to continue to have a code of practice that went beyond that directive I would welcome and support that decision. I see no need, however, to legislate to give effect to that code. It is far more effective when it is operated on a voluntary basis.

I give my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) more or less the assurance that he seeks. It is true that business travel was never intended to be part of the directive. It was fairly late in the day when we identified the danger that my hon. Friend correctly pointed out and which was echoed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West. We have always had serious reservations about that matter and I raised it at the Council of Ministers. We expect that the final text to the directive, should it be agreed, will have attached to it a minute statement by the Council and the Commission to clarify that the directive will not cover

"business trips which involve separate bookings of transport and hotel accommodation which do not constitute elements of a pre-arranged package, even though they are invoiced simultaneously."

[Mr. Forth]

That is Community jargon for saying, broadly speaking, that business travel will not be within the directive's scope. I hope that that gives my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks.

I sympathise with the point made by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding). She was absolutely right to bring this tragic constituency case to the attention of the House this evening. I cannot give her any comfort in terms of the wording of the present directive, but I draw to her attention the words in the new ABTA code, endorsed by the Office of Fair Trading. It says:

"A tour operator shall include as a term of any contract relating to the sale of their foreign inclusive holidays or tours—"

I come to the important words—

"a provision stating that every assistance shall be afforded by them to a client who through misadventure suffers illness, personal injury or death during the period of their holiday arising out of an activity which does not form part of the foreign inclusive holiday arrangement".

ABTA provides a form of words that may have assisted the hon. Lady's constituent had they been in place at the time. I hope that they will now help anyone who finds him or herself in the same tragic circumstances. I invite the hon. Lady to take up the point with ABTA to see whether it can satisfy her. If it cannot, she should by all means come back to me to see whether I can assist her.

Mrs. Golding: I thank the Minister for that assurance. I took up the matter with ABTA, which was helpful. Thomson's made quite a large ex gratia payment, but that does not solve the problem of the pathologist's difficulty in establishing the cause of death. It means a lot to families to know why people have died, and the EC could put a lot more pressure on pathologists to bring them up to the standard of those in this country.

Mr. Forth: I understand the hon. Lady's important point. The standard of pathology available in member states in the Community is not a matter for this directive. The hon. Lady might wish to raise the matter with the Commission through her Member of the European Parliament or pursue it with the Department of Health. I do not think that the point is for me or the directive.

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend has just referred to clause 483 of the ABTA code. I understand that that is a voluntary assistance package of up to £5,000 when an incident occurs which is outside the normal run of events.

Mr. Forth: That ties in with what the hon. Lady has just said and shows that we must not forget, when considering this matter, that we are fortunate to have in this country an industry that has gone to extraordinary lengths to provide a voluntary code and mechanism whereby complaints can be dealt with. Even the industry and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) would say that the mechanism has never been perfect, but the industry has been, and still is, working to see whether it can be improved. We should encourage and value that, and praise, not criticise, it.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), as always, has shown an enormous amount of knowledge and experience of this matter. He asked me some relevant and, as usual, difficult questions which I shall do my best to answer. If I fail to answer all his points, I shall write to him to give him a proper answer, but I shall pick up one or two of his points.

My hon. Friend made general points about flight and date changes which, I think, are covered under article 4, paragraph 5, of the directive in its latest wording. It says:

"if any of the essential terms of the package are . . . altered by the organiser before departure, the consumer may, within seven days of receiving notification of the change:—either withdraw from the contract without penalty,—or accept a rider to the contract specifying the alterations made and their impact on the price."

That goes some way towards answering his points. I should like to look at it again to see whether it is completely adequate, but there is a recognition of my hon. Friend's fair points about the distress that can often be caused, usually to elderly people or those who are not as robust as hon. Members undoubtedly are. To be here at this hour of the night they have to be robust—but I shall not explore that further.

My hon. Friend then made an important point about bonding and insurance. I refer him again to article 7 of the directive, which says:

"The organiser and/or retailer party to the contract shall provide sufficient evidence of ability: in the event of insolvency, to refund money paid over and to repatriate the consumer, and—to cover compensation for losses suffered as a result of the failure to perform or the improper performance of the contract."

So the directive requires that a reasonable amount of cover be provided, although it is right to leave it to the discretion of the operators to decide how to do that.

Although ABTA provides cover for ABTA members, if the directive were agreed, it would extend that safety net to all operators.

Mr. Gregory: I think that my hon. Friend has partly missed the point. I was talking about non-ABTA members who subsequently go into liquidation, and I gave the example of a firm based in Yorkshire which had gone into liquidation as recently as September. There is little point in pursuing it through the courts if it has already gone into liquidation.

Mr. Forth: Yes, but the article that I read out refers to ability in the event of insolvency to refund money paid over or to repatriate. That covers my hon. Friend's point.

My hon. Friend the Member for York also referred to the ombudsman. His reference to a "rapid and inexpensive means" has been dropped from the directive; it did not survive the rigorous examination of the Council of Ministers. However, I endorse what he said about the principle of an ombudsman and I hope that the industry will urgently press on towards introducing another mechanism for dealing with complaints.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West is an expert in this area, and I acknowledge his contribution to guiding ABTA towards a positive approach to this directive. I have already answered his point about business travel when discussing the scope of the directive. Pony trekking and cottages are matters of great concern to at least one other member state—I am sure that he can guess which one—and I hope that his point about them and their organisation on a regular basis will be covered while putting the regulations in place. His points may not be entirely covered in the directive, even when it is complete.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is unflagging in his anxiety to ensure that we do

not become supine in the face of the onslaught on our sovereignty by the institutions of the EC. I am not sure that this is the right issue on which to take a stand, however. My hon. Friend spoke as usual with great passion, and he knows very well that I have shared a number of his views over the years about unnecessary extensions of the Community's competence. My hon. Friend is here, as he always is, to use the opportunity that the House has been given to examine the matter. It is not as though we are trying to slip this through on the quiet, undebated. The House is discharging its responsibility and has been given the chance to do so, and I hope that my hon. Friend acknowledges that.

My hon. Friend asked whether the treaty base was suitable in this case. I have given that much thought and have come to the conclusion, with some reluctance, that this may be a legitimate internal market matter. This is an important business which involves millions of people throughout the Community and which crosses national boundaries. Some member states send people on holiday; others receive them. It is right that the Community should try to provide reasonable safeguards, given the movements of people and the transaction of Community business across these borders. He and I may not be able to agree on that, but if he gives the matter some thought he will see that it is not the matter upon which to fight the final battle on sovereignty.

I have tried, perhaps at excessive length, to answer the questions asked in the debate. Having heard my replies, I hope that hon. Members will see fit to support the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5382/88 and 7996/89 relating to package travel; and endorses the Government view that any proposal must strike a balance between consumer protection and the need to avoid undue burdens on the travel industry, which would adversely affect the price and range of holidays available to consumers.

PETITIONS

Opencast Mine (Gateshead)

1.40 am

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): The humble petition of residents of Gateshead metropolitan borough council sheweth

That the proposal to opencast mine coal in the area to the South of Marley hill and remove the coal by road would result in the net destruction of jobs, cause blight to the countryside and congest the already inadequate roads.

It gives me great pleasure to present the petition. The hole that is proposed will be enormous, as will the damage to industrial development which the two local authorities propose. The roads are totally inadequate. I am grateful for this opportunity to present the petition on behalf of my constituents.

To lie upon the Table.

Deaf People (Broadcasting)

1.41 am

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the House I wish to present a petition not only on my behalf and that of my constituents, but also on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) and his constituents. Unfortunately, my hon. Friend is ill and cannot present his petition. The petition contains the signatures of 1,500 of our constituents and relates to deaf people and television. The broadcasting authorities are not providing complete access to television for deaf viewers by providing, for example, subtitles or sign language. At least 4 million people are affected.

Deaf viewers are equal members of the general public and are entitled to equal access to television programmes. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I gratefully present to the House on their behalf the petition asking for the equal access that they rightly deserve.

To lie upon the Table.

1.42 am

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of my constituents and the people of Barnsley about facilities for deaf people in relation to broadcasting. The petition shows that broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers through the use of subtitling, teletext or sign language. This affects about 4 million viewers who have a right to equal access to broadcasts. It gives me great pleasure to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

1.43 am

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Like my two hon. Friends the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) and for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), I also have a petition, signed by more than 300 constituents and residents of Coventry, who are concerned, as I am, about the inadequate provision of choice for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, who cannot listen to radio and who miss 90 per cent. of

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

television programmes—those which are not subtitled. It is appropriate to present the petition on the day when the Broadcasting Bill received its Second Reading. Clause 32 of that Bill refers to the minimum number of hours per week during which programmes with subtitles can be broadcast. I hope that the petition will be noticed by those hon. Members who will serve on the Standing Committee.

The petition states:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the people of the constituency of Coventry, South-East and elsewhere sheweth that the broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example with subtitles or sign language.

The number of viewers affected are at least 4 million.

Deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

I endorse the petition and associate myself with all its sentiments, although not with the mediaeval language in which they have to be framed.

To lie upon the Table.

Unitary Taxation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

1.44 am

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will not take it amiss if I welcome him to the debate as the seventh in a distinguished line of Financial Secretaries who have dealt with this problem for 14 years. It has been the longest-running issue that Parliament has seen for a long time. This is the third Adjournment debate in which I have had the opportunity to raise the issue, and that in itself speaks of the longevity of the issue.

Because of this history, there is no need to spend any time in describing what the problem is over unitary tax. Its application has been internationally condemned as an iniquitous form of corporate taxation. It has been condemned by Australia, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, the United States, the OECD, the EEC, the US Administration and Her Majesty's Government. In the House, it is very much an all-party issue, as I am sure you will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has been condemned by all parties. That condemnation has been refreshed today by the tabling of a new early-day motion, which has already been signed by 150 hon. Members. I think that more will sign in the coming weeks. We have applied our minds to it over the years, but it has yet to be solved.

This is a timely moment to have the debate because the US Administration and the British Government are about to start a major review of the progress on the issue. If the review is only about progress, it may be only a short meeting, but I hope that it will include discussion of future action, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will participate in the review. We need to assess how we can take this matter forward, and nail it once and for all.

Whatever may be said about what has happened in California, it still uses unitary taxation on a worldwide basis. It has introduced a limited form of legislation that allows companies, on the payment of a fee, to elect to be taxed not on a worldwide basis, but on the basis of a water's edge method. Electing to pay the fee for something that is wrong, and has been condemned internationally, is nothing less than disgraceful. That is the morality of Dick Turpin, the famous highwayman, who said, "Give me your money, and then you will be allowed to proceed." That is what has happened in California. Therefore, I am glad that the British Government and the United States Administration have firmly recorded their opposition to the legislation in California because it does not deal with the problem and kill it off once and for all.

There is one glimmer on the horizon. New proposed legislation in California would abolish the election fee and ease some of the other concerns of British companies operating in California. If the legislation is to have any chance of moving forward, it will need the active support of the United Kingdom Government, who must lean on the United States Administration in Washington, to encourage and help them to ensure that the legislation does what it must to be effective.

British businesses are concerned about the legislation, and they do not like, and have to deal with, such factors as the length of the election period, which they believe is

still too long. The details of information—the spreadsheet that they have to provide to the state of California—mean an enormous amount of administrative, non-productive bureaucratic work for the companies, which should not have to do it. They also do not like the ability of the state of California arbitrarily to deny them access to the water's edge solution. They do not think that that is right.

At the moment, the legislation is flawed, and British business operating in the United States, with important investments for our companies, do not consider that the problem has been solved. The Californian legislation in 1986 was no solution, and we have proof of this.

A recent survey carried out by the Unitary Tax Campaign, which has led this issue and been the driving force behind the move for reform, had 51 replies to a survey of British businesses operating in California. Of the 51, 42 stated that unitary tax was extremely onerous. Yet only six were prepared to opt out of unitary taxation. That was because current legislation was much too risky. That result—six out of 51—shows a complete lack of confidence in what California has put forward as a so-called solution. It shows that the so-called solution to current Californian law is nothing less than a sham, and we should not be afraid to say so.

Why are companies not electing to get out of worldwide reporting and to move towards a water's edge solution? I think that it is principally because they are opposed in principle in unitary tax on a worldwide basis. They believe, I think rightly, that if they support current legislation, they will support legislation that they think is wrong.

Companies object to the fee. It cannot be right to pay a fee to do something that is entirely normal in every other civilised industrial country. Companies do not like it and they will not elect because of the uncertainties. California's record as a taxing authority does not inspire them with any great confidence.

Over the years, we have returned to this issue time and time again. The campaign to try to get it resolved has been led by Great Britain through the CBI and, above all, by the Unitary Tax Campaign, a grouping of leading companies in Britain that has lobbied hard and long in America to resolve the issue. It is time that we told our friends in Washington and Sacremento that 14 years is too long and that it is time that the issure was resolved. Let us tell them that the partience of the House is running out, as California refuses stubbornly to resolve it. After 14 years it is time for us to be tough. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will be able to tell the House that the Government are still much concerned about the issue, want to see it resolved and are prepared to introduce tough action to see that that happens.

We have effective leverage in our hands, called section 812 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. I hope that at least we shall hear tonight that that section will remain firmly on the statute book until unitary tax on a worldwide basis is abolished in America once and for all. It is important that section 812 remains, to show the Americans that we are determined to resolve the issue. When the tax is abolished, the section can be removed from the statute book, because it will have done its job.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to tell us that he will participate in ministerial meetings to show the Americans that we mean business. The House has been considering this issue for too long. Clearly 14 years is too long. I hope that this is the last Adjournment debate that I shall ever have to have on the matter, and that we shall see the abolition of unitary tax, which has been so damaging to so many British companies over the years.

1.53 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): This is a timely debate on an extremely important matter. The entire House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) for having raised it this evening. I do not wish to detain the House for long, because the Financial Secretary's reply is the important part of the debate and I look forward to hearing it. I want, however, to underscore a number of matters that have been raised by the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West.

First, California's unitary tax regime as applied to non-American companies is no more acceptable to the Opposition than it is to the Government. It is unacceptable that it has continued for 14 years. The issue is not one for the United Kingdom alone. American's other friends, traders, investors and partners all have a similar interest in reaching a solution, but perhaps it is for the Government to put themselves at the head of organising concerned representations on a international basis.

My understanding is that the American Administration are committed to limiting unitary taxation to the water's edge by federal legislation, if necessary. I do not regard the present fee-paying option as anything like a fair or satisfactory settlement. It certainly does not meet the Administration's stated objectives. It smacks of protection money and nothing more.

In 1985, the British Government issued the statement:

> "In the light of the President's statement, the Government will enter into negotiations with the Administration to amend the UK-US double taxation convention so as to prevent the application of the unitary method of taxation to UK companies."

I understand that that statement has yet to be given effect. It should be, and soon.

During debates on the 1985 Finance Bill, there was discussion about whether new clause 27 should be inserted. It was, with all-party support. My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) set out the Opposition's position, and it remains the same. I refer to what is now section 812 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

The present unitary tax arrangements in California amount to no more than a sophisticated and populist protectionist device. I accept, but regret, the necessity of inserting what was new clause 27 into the 1985 Bill. It was done not because we thought it right for its own sake, but as a response to a very unfair form of taxation being carried out by a country with which we otherwise have close and friendly relationships.

Although now the law of the land, the provisions of that new clause have not been applied. I must make it clear that an incoming Labour Government would reserve their right to apply the clause, whether or not the Government do so. If it is on the statute book, it can be applied. When the Financial Secretary responds, I hope that he will agree to send a message to our friends across the Atlantic that is slightly firmer than just restating the fact that unitary taxation is not cricket. He should do a little more than that.

1.57 am

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) on securing his third Adjournment debate on the important subject of worldwide unitary taxation and also on the lucid and forceful way in which he expressed his opposition to that form of taxation.

Worldwide unitary taxation is very much a subject that my hon. Friend has made his own. He has campaigned tirelessly on both sides of the Atlantic for some years and it is a tribute to him that he has united both sides of the House in pursuit of his campaign. That is shown both by the early-day motion, which has about 150 signatures from hon. Members of all parties, opposing worldwide unitary taxation, and by the helpful and constructive speech by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on behalf of the Opposition. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's contribution, which strengthens the Government's position in negotiating on this issue.

I pay tribute to the Unitary Tax Campaign, especially its chairman Peter Welch. Since it was founded in 1978, it has dedicated itself solely to the elimination of worldwide unitary tax. Its members include a substantial majority of the United Kingdom corporate direct investors in the United States.

I must straight away reaffirm both the Government's opposition to worldwide unitary tax and their support for the aims and objectives of the Unitary Tax Campaign and other bodies which have campaigned against worldwide unitary tax. The British Government are opposed to worldwide unitary taxation because it is contrary to accepted international tax principles, manifestly unfair and damaging to international investment. It is contrary to the accepted international principles, which indicate that each country should levy tax only in respect of profits which arise in that country's jurisdiction. It is manifestly unfair, since it can result in international companies paying tax to more than one Administration in respect of the same profits—and even paying taxes in a country where they are making losses simply because they are making profits elsewhere, in another country. It is damaging because it is bound to discourage the flow of international investment, which is mutually beneficial to host and source countries, as well as undermining normal relations between tax authorities.

That is why the British Government have pursued their opposition to worldwide unitary taxation as vigorously as possible through all appropriate channels—directly to the Californian state authorities, jointly with the United States Federal Government whose support in this matter we greatly welcome; in conjunction with our European Community partners; in supporting British companies in their court actions; and in taking legislative power to strengthen our bargaining position. Those pressures and the sustained work of the Unitary Tax Campaign have not been without effect. Barclays won a notable victory when the Californian Superior Court ruled its worldwide unitary taxation unconstitutional. Unfortunately, however, the United States legal mills grind slow and the final outcome is far from sure.

Another success of a kind is that California has so far taken two steps to meet the widespread concerns of international investors. First, in 1986 it passed legislation to allow companies to elect not to be taxed on a worldwide unitary basis, but companies which so elected had to pay fees and were committed to the election for a period of years and the Californian authorities still retained the right to impose worldwide unitary tax in certain circumstances —for example, if they found any of the voluminous data that they require unsatisfactory. Secondly, in 1988 California passed legislation which reduced the election period to five years and made certain other rules more workable.

Despite those changes, the Californian tax regime remains profoundly unsatisfactory. It is not acceptable that British companies should have to pay a fee to elect to be taxed on the normal "water's edge" basis. Nor is it acceptable that after paying such a fee they may still be deprived of that right if they cannot comply to the state's satisfaction with its onerous requirements.

Consequently, we have kept up the pressure and in the last year alone the Government have supported British companies in court with amicus briefs, and played a prominent part in the Community's demarche on unitary tax to the US Treasury. That elicited a potentially useful response—that the state's use of unitary tax

"remains a serious concern"

and

"may constitute an impermissible interference in the conduct of the nation's foreign affairs."

Finally, we sent a senior member of our Washington embassy to accompany the British delegation to California in connection with legislation being prepared there last summer.

Last March, my predecessor announced that we were prepared to defer initiating action under the potentially retaliatory legislation that the House passed in 1985, which would deny tax credits relating to dividends paid by US subsidiaries of companies with headquarters in states with unitary taxation. We did this in recognition of the progress that had been made towards resolving the unitary tax issue. We further made it clear that if it became necessary to take such action after the end of December 1989 it would not apply to dividends paid on or before that date.

My hon. Friend asked for confirmation that the Government intended to retain the potentially retaliatory legislation that the House passed in 1985. I gladly state, quite unequivocally, that at present there is no question of the repeal of that legislation.

Earlier this year my right hon. Friend who is now Chief Secretary to the Treasury proposed that, in the light of subsequent progress, we should review the situation jointly with the United States Treasury later this year. United Kingdom officials have, in consultation with the Unitary Tax Campaign and other representative bodies, initiated that review.

The survey information to which my hon. Friend referred will be of great value during the review. The question of any further undertaking not to act under the 1985 legislation will be considered as part of the review. Hon. Members may also rest assured that the anxieties that they have expressed today will be brought to the attention of the United States Government. I shall forward to the US Government the report of today's debate.

A couple of years ago, the Governor of California opened a trade office in London to attract British business to California. The United Kingdom already has substantial investment in California and there is every sign that it wishes to continue and to increase such investment. I therefore urge the California state authorities to think

again if they want the flow of investment from Britain to California to continue. I urge them to abolish completely the election fee and substantially to reduce the election period and the compliance burden of foreign companies so that British industry will once again be able to take its full part in investing in California, to the benefit of all concerned.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Bentley John Heddle Esquire, the Member for Mid-Staffordshire, and I desire on behalf of the House to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BARLOW CLOWES

Return ordered,
of the Government's observations on the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration on Barlow Clowes.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Safety)

1. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy to ensure that safety in schools is maintained.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): My right hon. Friend's policy is to assist local education authorities and governing bodies in meeting their legal responsibilities for reasonably ensuring safety in schools by providing advice and guidance and maintaining oversight of matters of particular interest and importance.

Mr. Livsey: On my birthday, 2 May, the Under-Secretary of State promised my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that further action would be taken about the risks in schools for the safety of children, especially the general state of disrepair into which many schools have fallen and the fire risk. Last year, there were 25 school fires costing £250,000 each. What has the Minister done to provide further resources and what plans does she have to provide for the greater safety of our school children?

Mrs. Rumbold: First, all local authorities and governing bodies have a responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 and the fire safety regulations to ensure that school buildings are safe. The hon. Gentleman will know from the Autumn Statement that annual capital guidelines of £485 million of expenditure have been announced, together with a percentage of capital receipts which will be available to local authorities for expenditure on repairs, maintenance and desirable improvements of schools. That is additional money and rather better than the figure of £352 million for capital expenditure in this current year.

Dr. Glyn: Is my hon. Friend aware of the excellent work done by St. John Ambulance which teaches first aid in schools? Will she ensure that a first aid course is compulsory in all schools?

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank my hon. Friend for that remark. I am well aware of the importance of the work of the St. John Ambulance brigade. We are looking at the guidance on first aid issued to schools and hope that it will be sufficient. If necessary, we shall strengthen it.

Ms. Armstrong: How can the Minister be content with the safety of staff and children in schools when she and her hon. Friends are presiding over a backlog of £3 billion worth of repairs?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Lady should be careful how she uses figures. The £3 billion to which she referred was for desirable repairs, £1 billion of which were postulated in a buildings report three years ago. Inevitably, some of those repairs must have been made as local authorities have had £1·6 billion available to spend over the past three years.

City Technology Colleges

2. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will establish a city technology college in the north-west London area.

Mrs. Rumbold: A number of sponsors have expressed an interest in sponsoring a CTC in the London area. We are willing to consider any proposal that meets the programme's criteria and has the support of industry.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. In view of the suggestion that such an institution might be established in the Brent Cross area and the excellent potential of such new institutions, what does my hon. Friend think the effects would be on neighbouring boroughs, including my constituency?

Mrs. Rumbold: The criteria for drawing up the catchment areas for CTCs are decided as and when CTCs are established. My hon. Friend is right to say that they are an extremely valuable addition to our complement of educational buildings and schools.

Mr. Flannery: May I express the hope that no CTC will be established in north-west London? If it is established, can that be done with money from private industry, as we were promised, instead of siphoning off Government money, as happened in Nottingham, where upwards of £8 million was taken for one school and 500 others will be deprived?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman should talk to parents in Nottingham who are clearly voting with their feet in support of the city technology college. I do not share the hon. Gentleman's hope that there will be no CTC in north London.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept the suggestion that there should be a city technology college on the Whitefield school site in north-west London, as it

has been warmly welcomed by the governing body of the school, and it will be warmly welcomed by parents in the surrounding area?

Mrs. Rumbold: If we had sufficient support from industry—that is, 20 per cent. or more—and if the section 12 notices relating to such a proposal came forward, the Government would be happy to consider the proposal favourably.

Mr. George: Perhaps I can help the Minister. If she wants to establish a CTC, she can give away the one that is about to be established in my constituency. Why, when the local authority is trying to close two or three secondary schools in the area, is there a requirement—by that well-known education authority, the Black Country development corporation—to establish a further school?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman is confusing the difficulties that some local authorities have in persuading parents to accept the schools that they support in the maintained sector, and the new thoughts that come to parents when they consider CTCs and what they provide. The excellence of those schools is demonstrated by the number of parents supporting them and the number of teachers who wish to teach in them. It is clearly the will of the people to have new choices, and to support different types of school within the maintained sector.

School Days

3. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the length of the school day and year in 1989 and 1959.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): Under the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981, as amended, schools—nursery schools and classes excepted—must meet for 380 half-day sessions in a school year and provide at least three hours of secular instruction for pupils under eight years and at least four hours for pupils of or above that age. The equivalent provisions in 1959 contained no significant differences.

Mr. Bennett: Is my hon. Friend aware that 25 to 30 years ago the average school teaching day finished at about 4 o'clock? In most secondary schools now the day ends at about 3 o'clock—an hour earlier than 30 years ago. As many schools claim that they do not have time to teach the national curriculum and optional subjects, is there not a case for the secondary schools' teaching day to be extended?

Mr. Howarth: We all sometimes feel the temptation to be nostalgic. I doubt whether my hon. Friend means to contend that in general teachers work less hard than they did in what was, no doubt, the golden age when he was a teacher. I am sure that my hon. Friend will join me in paying tribute to the hard work and professionalism of teachers today. However, he has made an important point. The performance of schools as they organise themselves to teach the national curriculum will depend on management policy. The disparity in the number of hours of teaching offered to children from one school to another is striking. In that context, last May we put out a draft circular for consultation, inviting governors and head teachers to review the balance of time spent on teaching and other activities.

Mr. Madel: Does my hon. Friend think that the present school day should be extended so that those young people who find it difficult and unsettling to do their homework at home would have the option of doing this work at school?

Mr. Howarth: The organisation of the school day and the duties undertaken by teachers in directed time are matters for the head teacher to decide. Most schools organise themselves to deliver the national curriculum successfully, but some find it more difficult. Some schools offer up to three hours more teaching per week, with the same length of school day. Head teachers are anxious to be flexible, imaginative and sensitive to the needs of their pupils, but it is at their discretion.

Research Students

4. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual postgraduate award for research students living away from home outside London paid by the research councils; and by how much it has changed in real terms since 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The basic postgraduate grant paid by the research councils in 1989-90 is £3,725 a year. That is 1·5 per cent. more in real terms than the equivalent grant paid by the research councils in the 1979-80 academic year.

Mr. Lamond: Would it not be sensible for research councils to be given more funds, despite the welcome increase that the Minister has just described, so that they can at least get somewhere near to competing against the money available in the City and commerce, to which young people are drawn, as we might want some of them to go into research? This is quite different from a student grant, as I am sure the Minister appreciates. In view of the costs incurred by research students, £3,725 will not encourage them to take up research.

Mr. Jackson: I should tell my hon. Friend—I think of the hon. Gentleman as my hon. Friend since we travelled round the Soviet Union together in a large black limousine—that the number of studentships awarded by research councils has increased by 11 per cent. during the past 10 years. The level of research grant is for the research councils to settle, but they are recruiting increased numbers at the present grant.

Mr. Key: Although the Medical Research Council, of which I have the honour to be a member, is grateful that the payment has been increased by £600 in the current financial year, there is a real problem of recruitment, competing against the private sector at a time of demographic contraction. Will my hon. Friend consider carefully the implications of that for the quality and the number of students who go into research?

Mr. Jackson: It is difficult to measure what one means by quality in this context. About one third of those who go on to postgraduate study have first-class degrees. That proportion has been more or less the same throughout the research councils for many years.

Dr. Bray: Will the Minister acknowledge that £3,725 is simply not a living rate and is a major disincentive which is having a drastic effect on quality? The proportion of first-class degrees is not a sufficient measure. I invite him to visit some leading research teams, such as that at the laboratory of molecular biology at Cambridge, to hear what they have to say. Is he aware that the Imperial Cancer Research Fund offers studentship grants of £7,269 and that the Wellcome Trust offers the same? It is utterly intolerable that the Medical Research Council and others should be unable to follow suit.

Mr. Jackson: The amount that we are paying is 1·5 per cent. more than was paid by the Government in which the hon. Member served 10 years ago. I visit many institutions and I am not aware that there is a problem with recruitment or quality. I think that the proportion of first-class degrees is a reasonable guide.

Mr. Conway: Is my hon. Friend aware of awards such as those made by organisations such as the National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases? Should we not recognise the work that is done at the taxpayer's expense and welcome the tremendous contribution of many national charities which fund a great deal of medical research out of charitable donations?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The charities make an enormous contribution, especially to medical research. That shows what can be done. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) referred to research assistantships, many of which are paid for by charities. Most of them are post-doctoral. Their number has increased four times during the past 10 years. Many are funded by the private sector and charities, and many more are funded by the Government.

Research and Development

5. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates he has for higher education research and development expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom and in France, Germany, Japan and the United States of America, respectively.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): Definitions of the higher education sector as reported to the OECD vary substantially, so any figures must be treated with caution. Published OECD figures for 1986 are 0·33 per cent. for the United Kingdom, 0·34 per cent. for France, 0·37 per cent. for Germany, 0·56 per cent. for Japan and 0·40 per cent. for the United States. But these are inputs, and this Government are concerned with outputs. As measured by our share of scientific papers published, the United Kingdom's research output remains second only to that of the United States.

Mr. Boyes: Is it true that we spend only half as much as Japan on our education research and development as a percentage of gross domestic product? How can the Secretary of State expect the United Kingdom to compete in a highly technological world when we spend less on research than do other major OECD countries? Is that not particularly important to constituencies in the north-east, where we try to create and attract new technological industries to replace our previous traditional base of steel, coal and merchant shipbuilding, which have all been destroyed by this Government?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman's latter point has nothing to do with the question. He asked me about specific countries, but I should tell him that we spend more on research and development than many other countries. Even more important, the comparable figures for OECD countries are for 1986 and are out of date. Since 1986 we have increased our science budget in real terms by 17 per cent., which is bound to be reflected in the comparisons. In the last two public expenditure surveys, we have increased the cash amount by £490 million—a significant increase.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Has my right hon. Friend comparable figures for the provision of funds for higher education research and development by private industry and commerce? Is there not a case for trying to attract more funds from those sources so that we can have better research and development in the future?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not have the figures to hand, but they would show that, over the years, we have contributed less through those sources than some other countries. I am glad that, in the 1980s, universities and colleges have successfully attracted more funding from industry, as my hon. Friend recommended. I entirely agree with his objective, and our position is improving.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Secretary of State agree that in addition to our relatively poor performance during the five years from 1986-87 to 1991-92, as evidenced by the answers that he has just given, there will be a fall in expenditure on research and development in real terms by 10 per cent.? According to Government figures, expenditure will fall from £4·8 million to £4·3 million. Is not the reality that, according to the Government's figures, they have not only cut their commitment to research and development, but grossly underfunded our science base?

Mr. MacGregor: I have just told the House that our expenditure on the science budget since 1986-87 is substantially up in real terms. One can only guess as to the exact amount spent on research and development as a whole in universities. The Universities Funding Council said that this year we would spend about £780 million more on research and development. There has been a considerable increase in the amount spent.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend cast his eyes beyond solely expenditure on research, and say how we fare on the success and results of research, particularly in comparison with western Europe and the United States?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. In citations and published output we continue to perform extremely well. As I said, we are second only to the United States in terms of scientific papers in main journals. It is interesting that in the 1980s we have maintained our porportion of world output, whereas Germany and France, despite an increased scientific budget, have reduced their output.

Primary Schools (Computers)

7. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that the supply of computers in primary schools will meet the demand of the national curriculum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities are responsible for ensuring that schools have enough microcomputers to meet the requirements of the national curriculum. Under our education support grants programme, £25 million is being set aside over a three-year period beginning last year to assist LEAs to purchase microcomputers for educational use in schools. For 1990-91, the Department has asked the authorities to give particular attention to the needs of primary schools.

Dr. Reid: The Minister must be aware that the National Curriculum Council states that our schoolchildren should be able to use computers as early as possible. However, Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools has discovered that more than one third of schools' computer hardware and software is inadequate. Why are Britain's children being sold short? How long will we have to wait until our children receive exactly the same technical back-up of hardware and computer software as our foreign competitors to allow them to develop their skills and contribute towards the nation's future technological health?

Mr. Howarth: Under the national curriculum, we require that every child in key stage one, which is the first three years of primary education, should have hands-on experience of computers. I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that he is quite in error and that Britain leads the world in information technology in schools. We have more microcomputers, more teachers trained in their appropriate use, and a more extensive presence of information technology across the curriculum than any other country. That places us in a very strong position for the future.

Mr. Baldry: Will my hon. Friend confirm that whether it be teachers, textbooks or computers, since 1979 spending per pupil in primary schools has increased by 35 per cent. and in secondary schools by 40 per cent? Is it not a fact that the Conservative party continues to strengthen our state schools?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Sound economic policies must be the basis on which to generate the resources that we all want for education. Only this Conservative Government can deliver those sound policies. My hon. Friend will be pleased to learn that the programme to equip primary schools with computers has been proceeding very well. There are now, on average, three microcomputers in each primary school.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister realise that primary school teachers in Bradford have difficulty using computers because there are so many leaking roofs that they fear for the electricity supply in the damp conditions? Will the Minister ensure that, as a requisite for teaching computing or any other subject, Bradford receives a sufficient allocation to ensure that its schools have decent premises and permanent extensions rather than having to manage, as they have for many years, with temporary classrooms, some of which need replacing with further temporary classrooms because they are worn out? I am thinking especially about Buttershaw first school in my constituency.

Mr. Howarth: The capital allocation needs of Bradford have been objectively and fairly considered on the same basis as every other authority, and that will continue. We support the introduction and development of information technology in schools through specific grants, which are a separate source of funding.

About £25 million is being set aside under education support grant for the purchase of microcomputers, with an additional £30 million for the employment of advisory teachers to help classroom teachers get to grips with information technology. Under the local education authority training grant scheme, £16 million is being set aside for training teachers in the use of information technology in schools. Bradford's bid for a share of those funds will again be fairly considered, as will bids from any other authority.

Curriculum

8. **Mr. Forman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to devise a coherent curriculum for 16 to 18-year-olds.

Mr. MacGregor: The most recent step is that I wrote to the School Examinations and Assessment Council on 28 November, asking it to develop proposals to enable young people to switch more easily between academic and vocational courses. I have also asked SEAC and the National Curriculum Council to work with other appropriate bodies on the incorporation within advanced-level courses of knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to working life.

Mr. Forman: I welcome that constructive step in Government education policy. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is an overriding need to raise the lamentably low staying-on rate for 16 to 18-year-olds? Does he further agree that we could well examine the international baccalaureate and the modular approach to courses? Would that not make it more attractive to pupils of all ranges of ability to stay on at school?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree that more young people should stay on at school. However, the rate has been improving in recent years and about 42 per cent. of young people aged 16 and 17 are now staying on in full-time education. A further considerable number are staying on part time. But we are still not doing as well as our major overseas competitors, and I am anxious for an improvement. I am glad to say that the GCSE is already being shown to motivate more 16-year-olds to stay on at school. My hon. Friend raises in his second point a number of bodies which are developing vocational courses, and I have asked SEAC to consider whether we have the right mix.

Dr. Thomas: The Secretary of State will recollect that he shares responsibility for the work of SEAC with the Secretary of State for Wales. Is he satisfied with the co-ordination with the Welsh Office on this issue, and is the Welsh dimension of SEAC's work being sufficiently addressed by the council?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I am satisfied about that. I work closely with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I know that SEAC pays particular attention to Welsh interests.

Mr. Latham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the A-level is an increasingly lonely examination—an all-or-nothing one-day pass or fail exercise—and will he

compare it with the approach that is now being given to the GCSE to see whether more continuous assessment could be introduced?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I do not agree with my hon. Friend's first point. It is important to maintain the strengths and excellence of A-levels, and that is what we aim to do. But, given the numbers of extra young people now staying on after the age of 16 as a result of the GCSE, there will be some for whom the academic rigours of the A-level will not be appropriate as they stay on. That is why I have asked SEAC to look at the possibility of developing what technically are called credit transfers—to enable people, once they are in the A-level stream, to switch to vocational courses, if to do so suits them better.

Mr. Fatchett: The Secretary of State's answer to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) suggests that there is need to reform the A-level. When industry, through the CBI, and higher education, through the university vice-chancellors and polytechnic directors are asking for the reform of the A-level, and when the Government's own committee chaired by the vice-chancellor of Southampton, Professor Higginson, has asked for the reform of the A-level, is it not about time that the Government got the message and recognised that a broader examination at the age of 18 is the key to a broad curriculum between the ages of 16 and 18?

Mr. MacGregor: My answer to my hon. Friend did not imply what the hon. Gentleman suggests. It is important in this context to broaden the range of subjects that young people take when they move into the A-level stream. We are developing the AS-level to give that broader range. It has started comparatively well. It always takes time for an innovation to settle down. There are some problems that I have asked the advisory bodies to consider, but it has started well, and in my view that is the right course to pursue.

City Technology Colleges

9. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the programme of development for city technology colleges.

Mr. MacGregor: The CTC programme continues to make excellent progress. Three CTCs are now open and at least a further eight colleges will open in 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Dunn: While welcoming the Government's determination to press on with the CTC programme, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is now time positively to encourage local education authorities to run some of their schools along CTC lines?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend will be delighted to know that the CTC in Dartford is making good progress, and that that is a CTC run exactly along the lines that we planned from the outset. As for his suggested broadening of the type of CTC that might be considered by local education authorities, I believe that that area could be further developed. Our top priority at present is to get completed the 20 to which we are committed as a target. The development of the CTC curriculum is another important area on which we have committed some expenditure. It is important for all local education authorities to gain from the innovations and changes that CTCs make to ensure that they are spread within the education system as a whole.

Mrs. Mahon: Is not the spending of huge amounts of public money on CTCs getting close to curruption? Is it not time that the Government looked to their responsibility to pay for education for the whole nation, and stopped funding a small, elite group?

Mr. MacGregor: That is the oddest description imaginable of money spent on an innovation that will bring considerable benefits to inner-city areas, assist in the development of technological innovation in education and help industry and education to work together more closely in schools. It is also important for the hon. Lady to see our spending in context. Next year we shall be spending about £28 million on CTCs, and just under £15,000 million on the maintained sector as a whole.

Mr. Pawsey: As one of the only two hon. Members of the House who went to a technical school—the other being my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce)—I well understand, as does my hon. Friend, the benefits of a good technical education. May I urge my right hon. Friend to ignore the carping, moaning and grumbling of Opposition Members, to accelerate the current programme and to develop more CTCs?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. It is interesting to note that parents who are in potential CTC catchment areas take an entirely different view from that of Opposition Members. The colleges now being developed are clearly oversubscribed.

My hon. Friend asked me to expand the programme. We have a big job ahead in achieving our target of 20 CTCs—there are always difficulties to be overcome in such circumstances, for instance sorting out planning, building sites and staffing, but we are making good progress, and I think that it is right to concentrate on that.

Mr. Straw: Does the Secretary of State recall that his predecessor said that 20 CTCs would be in operation by the end of this year? As only three are in operation so far, why does the Secretary of State not recognise that the programme is an immoral and wasteful failure? Her Majesty's inspectorate has said that half the children in secondary schools are being educated in sub-standard accommodation. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not immediately cancel this wasteful CTC programme and use the money to repair some of Britain's crumbling schools?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already told the House that the target set by my predecessor turned out in practice to be overambitious, owing to the difficulty of getting the practical realities off the ground. To describe the programme as immoral is, however, ludicrous. The plain fact is that practical problems are always involved in the business of gaining planning permission, finding sites and linking sponsors to those sites. That is what has caused our failure to meet the original timetable, but we are sticking to our target, and it is clear from the response that this has been an excellent innovation.

Mr. Squire: Is my right hon. Friend not appalled by the continuing opposition from so many members of the Labour party to yet another extension of choice? Will he confirm that, far from being elitist, CTCs draw their pupils from the widest range of ability possible?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. If the Opposition abandoned their blind prejudice and looked at what is happening in the CTCs, they would obtain a very different view. They would see just how well the colleges are performing in inner-urban areas containing a considerable ethnic mix. I expect that, just as they have changed their attitude to the closed shop, taxation and so many other matters, Labour Members will gradually come to recognise that we are right, and will cease their opposition to this innovation. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask hon. Members to listen to these important questions?

Staffing Levels

10. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on staffing levels in junior and infant schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The ratio of pupils to teachers in primary schools has improved from 23·1:1 in 1979 to 22:1 in 1988. There are now more primary teachers relative to pupils than ever before. This improvement has given local education authorities and schools greater flexibility in the deployment of teacher time. The average class size in primary schools is now 25·9 pupils—down from 26·3 in 1979.

Mr. Archer: That is good stuff, but is the Minister aware that I have received correspondence from the head teachers of many primary and junior schools in my constituency which expresses deep anxiety about the staffing problems and consequent crisis in morale? As his Department introduced the national curriculum, can he assure those head teachers that every school will contain a suitably qualified teacher for each subject in that curriculum?

Mr. Howarth: The Government are very conscious that much is being asked of teachers in our current education reforms and that much is being achieved. The teaching profession deserves recognition, respect and gratitude for its professionalism. The criteria for the accreditation of teacher training courses have been modified, and as a result we shall look forward to every teacher trainee for primary teaching having 100 hours of training in science, in addition to the training already provided in the other core subjects of mathematics and English. Beyond that we are providing grants for in-service training to enable primary teachers to upgrade and update their professional qualifications.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that the large increase in resources per primary school pupil over the past 10 years has led to a record pupil-teacher ratio in Britain? Will he confirm the results of a recent national survey on parents' attitudes which show that the majority of them are not worried about resources or staffing in schools and overwhelmingly support the Government's policies for a national curriculum and rigorous assessment of pupils and teachers which have been embodied in the Education Reform Act 1988?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The national curriculum has been very widely welcomed by parents and by the teaching profession. It represents a redefinition of every child's entitlement to an education that will prepare them for the 1990s and it deserves the fullest support of all parties in the House.

Mr. Straw: As the Minister is so confident in the Government's record, will he offer parents a clear and categorical guarantee that no child will be without a properly qualified permanent teacher in his or her classroom in January?

Mr. Howarth: Overall, the supply of primary teachers in Britain is more than enough to meet the requirements. Of course we are well aware that there are problems of shortages and difficulties in retention and recruitment in certain geographical areas—notably London and the south-east. As the hon. Gentleman knows, education authorities are responsible for the employment and deployment of teachers. We are working actively and vigorously to support them. A £50 million programme is in operation to assist authorities to devise the recruitment packages that they need. We shall continue to develop and refine that programme, working in their support.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that when considering resources, particularly in junior and infants' schools, we shall move away from the slavish regard for class sizes and pupil-teacher ratios and consider resources in a much wider way? Sometimes large classes are the right approach and resources should be spread more widely to provide other teaching aids.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is right to say that class sizes are an indicator of limited value. The quality of teaching counts above all. However, our improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio has given authorities and heads more flexibility in the management of their teacher forces and has provided more scope for teachers to undertake in-service training. My hon. Friend is also right that it is important that we continue to make good progress in making available to schools new material and teaching aids. For example, we are working on a programme to make available interactive videos in our schools.

Student Loans

11. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the Government's proposal to set up a system of top-up loans for students.

Mr. Jackson: Since the publication of the White Paper on top-up loans for students we have received about 4,700 letters, including 63 petitions. Of those, about 350 have been received since publication of the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister not understand from the reception that his proposals have received that the system of top-up loans is universally recognised as unfair and unwarranted? Does he accept what students at Leicester polytechnic told me this morning—that combined with the removal of housing and social security benefits during vacations, many students will be left worse off than people on the dole? Should students not have the means to have the peace of mind to study?

Mr. Jackson: Top-up loans will represent a substantial addition to the resources that are available to most students and the hon. and learned Gentleman should

recognise that. We had a substantial majority for the Bill on Second Reading and I am pleased to report that we are making good progress in Committee.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend not consider it wholly misleading for a students' union to write to inform hon. Members that the majority of students are against these proposals? When one looks at the table attached to that communication, one sees that only 6 per cent. are against these proposals and that 94 per cent. did not respond in the survey from Edinburgh students' union.

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is a great deal of misrepresentation and some degree of genuine misunderstanding. As we make progress with the legislation, our proposals will be better understood and widely welcomed.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Sir Michael Shaw:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with Mr. Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Sir Michael Shaw: On this, her last Question Time of the 1980s, will my right hon. Friend reflect on the great progress that has been made during the past 10 years in the well-being of our country and in the new competitive spirit of all our industries? Furthermore, will she reflect on the dramatic and helpful changes that are being made in the rest of the world? Will she look forward and seek to — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly, please.

Sir Michael Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend seek to explain to us the role that she sees for her Government and for this country in the future?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. During this decade, we have created more jobs than ever before in this country, we have higher living standards than ever before, better social services than ever before, a wider spread of ownership than ever before and a higher standard of respect in the world than we have had for many a long year. In the next decade, we look to extend educational opportunity, to increase the training that is available to young people and to take a leading part in the single European market. With our staunch defence and our belief in the market economy, I hope and believe that we shall be able to give extensive help to the countries in eastern Europe that are seeking what we have taken for granted for so long.

Mr. Kinnock: When 600,000 people working in the Health Service are already covered by pay review arrangements, why will the Prime Minister not consider extending a pay review body to the 22,000 ambulance staff?

The Prime Minister: Pay review bodies, as the right hon. Gentleman should recall, are given to those who do not go on strike, such as the nurses.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister knows very well, as she has known for the past 15 weeks, that ambulance staff are not on strike—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: Why will not the Prime Minister acknowledge the fact that, if she allowed the dispute to go to arbitration, she could bring it to a speedy and enduring resolution, which would ensure that ambulance staffs never went through this experience again? Or is it the case, as millions in this country now believe, that the Prime Minister does not want a resolution to the dispute?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, there are some militant ambulance men who want to withdraw the emergency service across the country to force through their pay claim. Moreover, from Friday 15 December, most emergency crews in London have refused to respond to urgent calls through the 999 service and have invited calls direct from the public, with which they cannot deal properly. The right hon. Gentleman knows that quite generous offers have now been made to ambulance men varying from 9 to 16·3 per cent. depending on where they work and on the extent of their medical training. That increase is backdated to 1 April, and there are now arrears waiting for ambulance men to pick them up varying from £653 to £1,290. I hope that they will consider that that is a reasonable offer and that they will wish to return to work, as we should like them to do.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister speaks of ambulance men. Has she not heard that the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel—the kind of organisation that she likes—has turned down her pay offer by a majority of five to one? Does not the Prime Minister get the message from that? If she does not, I do, millions of people in the country do and members of her own party do. The message is that urging from the Prime Minister will not resolve the dispute; arbitration will.

The Prime Minister: Those particular ambulance men voted on a day when the trade union official of the main ambulance union suggested that there might be another offer on the table. As the right hon. Gentleman knows there has been a final offer. There are many people in this country who think that an offer ranging from 9 to 16·3 per cent. with considerable lump sums waiting to be picked up, is reasonable. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to join me in asking the ambulance men to return to work and, in particular, to have the truce over Christmas that was offered to them.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to welcome the activities of those in British industry who are taking part in the economic integration of the two Germanys? Does she agree that such stability is the best way to stop people voting with their feet? Will she assure the House that the Government will continue to look at opportunities for English language training, know-how agreements and cultural and political exchanges that may further the process?

The Prime Minister: The single most important thing as regards East Germany is to do everything that one can to

support the setting up of a genuine democracy with plural parties and we shall do all that we can to encourage that. We always do all that we can to encourage the teaching of English language. The British Council is very active in that regard and its services are greatly in demand. Within the *existing arrangements*—within the framework of the Warsaw pact and NATO, the four-power agreement on Berlin and the Helsinki agreement—we shall do everything that we can to see that democracy comes to East Germany.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that, on the issue of Hong Kong, she now faces a moral test of her premiership as great as that which she faced over the Falkland Islands? Does she realise that the long-term stability of Hong Kong and the honour of this country now rest on her finding the courage to face down the bigots on her own Back Benches and to ignore the moral bankruptcy and opportunism of the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman would calm down a little, he would realise that we most certainly have a duty to those Crown servants in Hong Kong who have enabled us, and will enable us, to carry out British administration right up to 1997. We also have a duty to do everything that we can to keep the prosperity of Hong Kong going right up to 1997. That will mean making special arrangements for some people who are keen to keep that prosperity going. There are two groups of people. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will make a statement tomorrow about the arrangements that we propose to make for them.

Mr. Tracey: In the 1990s, will my right hon. Friend hold out the prospect to the British people of continuing her consistent policies upwards instead of the continual U-turns which seem these days to characterise the Labour Opposition?

The Prime Minister: The policies that have done so consistently well during the 1980s will continue throughout the 1990s, adding to wider opportunity, wider ownership, better training and all the things that we—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might help the House if the Prime Minister were to speak into the microphone. I call Dr. David Owen——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called Dr. David Owen.

Dr. Owen: Will the Prime Minister make it clear to Mr. Shevardnadze that it does not lie with the Soviet Union to put any veto on a free decision of the people of West Germany and of East Germany to unify if they so determine?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that the undertakings that have been made, for example, the Helsinki Final Act, which was signed by 35 nations and which states that there should be no violations of borders that can be changed only by peaceful agreement; the four-power arrangement in Berlin and the two alliances are the background against which any other changes must take place.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Once again, the European Commission is threatening our traditional Christmas dinner by banning fresh turkeys. Will my right hon. Friend disregard this gobbledegook and ensure that we have fresh turkeys on the menus next Christmas?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that there will be plenty of fresh turkeys on the menus and on British tables this Christmas, but I shall consider the point that my hon. Friend has raised.

Q2. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some minutes ago.

Mr. McCartney: Does the Prime Minister accept that the reality of the last decade under her leadership has been a doubling in homelessness? What does she say to the fact that this Christmas 120,000 homeless men, women and children will have no room at the inn under her Government?

The Prime Minister: I do not necessarily accept the hon. Gentleman's figures. There are more than 21,000 hostel bed spaces in London, including over 3,000 emergency and direct access beds, of which sometimes 200 are vacant at night. They are not all taken up. We have provided another extra 21,000 hostel bed spaces in the rest of England since 1981 and we have allocated £250 million during the next two years for more provision for those who are homeless. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there are now 2 million more houses in Great Britain than there were 10 years ago.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the ombudsman has refused to release his report to the House until 3.30 pm and that many Members want to read it before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry makes his statement? As soon as Question Time ends, can my right hon. Friend find time to ask her right hon. Friend to seek your permission, Mr. Speaker, to delay the statement until 7 o'clock so that hon. Members can have time to read the report before my right hon. Friend makes his statement?

The Prime Minister: The time of the production of the report is a matter for the ombudsman and the other matter may be for Mr. Speaker to decide. My recollection, subject to your guidance, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a private notice question before the statement on Barlow Clowes.

Q3. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bradley: As a pensioner, the Prime Minister will be aware that one of her achievements of the past 10 years has been to cut the real value of pensions to elderly people. In this season of good will, would it not be a good idea to announce today a substantial increase in retirement pensions so that all our elderly people can enjoy a happier and healthier 1990?

The Prime Minister: No. The value of pensions to elderly people has not been cut. The promise to protect pensions against price increases has been honoured and, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, in October we announced that old and needy pensioner couples could receive an extra £3·50 a week in addition to their pensions.

The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that this autumn we abolished the earnings rule for pensioners, at a cost of about £375 million, and we have also given a good deal of extra help to the disabled and to war widows. That is a good record. The hon. Gentleman will remember that the Labour Government could not honour the inflation-proofing of pensions and that they cancelled the Christmas bonus twice.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take points of order after the statement.

Type 23 Frigates

3.31 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will answer the question on type 23 frigate orders of which he has been given notice.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Michael Neubert): Competitive bids were sought from British shipyards for a batch of between one and four type 23s. Three yards—Cammell Laird Shipbuilders in Birkenhead, Swan Hunter Shipbuilders in Newcastle upon Tyne and Yarrow Shipbuilders in Glasgow—responded, and it has been an extremely keen and commercial competition, to the taxpayer's benefit. All three yards are to be thanked for taking part in it.

The competition demonstrated that our commercial approach is continuing to encourage improved efficiency in the industry, enabling it to compete more effectively here and abroad. It also underlined the benefit of ordering in batches and the better value for money that results from it. On this occasion, having invited tenders for up to four ships, we have decided to order three. To order four now, even all from one yard, would not give us significantly more attractive unit prices than ordering three. The new ships will be named Westminster, Northumberland and Richmond.

After evaluation of the bids, we have decided, subject to contract, to place the order with Swan Hunter Shipbuilders of Wallsend in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Swan Hunter's has won our order fairly and squarely on commercial terms. The value of the order is commercially confidential, but I can say that the average unit cost of the three new ships is significantly less in real terms than for the last order, which in its turn was lower than for previous ships of the class.

It follows that both Swan's and the other yards were extremely competitive this time. We are sure that they will be keen bidders for our future requirements. They will, for instance, be able to bid for another batch of type 23s, for which we hope to invite tenders next year.

Nine type 23s are now on order for the Royal Navy. It remains the Government's policy to maintain a surface escort fleet of about 50 destroyers and frigates. This latest order demonstrates as clearly as possible our commitment to NATO and to our nation's defence. At the same time, today's announcement confirms that we remain resolute in pursuit of value for money.

Mr. O'Neill: I thank the Under-Secretary of State for his announcement, which confirms the one that was made this morning in Press Association tapes. Although his statement will bring a sigh of relief to workers and their families on the Tyne, it will be a source of bitter disappointment to fellow workers elsewhere. Can the Minister give some hope to the rest of those employed in British warship building, by confirming the number of type 23s for which he will be seeking tenders in the forthcoming year?

Will he also confirm that he accepts the view of the Select Committee on Defence that orders of around 2·6 frigates per annum are necessary to maintain a surface fleet of about 50 vessels? Will the Under-Secretary of State confirm that price was the only factor involved in the competitive tendering process? Does he acknowledge that although that process can drive down prices, it can also drive the losing yards out of business and thus prejudice future competition?

Finally, what prospects can the Minister offer in the way of alternative and additional work on the Clyde and Mersey—for example, in maintaining our defence forces' amphibious capability? The Government have talked about that for many years, but they have yet to come up with any tenders.

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Gentleman gives a welcome, albeit grudging, to my announcement. Of course, the yards that have been unsuccessful must be disappointed—but not, I trust, despondent. On the previous occasion when an order for type 23s was announced—last July, by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement—the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) forecast the possible closure of Swan Hunter, but that did not happen. Instead, I am able to announce today that an order has gone to that yard. I am unable to say how many frigates are likely to be ordered next year, although we shall again seek to invite tenders for a batch of frigates. At the time of last year's announcement by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, called on the Government to maintain the momentum by ordering two more frigates this year. We have done rather better than that. We have ordered three.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that his announcement will come as a bitter disappointment to the workers of Cammell Laird? I hope that he will take into account the possibility that, by next year, Cammell Laird may no longer exist to tender for orders.

Mr. Neubert: We take wider considerations into account, and my announcement is good news for the Navy, for NATO and for the yard that won the order this time—in the same way that it was good news for Yarrow's when it won last year's order. Cammell's has a substantial amount of Ministry of Defence business and it will be able to bid for the new type 23 order that we hope to place next year. We are also evaluating Cammell's tender for an aviation support ship, which it has submitted together with its parent company. We must hope that with improving productivity and increasing competition—the competition for the previous order was extremely keen—other yards will be successful in the future.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Minister will know that his announcement will cause deep disappointment among the employees of Yarrow's—a goodly number of which are constituents of mine who found work at that yard following the closure of Scott Lithgow. However, I am sure that Yarrow's employees will not be too deeply dismayed because they know that they work in a first-class yard. Can the Minister say how commercially and financially realistic the successful bid was?

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Gentleman's final question concerns a matter of commercial confidentiality. I commend the HMS Norfolk—the first of class that came from the Yarrow yard—of which we have received

excellent reports. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Yarrow was also very successful in winning the previous two competitions.

All that has been said is possible only against the background of a sound economy under a Conservative Government. The strength of our economy and the soundness of our defence policy is the greatest reassurance that one can give for the future of shipbuilding in this country. If the Labour party conference proposal of a £5 billion cut in Britain's defence was ever put into effect, the prospects for British shipbuilding would be bleak if not non-existent.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): Does my hon. Friend accept that this is splendid news, not only for Tyneside, but for the Royal Navy, reflecting Swan Hunter's proven record for the delivery of frigates on time and without defects? Does he accept that it is a splendid boost for Tyneside as we enter the 1990s, with thousands of jobs ensured for years ahead? Does he further accept that Swan's has matched its proven record of quality and commercial success in winning the order against fierce competition?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) has been exceptionally active inside and outside the House in the promotion of the interests of Swan Hunter's work force. He deservedly shares in its success today. Over recent years, the yard has established an enviable reputation. HMS Chatham was delivered without a single recorded shipbuilders' liability defect. It is a tribute to the efforts made in it and other yards that we had such a successful competition, which led to this outstanding result.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Will the Minister confirm the remarks that he made a few moments ago to the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), that wider considerations were taken into account in making the decision? Is that not a contradiction of his previous statement that he made a purely commercial decision? Does that not lead us to the conclusion that basically it was a political decision? Is it not the case that once again the Scottish Office has lost inside the Government machine?

Mr. Neubert: Given that Yarrow won the previous two competitions for type 23 frigates, it comes ill from the hon. Gentleman to complain because it was not successful in this competition, which was extremely keen. Price was a major consideration, which is the purpose of inviting tenders in batches and orders from competitive yards. However, that was not the only consideration. As a responsible Government, we must take all considerations into account. This represents the best value for money and the best for the Royal Navy and the defence of Britain.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): My hon. Friend will know that the value of batch ordering has been urged on his Department for a number of years. I am glad to note that it continues to respond to that advice. Will the next batch be of equal size—three? Will he give the in-service dates of the three frigates, and will he say whether they will be equipped with the type 23 command system?

Mr. Neubert: My hon Friend has a respected record of interest in these matters. At this stage, we cannot say how many there will be in the batch for which we hope to invite tenders next year, nor is it our practice to announce in advance acceptance dates for such warships. I reassure my hon. Friend that the new frigates will have the new command system from their build.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Minister need to be reminded how serious the implications of his statement are for the future of Cammell Laird? While he is thinking about that, may I ask him two questions? First, can he say when he will put out to tender the new work for frigates next year? Secondly, has he had time to reflect on the bidding skills of the board of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.? Would it be fair to say that its skills do not yet match those of the men and women who build boats at Cammell Laird?

Mr. Neubert: I readily understand the disappointment that will be felt by the management and men of Cammell Laird, their families and all those whose livelihoods depend on the successful securing of new ship orders. A competition is a competition, and it was fairly and squarely won by a yard that is in an area of above average unemployment. I cannot give the number of frigates that might be ordered next year or the timing of the placing of the order, but Cammell Laird has that prospect for the future. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to comment on the policy of the VSEL board.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide welcome in the north for this magnificent news for the north-east, which has implications across the region for construction and other spin-offs? I predict that there will be cheering on Tyneside tonight. Will my hon. Friend confirm that no one area has a God-given right to build ships? The only right that anyone has to build ships for the Royal Navy is, after proper competition and on full economic grounds, through producing the best possible defect-free product for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Neubert: Yes. The order and the competition that precedes it demonstrate, first, the British commitment to our defence, which is important, secondly, the benefits of ordering by batches and, thirdly, the competition that that creates. There are other advantages. Tonight there will be rejoicing on Tyneside because, we calculate, this order is equivalent to 10,000 jobs being sustained for four or five years. It is a valuable boost to employment in an area with above-average unemployment.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Does the Minister recognise that I for one give not a grudging welcome to his announcement, but a delighted one? I speak for the people of Wallsend. The shipyard is in my constituency and is where most of my employed constituents work. Does he agree that the tributes made this afternoon are to the credit of the work force, the management and the excellent trade union relationships? Finally, may I say that it gives me great personal pleasure that one of the ships is to be named after the noble county of Northumberland?

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Gentleman has spoken in character and I join him in paying tribute to the work force at Swan Hunter that has secured this order. I can also pay tribute to the other yards that I visited and that are showing signs of improved productivity and extremely keen bidding. It was a most competitive competition and there had to be losers as well as a winner, but all the yards can be commended for their efforts to secure the order.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My hon. Friend will know that we look forward to welcoming HMS Chatham on the Medway in the near future after its successful commissioning. This is splendid news for Swan Hunter, the private management of which has grown in our respect in the past four years since privatisation. Does this order have ramifications for building a third auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel? Can my hon. Friend say anything about that yet?

Mr. Neubert: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments on HMS Chatham, which come so close to home. I cannot say anything about auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels now, but the order has no implications of the kind that my hon. Friend suggested.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I welcome the Minister's announcement but, like many hon. Members, I understand the disappointment that will be felt elsewhere among the unsuccessful yards. Does the Minister agree that that disappointment might be mitigated if the Government were now to adopt a consistent pattern for ordering ships, as the Select Committee on Defence urged them to do? Does he agree with the Select Committee's point that

"a single year's orders is not the same thing as a consistent ordering pattern over a number of years, and the two should not be confused."?

Mr. Neubert: That is the view of the Select Committee on Defence which the hon. and learned Gentleman has quoted. It is for us to decide at each stage what the needs of the Royal Navy are and what orders we should place to support a fleet of escort ships. As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the Government's policy is to have a fleet of about 50. I am pleased to say that as a result of the order announced today and with the number of existing ships, the total in the fleet is 49.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that we have a busy day ahead of us, with two statements and an important debate. I shall call one hon. Member from each side. Then, I regret, we must move on.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): My hon. Friend's announcement is the third in a row in which three ships have been ordered. For the benefit of the Opposition Front Bench, will he spell it out once more that these orders are placed not just on front-end costs, but on other valuable issues, such as quality, ability to deliver on time and maintaining a competitive base?

Mr. Neubert: I know that this is the Christmas season, but I hope that my hon. Friend will not see three ships coming in automatically. This time we have been able to order three ships. He is right that quality, delivery on time and general productive performance are important factors in securing a successful order.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Minister confirm that quality also played a part in his choice of yard for the order? His announcement will be greeted with a great sigh of relief on Tyneside, in the constituencies represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) and for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), and by me. All that our shipbuilding community has ever sought from the Ministry of Defence has been fair play. We have tried hard to accommodate ourselves to the current procurement regime and to survive. Will the Minister confirm that today's announcement reflects that our community has done just that? I am sorry that it was not possible to share the order with Yarrow, but I was even sorrier last time when Yarrow won all the frigates and it was not possible to share one with us.

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Gentleman's comments are genuine and heartfelt. I have no hesitation in repeating my tribute to the quality of work at Swan Hunter, which undoubtedly led to the improved performance that has enabled it to make such a successful bid. It is a lesson for all yards that they must continue to work for better performance, to sharpen their competitive edge for orders here and overseas.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I shall take points of order later, after statements.

Barlow Clowes

3.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about Barlow Clowes.

The report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration on Barlow Clowes is published today, as are the Government's observations on it. Copies of both are available in the Vote Office.

The House will be pleased to know that, after very careful consideration, the Government have decided, in the exceptional circumstances of this case and out of respect for the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner, to make substantial ex gratia payments to all investors who have suffered loss. I shall give the details later. Equally, I want to make it clear that the Government do not accept the Parliamentary Commissioner's main findings, nor are the Government legally liable.

These are important questions upon which I want to make the Government's position clear. I am therefore publishing separately today the Government's observations on the PCA's report. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will read these observations carefully: I will not rehearse the detailed arguments here.

There are, however, a number of unusual features which taken together distinguish this case from other business failures. Although at the relevant time the Government had started on the process of overhauling the legislative background, before April 1988 the regulatory machinery was inadequate. It is also true that a large number of investors, many of them elderly, have suffered hardship. Many believed, although wrongly, that they were investing in gilts. They were led to believe that their investment was safer than it was.

When disagreeing with the findings in the PCA's report, the Government are not asserting that the conduct of the Department was beyond criticism, given the benefit of hindsight, but in the Government's view, the Department's handling of the case was within the acceptable range of standards reasonably to be expected of a regulator.

For the reasons that I have given, the Government have decided to offer substantial payments, without admission of fault or liability, to investors who have suffered loss.

The Government have decided that investors who invested up to £50,000, including reinvested interest calculated at building society rates, should be able to recover 90 per cent. of their investment. It is important to maintain the principle, which the PCA recognises, that investors should bear some of the loss themselves. This is particularly so for larger investors, who must be expected to bear a greater part of the responsibility for their own decisions. To reflect this, the Government have decided that investors should be able to recover 80 per cent. of their investments between £50,000 and £100,000 and 60 per cent. of investments over £100,000. The detailed terms of the scheme are set out in the Government's printed observations.

The scheme will be administered on the Government's behalf by firms which are already acting in the liquidation and receivership of the Barlow Clowes businesses. A letter has today been sent to all investors, giving them an outline of the Government's proposals. Detailed terms will be sent in mid-January, and we hope that processing of payments will be completed in February.

The Government believe that there are others whose role in the Barlow Clowes affair deserves close examination and who cannot escape part, at least, of the blame for what happened. It will be a condition of payment that investors assign to me their rights in the liquidation and receivership and against third parties. I give notice of our intention to pursue vigorously any claims which show prospects of reducing the cost to the public purse of these payments.

Parliamentary approval of this expenditure will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate in due course. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £150 million will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund. Receipts from subsequent recoveries will be credited to the Consolidated Fund.

Recent legislation and recent jurisprudence make it clear that regulators are not liable to investors in the exercise of their regulatory functions. The Government do not believe that it would be right for this case to be treated as a precedent, and if similar proposals are made in the future, they intend to respond to them in the light of the principles set out in their observations. However, because of the exceptional combination of circumstances in the Barlow Clowes affair, the Government have decided to respond generously to relieve the hardship caused to large numbers of people.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I welcome, after 18 months, this first payment to Barlow Clowes investors after the clear and unmistakable evidence in the ombudsman's report of five significant areas of maladministration by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Many pensioners have until today lost their life savings, and retired workers their redundancy payments. Can the Secretary of State confirm, in as precise detail as possible, what the average payment is likely to be, whether payments are to be made to the dependants of the 600 people who have died, whether there will be any contribution from intermediaries whom Lord Young has already criticised, whether he will definitely take court action against those whom he considers responsible to recover taxpayers' money, and whether the first payments are likely to be made before February so that investors who have waited for more than a year, some of them on the edge of bankruptcy, will not experience further delays?

I must ask why we have had to rely on the ombudsman to confirm the mismanagement, maladministration and incompetence that was widely known about more than one year ago. Will the Secretary of State explain—I acknowledge that he was not the Secretary of State at the time—why it took an internal inquiry, a departmental inquiry and now the ombudsman's investigation, instigated by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, before justice began to be done?

Does the Secretary of State agree that the House will find it strange that he is prepared to pay out at least £150 million but he continues to deny the Government's responsibility for mistakes and does not even apologise for his Department's role? Will he confirm that, while the need for compensation is agreed, the reason for the payment of this public money—our public money—is not the fecklessness, gullibility or incompetence of the small investors but the fecklessness, gullibility and incompetence

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

of the Government who, for months and years, ignored all the warnings about Barlow Clowes that were available to them?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the ombudsman's conclusion is that mismanagement happened throughout the 1980s, not just in 1985 and afterwards, when the firm was licensed and relicensed? That mismanagement continued during the 1980s, with the failure to heed at least 10 warnings, including warnings from the stock exchange, the Bank of England and the regulatory bodies. Will the right hon. Gentleman now tell us who in the Government intends to take responsibility for this negligence on a vast scale that is costing huge sums of public money?

Will the Secretary of State now show that his Department has learnt some lessons so that public money will never again be used in this way? Will he compel financial intermediaries to take out indemnity insurance against negligence and fraud, ensure minimum standards of competence among intermediaries and take up the Securities and Investments Board's proposals for tougher regulation?

Will the Secretary of State demonstrate that his aim is not just to lure investors into the market place but that he regards it as his duty to give them proper protection from the unprincipled and the unscrupulous?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman made many presumptions about the record of the regulators in my Department and what they may have done wrong. As he says, there are five charges of maladministration in the report of the Parliamentary Commissioners for Administration. I recommend him to study at length and with care those accusations of maladministration and the Government's response to them. He will notice that the only one to which the PCA attaches great significance is a new point that has never been raised before concerning the partnership in Jersey. I invite the hon. Gentleman, partial as he is, to decide whether his own thinking bears out what he said from the Opposition Dispatch Box this afternoon. He may find it does not. The first criticism of regulators in my Department dates from 1975. Therefore, he should not seek to make a party political point about the time during which these matters took place.

The hon. Gentleman asked what the payments will be. I repeat that they will be 90 per cent. of sums up to £50,000, 80 per cent. of sums between that and £100,000, and 60 per cent. of sums above £100,000. Those figures are based on taking 90 per cent. of the capital value, plus the compound interest due from the last time that interest was received by the investor up to the date of liquidation. To that 90 per cent. will be added the interest due since then. That is a generous way of recompensing those, particularly the smaller investors, who have lost money.

I confirm that the dependants or estates of the deceased will be eligible to claim their share of compensation. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is up to the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association or the Securities and Investments Board to determine what to do about financial intermediaries.

We shall pursue as vigorously as we can third parties from whom it might be possible to recover some of the costs. I hope that all the money will be paid out in February, but that requires investors or their estates to make the necessary claims as quickly as possible after they receive the forms so that we can issue the payments to them. Although the gross cost of what I have announced is £150 million, the liquidators expect to be able to return more than £60 million from the funds that they still have so that the net cost will be much less, and even less if further sums are recovered from third parties.

We have decided to make these generous payments, despite the fact that the Government do not accept liability, for the reasons that I have given, plus the important additional reason, which I think the hon. Gentleman will respect, that we felt that we should respond to the recommendations for making redress put before the House by the PCA. That we have done.

Mr. Ian Stewart (Hertfordshire, North): On behalf of many of my constituents and no doubt those of other hon. Members, I thank the Secretary of State for his full statement and the handsome scheme of recompense that he has announced this afternoon. No doubt it will be welcomed up and down the country.

When the Secretary of State reflects on the lessons to be learned from this sorry story, will he take it from me that it did not require a great deal of insight in 1985 to appreciate that the business of Barlow Clowes was not then being run in a fashion that would make it an obvious candidate for a licence? His Department's explanation that a cessation of business then would have been against investors' interests is difficult to understand, because if the money had been there, the investors would not have missed out, and if the money had not been there, there would have been no case for granting a licence at that time.

Mr. Ridley: I thank my right hon. Friend for his opening remarks. I am sure that the payments will be greatly appreciated by those who have suffered grievous loss. Many of them are poor people. On my hon. Friend's second point, I invite him to consider the extent to which what he alleges was indeed a lack of insight or whether it was a lack of hindsight. There is a great danger of mixing the two.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I welcome today's important step forward for the victims of this huge and vile swindle. The Secretary of State is aware of my special interest on behalf of two elderly constituents who lost not only their total life savings but their home.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the further hammer blow that has hit my constituents and others today? They have received demands from the Inland Revenue for thousands of pounds of taxation that they were told by Barlow Clowes had been deducted at source. If the Government are not to take back with one hand what they give with the other, will the right hon. Gentleman urgently consult the Chancellor of the Exchequer to stop further suffering for elderly and vulnerable people?

Mr. Ridley: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman made that point about taxation, because I may be able to help him. I am grateful for what he said about my statement. As I understand it, the Inland Revenue believes that the payments that I announced today, both of capital and in lieu of interest—it is not interest, but compensation for the interest that was not received—would not usually be subject to income tax. There will be some cases where there is a complication with the question of whether

investor's funds were transferred from the international fund to the national fund. I advise hon. Members whose constituents have a tax problem immediately to get in touch with the Inland Revenue or my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. I am sure that the Inland Revenue will be only too keen to ensure that the tax law is correctly and appropriately applied in all cases. It will be a considerable relief to hon. Members to know that the payments that I announced today will, in general, attract no tax.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): As the first hon. Member to warn the Department of Trade and Industry about the activities of Barlow Clowes in late 1984 and again in early 1985, as a result of information given to me by my constituent Mr. Peter Hayes of the Plan Invest Group, I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement. I thank him and the Government for the generous level of compensation that has been announced. It will be most welcome to the small investor, about whom all hon. Members are deeply concerned. My right hon. Friend has restored the confidence of investors in those institutions and the capital market.

Mr. Ridley: I am glad that my statement pleases my hon. Friend, whose role in this affair must be acknowledged worldwide.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Did you note Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary of State advised my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to study the report carefully? Because of the way that matters have been handled today, with the report coming out at 3.30 pm and a statement being made immediately afterwards, it has not been possible to do that. We have had only a quick reading of it and of the statement.

Is it not odd that, although the Government disagree with the findings of the ombudsman—he should have the congratulations of the House because he found five cases of maladministration—they are nevertheless paying up because, they say, they like the ombudsman? It is a curious way for a Government to proceed.

Many of us will want to contact our constituents this evening and tomorrow because the mail is difficult at this time of the year. I notice that page 21 of the report states:

"Investors will have approximately one month to decide whether they wish to accept the Department's offer".

The statement says:

"A letter has today been sent to all investors . . . Detailed terms will be sent in mid-January."

Does that mean that we should tell our constituents that they have a month from mid-January or a month from now? That is the sort of question that we will be asked, so what should we answer?

Mr. Ridley: If the right hon. Gentleman reads it, he will see that the Parliamentary Commissioner's report includes the Government's decisions in relation to what he has suggested. The right hon. Gentleman will agree that it would be wrong for the major statement of important Government policy that I have just made not to be the subject of a Government announcement to Parliament. There may be a procedural difficulty here, because it is rare that a Parliamentary Commissioner's report is the subject of a statement to Parliament rather than a written communication to the hon. Member concerned. If that is not a happy procedure, I am sure that the relevant procedural Committee of the House would wish to consider it, but there are difficulties on both sides.

I have written to all investors—including, I hope, the constituents of the right hon. Gentleman—informing them of my statement today. They will receive detailed forms in the middle of January and it will be for them to claim the compensation that I have announced. If they fill in that claim form rapidly, they should receive the compensation early. I cannot guarantee that they will receive the compensation if they do not return their claim forms early —*[Interruption.]* I have said already that they will receive the claim forms in the middle of January. [HON. MEMBERS: "One month."] I said that we hope that all claims will then be paid during February. They cannot be paid during February if the liquidators do not receive the returned claims forms. It is entirely up to those investors who are due compensation to make sure that they get in their forms, or we cannot pay them in February. There is no cut-off date. I said that we hoped that all claims would be met by then.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that hon. Members on both sides of the House welcome the generous response by the Government to the victims of this affair? Does he agree that this may be a serious situation here, with the Government disagreeing with the findings of the Parliamentary Commissioner? Will my right hon. Friend look into that further so that the matter can be considered perhaps by the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, of which I have the privilege of being Chairman?

Mr. Ridley: The Government are perfectly entitled to have their views about the chain of reasoning which the PCA has employed in this case; my predecessors had doubts at the time of the Le Quesne report. We, too, have similar doubts, although on slightly different grounds, this time. The Government cannot be coerced not to put forward their view of such matters.

I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend will agree that the important point is that the Government have accepted the recommendations for compensation, even though they cannot accept the reasoning. I invite the House to study the arguments on both sides, and perhaps many hon. Members will come to the conclusion that the Government were right in their reasoning.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The constituents of all hon. Members, including mine, who have been affected by the Barlow Clowes affair will welcome the compensation that the Secretary of State has announced. But the idea that the confidence of investors will be restored is more dubious in view of the Minister's rejection of the ombudsman's finding, which I read leaves the ombudsman absolutely unconvinced. I suspect that our constituents will be able to draw their own conclusions as to who they believe has the best judgment, the ombudsman or the Secretary of State. But can they at least be reassured that even if the right hon. Gentleman does not accept the findings, he will ensure that his officials study them and act on them to make sure that these events do not recur?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman should know that recent legislation, to which he may have contributed, and all recent court judgments have made it clear that

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regulators are not liable at law for matters of this sort. That is still the position. If the Financial Services Act 1986 had been in place when these events occurred, 15 years ago, there would have been no question but that investors could have been compensated by the Securities and Investments Board scheme only if the rules of that scheme had been met. For that reason we have a different position now. But I do not believe that the principle should be allowed to be established that regulators are liable at law for any loss suffered as a result of their actions.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Obviously the House is very pleased to hear of such generous compensation, which will help many vulnerable people who were worried about the results of the Barlow Clowes affair. Will my right hon. Friend bear it in mind, however, that the money will come from the generality of taxpayers, most of whom did not invest in Barlow Clowes and who therefore will receive no compensation? Is it not essential for my right hon. Friend to pursue every possible avenue with the utmost vigour in his efforts to get all the money back for the good of the generality of taxpayers?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that one lesson to be learnt from the affair is that high-return investments often carry the highest risk? If they pay some attention to that factor, the public may learn the lesson so that such an awful tragedy does not occur again.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I assure him that the Government will seek to make the maximum possible recovery, through the courts, from any third parties who appear to have been to blame.

My hon. Friend is right: a high-risk investment is likely to be one with a high return. It was, I believe, in recognition of that factor that the Parliamentary Commissioner suggested that there should be an abatement, which he agreed should amount to 10 per cent. for investments of up to £50,000 and a little more for larger investments.

It cannot be assumed that higher and higher returns can be offered, along with the safe knowledge that if they get through the regulator compensation will follow. That is a clear reason for not allowing a precedent to be established.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Secretary of State make it clear whether he will now publish the report by Mr. Ziman and Mr. Hoffman, the DTI inspectors who were appointed on 4 June 1988 under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985, to inquire into Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers? If not, why not?

Mr. Ridley: I have not yet received the report. When I receive it, I shall have to check with my legal advisers to find out whether I can publish it immediately, but I intend to publish it as soon as that is established.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): May I join my hon. Friends, and some Opposition Members, who have been active on behalf of the investors in thanking my right hon. Friend warmly for his statement? Does he agree that, although the vast majority of investors will be delighted at the announcement, they will find the discussions now hovering round the technicalities of what was and was not done rather irrelevant? For the first time, those investors will be able to celebrate Christmas again. I am sure that they simply wish hon. Members to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for a very generous statement.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree that the relief from hardship and loss is the most important aspect of today's announcement, and I hope that hon. Members will not try to make too many legalistic points that will detract from its significance.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): We accept what the Secretary of State has said about the need for us not to make too many legalistic points, and I confirm, on behalf of many people in Northern Ireland, their thanks for this generous settlement. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept, however, that today's statement has not really maintained trust in financial institutions, particularly if greater responsibilities are not to be placed on the shoulders of regulators?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said, but I believe that there is another side to the case. The risk involved in choosing where to put his money can never be entirely taken from the investor; otherwise he would always choose the highest-risk—sorry, highest-return—investment that he could find. The return must clearly be tempered in relation to the risk.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the compensation terms that he has announced today are warmly welcomed? However, will he reflect that a basic problem of the case was that many decent but often inexperienced people felt, rightly or wrongly, that the Government had endorsed the probity of the company? What has he done and what does he intend to do to ensure that such a false impression is not given again?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his comments. He will know that since then the House has passed the Financial Services Act 1986 which puts the responsibility for regulating such matters on the Securities and Investments Board, which has its own clearly delineated and contained compensation fund. In future, the SIB will be responsible for regulation. That is a much healthier state of affairs than the old one under which those events took place which, I am glad to say, no longer applies.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In so far as the ombudsman identified five grounds of significant maladministration by departmental officials and a great number of people have lost money on the licensed securities market, will the right hon. Gentleman now institute an inquiry within the Department on what happened to investors in Harvard Securities, Afcor Investments, Investors Discount Brokerage and Tudorbury Securities—whose activities were repeatedly drawn to the attention of departmental officials, and which have left great numbers of people with worthless investments?

Mr. Ridley: I do not believe that I should follow the hon. Gentleman into discussing other cases that are not the subject of the statement.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): When did my right hon. Friend first hear about the problems of Barlow Clowes, and was he informed earlier by any other Department of State?

Mr. Ridley: I heard of the problems of Barlow Clowes at the time of the collapse. Of course, I was not in the Department of Trade and Industry then. Since I have been in that Department, I have been all too well aware of the problems of Barlow Clowes and have heard little else since July.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that there is another statement after this one and a very important debate. I shall allow three more questions from either side and then I regret that we shall have to move on. However, there will be opportunities for right hon. and hon. Members to discuss the matter on the Adjournment motion tomorrow.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), the Secretary of State said that the Government are not at fault and do not have the responsibility for investors in Barlow Clowes. Yet the Government took exactly the same approach to those affected by the collapse of McDonald Wheeler, which purported to have the blessing of the Government. If the Government can pay generous compensation for those sadly hurt by the collapse of Barlow Clowes, how can they justify their refusal to pay compensation to those affected by the collapse of McDonald Wheeler?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is already trying to widen my announcement and to make a precedent in a way that the Government had not intended. I must slightly correct his introductory remarks. I said that the Goverment were not legally liable for the collapse of Barlow Clowes, but I did not say that the Government were not at fault. If the hon. Gentleman reads my statement and the observations on the report, he will realise that that was not an accurate shorthand for what I said. For three reasons, there were some blemishes in the Department's handling of the case. There was a legislative vacuum in the sense that the Financial Services Act was not in place, and there was the hardship caused to many poor investors. We responded as I believe the House would wish us to respond to the suggestion of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration that compensation should be paid. That is the important point. It is wrong for the House to try to open up other cases in which the circumstances are, no doubt, wholly different.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): My right hon. Friend has reached a most honourable settlement, which is entirely characteristic of him. My right hon. Friend mentioned earlier that the Financial Services Act 1986 and the Securities and Investments Board, whiich is now in place, should prevent further such frauds. However, will he reflect that in September 1985 the financial services division of his Department asked the solicitors office for advice? That advice took two months to come, even in an interim form, and three months to come in a definitive form, and it was six months before counsel's opinion was even invited. Does my right hon. Friend agree that lawyers, although not apt to be very speedy, have in this case excelled themselves in their tardiness and that the delay has proved to be very expensive?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. However, I must riposte by saying that the Government have a collective responsibility for the decision that I have announced today, just as I share the collective responsibility for the decision that was taken at the time of the Le Quesne report that the Government were not liable and should not pay compensation. I must point out that the Parliamentary Commissioner did not find the particular event in the history of this unhappy matter to which my hon. Friend referred to be of great significance.

The event on which the ombudsman based the bulk of his claim that compensation should be paid was the fact that the officers of the Department failed to notice that the Jersey partnership had different partners from those of the United Kingdom partnership. It may or may not have been as a result of the failure to make that observation that further losses were suffered by investors. That is the point on which the claim of maladministration was mainly based and it will be for the House to decide whether it believes that that was the correct judgment.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Secretary of State aware that I am still concerned about the timetable of payments to my many constituents who were affected? I also have constituents who are still waiting well beyond the deadline for money from the investors' compensation scheme from the Greenan collapse. Will the Secretary of State ensure that extra staff are taken on, if necessary, to ensure that timely applications are paid out by the end of February and will he give us an absolute guarantee on that?

In view of the crucial and harmful role in this disaster that was played by the Jersey partnership, will the Secretary of State and the Home Secretary now examine seriously the role of the offshore islands in this financial area?

Mr. Ridley: On the latter point, I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the document carefully. There was a complicated series of events, and there is no possibility of banning offshore islands. Islands are there and always will be, so the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is impractical. On timing, I must make it clear again that when investors or their estates receive the form, they should make a claim within 28 days of receiving that document. If, for some reason, they do not make that claim, there are arrangements for late payments to be made, but it will be for investors to make the application. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will encourage their constituents to send in the claim as early as possible so that they can receive the compensation as early as possible.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there can be no question of the Government's being primarily responsible to the investors in this affair? Bearing in mind the fact that it would be difficult or even impossible for many investors to prove any Government liability, and bearing in mind the costs of any legal claim, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's offer should be seen as generous—or even very generous—and should be welcomed accordingly?

Mr. Ridley: Everything that my hon. Friend says is correct. This is a very generous offer, which follows what the Parliamentary Commissioner suggested, and the main reason why we are making it is that we have respect for the Parliamentary Commissioner's office.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Although we recognise the generosity of the Government to all those who needlessly lost money in the Barlow Clowes affair, my constituents will be wondering why it has taken all this time for the Government finally to give compensation. Until the publication of the ombudsman's report, all the signs were that the Government were extremely loth to get involved. As a result, they have caused those who lost money needless suffering. In my constituency, one couple had to sell their home because it seemed to them that they had no prospect of being compensated, and the husband has since died because of the stress of the Barlow Clowes collapse. If the Government had acted immediately on information that was widely available, the damaging impact of the affair could have been avoided.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has heard what I said. We received the Parliamentary Commissioner's report only a short while ago. It has been considered by the Department and finalised by the Parliamentary Commissioner in almost record time, I believe, to get the news out as quickly as possible. I really do not think that we have dragged our feet. It took the PCA a considerable time to conduct his investigation but he must be responsible for that, not me. I must make it clear that we are paying compensation in the special circumstances of this case only because of the recommendation of the Parliamentary Commissioner.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Although I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement, may I ask him to accept that many investors in my constituency—some of them elderly and some who were first-time investors—took advice from professionals? Will he try to ensure that such a tragedy does not occur again because such people are very vulnerable to the information and advice that they are given?

Mr. Ridley: I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's point to the attention of the Securities and Investment Board, whose job it is to ensure that intermediaries behave in an entirely responsible way towards innocent investors who do not quite know the risks.

British Rail (Objectives)

4.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about British Rail's objectives for the period 1990 to 1993.

I have today written to the chairman of British Rail, Sir Robert Reid, setting out the objectives that I have agreed with him. Copies are available in the Vote Office and will be published in *Hansard*.

Since British Rail was first set three-year objectives in 1983, the management has had a clear framework for planning its business. It has achieved undoubted success in working to the objectives that my predecessors set in 1983 and 1986. Railway investment has risen sharply. BR is now investing twice as much as in 1983, and the result is that investment in 1989-90 is the highest for some 25 years. It is to go up by a further 75 per cent. over the next three years. At the same time, British Rail's need for subsidy has been falling steadily, as BR has improved efficiency and has attracted many more passengers. Over the next three years I want to see substantial further progress on safety, quality and financial performance.

Providing a very high standard of safety must remain the railways board's top priority. We allowed for £125 million for specific new safety expenditure over the next three years in the recent public expenditure round. BR is acting positively and quickly on the report published in November on the Clapham junction accident. I repeat the assurance that I gave at that time that finance will not stand in the way of implementing the report's recommendations. I shall look at what further measures may be required once the board's assessment is available in the new year. We are committed to ensuring that BR will continue to have the necessary funds for safety. I give the House the assurance that there will be no economising on safety. British Rail has also begun work in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive and the railway inspectorate on a comprehensive safety plan. I have asked the board to submit this to me by October, and to update it annually thereafter.

British Rail's three commercial businesses—InterCity, freight and parcels—have made good progress towards the financial objectives set in 1986. InterCity has achieved a major turn-round into profitability. The objectives I am setting call for further progress towards earning a proper commercial return on their assets. Intercity's objective for 1992-93 will be a current cost profit of £95 million at today's prices.

The overall objective for rail freight will be a profit of £50 million, and the board will be preparing plans for bulk freight to earn at least an overall 8 per cent. return on its assets by 1994-95. I also want to see improvements in the financial performance of the rest of the freight business, with still greater involvement of the private sector, so that it is ready to seize the new opportunities presented by the Channel tunnel.

On British Rail's parcels business, I have endorsed the £9 million profit target which the board has set.

On the two remaining businesses—Network SouthEast and the Provincial sector—I am very conscious of the need to strike a balance. I want to see continuing but carefully phased reductions in subsidy, which should be possible without excessive fares increases.

I hope that, by the mid-1990s, Network SouthEast will start earning a commercial return on its assets, and I am asking the board to produce plans for that. Meanwhile, I am endorsing the board's own objective of reducing the grant requirement to zero in 1992-93. I am satisfied that by then Network SouthEast should not need a revenue subsidy. It is carrying so many more passengers now, and the high and growing level of investment is improving quality and reducing running costs. Increased revenue from a higher number of passengers, and lower running costs from more modern equipment, reduce the needs for subsidy from the taxpayer.

On the Provincial sector, I am again endorsing the board's objective, which is to reduce the grant from about £400 million this year to £345 million by 1992-93. It is clear that large subsidies will be needed for Provincial for the foreseeable future, although there should be scope for some further savings and I am asking the board to examine ways of achieving further improvement of the order of £20 million by that year.

Neither reductions in subsidy nor the huge increases in investment will lead to large fare increases. These objectives are based on BR's own forecasts included in its corporate plan, which it will be publishing today. The plan assumes only modest real fare increases. I shall be looking to the board to continue to improve productivity to minimise the direct pressure of costs on fares.

I share the board's determination that quality of service should improve. Demanding quality standards for provincial services were set last July. The board has now agreed to a tougher Network SouthEast punctuality standard. These are tough targets, but the benefits of the investment already authorised will be building up over the next three years and will enable BR to give passengers a better service.

Demand for Network SouthEast and Provincial services is expected to continue to grow and BR will need to decide how best to accommodate it. Where, exceptionally, new capacity cannot pay for itself, a cost benefit evaluation will be carried out to enable me to decide whether capital grants would be justified on wider social and economic grounds.

The achievements of the past six years are a tribute to the hard work of the BR board and all railway staff under the leadership of Sir Robert Reid. With the opening of the Channel tunnel, the next decade will bring new opportunities. The Government are committed to securing a safe, efficient and high-quality modern railway network. The new objectives set out a clear framework for further progress towards these goals. I commend them to the House.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Does not the Secretary of State understand that today's announcement continues the disastrous penny-pinching approach that the Government have adopted towards British Rail since they came to office? Is it not the case that in the 10 years from 1983 to 1993 the Treasury will have denied British Rail £3·5 billion in financial support by reducing the 1983 levels of support? Would it not have made sense to spend that money on ensuring that Britain could play its full part in the railway revolution that is now sweeping through Europe? Is it not the case that, instead, safety, quality and reliability have suffered, fares have rocketed and we are missing out on the major opportunities offered by the Channel tunnel?

When will the right hon. Gentleman realise that there is no point setting tougher targets for quality of service unless the resources are there to implement them? Why has he ignored the views of the passenger body, the Central Transport Consultative Committee, which only two weeks ago told him that there was a direct link between the cuts in Government grant over the past decade and the poorer quality of service?

The right hon. Gentleman's grasp of detail does not always match his considerable public relations skills, but he will now have to answer the question about fares that he ducked last week in the House. I ask the right hon. Gentleman again: does he now accept that today's announcement that Network SouthEast must have a commercial rate of return by 1995 means fare increases of at least 4 per cent. above the rate of inflation every year for the next 10 years? Is not that the exact figure in the assumption, used by the Department of Transport in assessing the options in the road assessment studies, on which he reported to the House last week? He seemed to be somewhat confused about the matter last week and promised to write to us. We are still awaiting his letter.

Does not the right hon. Gentleman understand that today's target will be greeted with outrage throughout Britain, especially in London and the south-east? Does he not realise that passengers are fed up with paying the highest fares in Europe for a dirty, overcrowded, unreliable service, and that the latest cuts will mean higher fares and even poorer quality service?

The right hon. Gentleman talks about passengers' willingness to pay more for a better quality service, yet fares are already twice as expensive in Britain as in Belgium, and one third more costly than in Germany, France and the Netherlands. How much more should passengers pay for a seat on a train which is on time and to guarantee a safe and reliable journey?

The right hon. Gentleman constantly claims that we can have either higher investment levels or higher levels of Government financial support, but that we cannot have both. Why not? They do in France, in West Germany, in Spain, in Italy and in Belgium. What is so unique about Britain?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that Britain is at the bottom of the European league of Government financial support for railways? We are still bottom of the league for investment. Why is it only on fares that we are at the top of the table?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that not one penny of the investment claims that he makes comes from the Treasury and that all of it comes from higher fares, chronic overcrowding, property and land sales, redundancies and low pay? Will he explain that some 90 per cent. of the investment over the next three years will be for the routine replacement of trains, signalling and rail and structures and will not necessarily help to expand capacity in the system?

Passenger bodies are complaining to the right hon. Gentleman and to many hon. Members about the chronic overcrowding. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Network SouthEast passengers will be outraged that BR is already saying in its corporate plan that it will not be able to meet the target that he has set for reducing overcrowding in the system, despite the increase in fares that will flow from his statement this afternoon? Is it not

[Mr. John Prescott]

true that, according to the passenger bodies, train cancellations have doubled on the provincial services and have increased by 50 per cent. on Network SouthEast?

Why are there no environmental objectives in the statement? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the increasing bulk freight's rate of return on assets from 2·5 to 8 per cent. will reduce even further rail's share of the freight market, especially in view of the CBI's calculation that the cost of road congestion is £15 billion a year? How can it make sense to drive even more freight on to the roads? Has the right hon. Gentleman discussed that with the Secretary of State for the Environment?

The right hon. Gentleman assured the House that finance would not stand in the way of the implementation of the Hidden report following the Clapham disaster, but what does that mean in practice? Will the right hon. Gentleman expand on the statement to give an assurance that safety—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] I hope that the House will always listen to points about safety. We have not listened in the past and we have now paid a terrible price for that. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that the safety deficiencies identified by Sir Anthony Hidden will be paid for by grant aid either in the form of PSO funding or a direct safety grant and will not have to be paid for by passengers in even higher fares?

Finally, does the Secretary of State endorse the view of the chairman Sir Bob Reid when he said last week:

"Our duty is not to run a service that is desirable; it is to run a service that will be profitable"?

If he does, let me offer the right hon. Gentleman some advice. He should take some time off from his tour of the nation's auction rooms peddling valuable old number plates to study the transport systems of other European countries and, yes, perhaps even use them. He may then realise that there are some things that may not be considered profitable in the narrow and petty-minded terms of the Government but which are desirable for a vital and modern nation. They include a concern for safety, for the environment, for quality of life, for economic regeneration and for the whole of Britain, and they are all sadly lacking from the statement.

Mr. Parkinson: When I listen to the hon. Gentleman, the thought that strikes me is that he is never happier than when he is attacking the work of the 131,000 people who work in British Rail and bad-mouthing their efforts.

Let me quote a passage from a White Paper produced by a Labour spokesman a little wiser than the hon. Gentleman. It says:

"To use subsidies to disguise from people the cost of the services they are paying for is pointless, and to subsidise richer people at the expense of poorer is perverse."

There is no sense—I have made this point over and over again—in the people of Hull subsidising the service in London and the south-east which is used by people who are earning much more than they are and for which there is already an excessive demand. To subsidise a service for which there is excessive demand is an absurd waste of money and it is a silly way of reallocating the national income.

One would never believe it from listening to the hon. Gentleman, but BR has more passengers in every aspect of its business in Network SouthEast and Provincial and is investing more than ever before in Network SouthEast and Provincial. Two years from now, more than 80 per cent. of the rolling stock on Provincial will be less than five years old and will effectively have been renewed.

The hon. Gentleman's picture of a declining railway suffering from lack of investment simply does not accord with the facts. The only point that he can make—it was the only point that he made in the course of his remarks—is that the subsidy is lower than it used to be. We have explained that we plan gradually to phase out the subsidy for Network SouthEast, to reduce it by £55 million from £400 million in the next three years on the Provincial network, and that that reduction, coupled with the growth in business, should not give rise to any substantial increases in fares. It is absolutely—*[Interruption.]* There is one simple point between the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and myself. He believes that the Government's commitment to the railways or to any other service is the extent of the subsidy that they provide. We believe that it is a matter of improving the service and of increasing investment.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Why do the Government not prove that?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends are very enthusiastic about bad-mouthing Britain's railways and Underground systems. The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on a visit to Paris, praised the French for modernising five Metro stations a year and investing money. We are modernising 10 stations and investing twice as much—but all that we hear from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is criticism. We are investing more money per route mile than the French. It is bad news for the hon. Gentleman that we are making progress and improving the system. We intend to carry on doing so, and to ensure that the fares do not increase excessively. We intend to ensure also that Britain has a modern railway system.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): We naturally want to give careful thought to the announcement made by my right hon. Friend this afternoon. I hope he will realise that it is difficult for many right hon. and hon. Members to attach much weight to any forecast or undertaking given by British Rail at the moment. That is particularly so in the light of British Rail's treatment of the fast link from the Channel tunnel. British Rail had four plans to consider, and after long debate and many public meetings, it reached the conclusion only six months later to cancel everything that had been discussed, arranged or agreed—and announced that it was taking an entirely fresh look at the problem.

Leaving that matter on one side, my right hon. Friend made the important comment at the end of his statement that particular problems will go to him for examination and a decision. I ask him to acknowledge that there is a difference between a subsidy—even though I may not accept everything that my right hon. Friend said about subsidies—and expenditure that is required for environmental considerations. The Government have pledged themselves to expenditure to protect the environment. It is not possible to have a railway that is profitable and which, at the same time, takes account of environment requirements. No railway in Europe does so.

Mr. Parkinson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heath: My right hon. Friend shakes his head in disagreement. If a railway is to follow its own profitable inclinations, its track will run straight through a town. Everything will be pulled down, compensation will be paid, and that will be the end of the matter. If a railroad is to take account of all environmental considerations, as we would like it to do, it must have a source of revenue other than its normal ticket taking.

The Channel tunnel fast link is also a matter of national concern because it will continue on to the north of England and to Scotland, when further environmental considerations will have to be taken into account. I hope that my right hon. Friend's concluding comment means that he is prepared to do now that which his predecessors did not do —accept that expenditure on the environment and on tunnelling is a necessary form of expenditure by Government, and that the question of a railroad's profitability does not arise.

Mr. Parkinson: As my right hon. Friend knows, the estimated costs of the fast link escalated enormously. No one really knew what the final costs would be. The figure of £3·5 billion was really a guesstimate. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the nature of the ground, no one could be sure what would be the true cost of tunnelling. It could have been billions more than the £3·5 billion originally estimated. That is why British Rail and its partners reached the conclusion that, although they could confirm the line to Swanley, they should look for other less expensive ways of connecting from there to Waterloo and then on to King's Cross. They are now doing so. Although I agree with my right hon. Friend that the environment must be taken into consideration, I cannot agree that the cross-Channel link should be tunnelled under London regardless of cost.

Coming nearer to home, the north Kent lines, which are also important to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), are the subject of an announcement of specific orders for £257 million of new rolling stock in the modernisation of that whole network. While I cannot satisfy my right hon Friend on the fast link, I promise his constituents that their local lines are in the course of being substantially improved.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I welcome the fact that British Rail is achieving its objectives, and also that it is attracting many more passengers—because that is what the statement says. However, is the Secretary of State aware that practically all its passengers travel in discomfort because of overcrowding? What steps will be taken immediately to introduce new rolling stock—and I mean immediately, rather than over the next three years that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned?

The statement also promises that there will be no large increases in fares but that there will be "modest" increases. Can the right hon. Gentleman elucidate on the meaning in that context of the word "modest"? Most of the travelling public would like to know. Also, is the Secretary of State aware that the northern regions need to know urgently what connections there will be between them and the Channel tunnel? When might we expect an announcement on that aspect?

Mr. Parkinson: The investment plans of £3·7 billion over the next three years include orders for a whole range of rolling stock. If the hon. Gentleman reads the press, as I know that he does, he will have learnt this morning of the announcement of another order valued at £350 million. In September, I announced a £257 million order for rolling stock. Our plans are being translated into action. As I mentioned earlier, we aim at modernising the rolling stock on the whole of the provincial network, and a substantial start has been made. The hon. Gentleman will see that for himself, if he looks around various provincial stations, as I do, and notices the new Sprinter trains on track.

British Rail has predicated its five-year plan on fare increases around and slightly above the rate of inflation. There are no plans for substantial increases above the rate of inflation. In some cases there are no plans for increases. In others, there are plans for substantial increases. The second year of the plan provides for substantial increases in the fares of long-distance commuters. We have made that announcement and there is no secret about that fact.

The long-distance commuter is paying on average only a tiny proportion of the standard fare, yet travels at peak times. The long-term season ticket is too good a bargain, and that is why there will be increases in various sections —*[Interruption.]* When I travelled to Brighton the other day, I shared a compartment with a passenger using a season ticket, and whereas I paid a return fare of £24·40, the season ticket holder was paying only £9·50—and agreed that he was enjoying a substantial bargain.

As to Channel tunnel links to the north of England, Sir Robert Reid's remarks have been much misunderstood. He said that, as announced, a service will be run from the regions to the Channel tunnel. However, at this stage we cannot forecast what the demand for it will be. The service will be increased if necessary, but if excessive provision is made it will be reduced. We are determined to give the regions proper access to the tunnel. The initial proposals represent a best guesstimate. If they need to be expanded, they will be expanded, but if they prove excessive, they will be reduced.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government and British Rail should be congratulated on doubling the rate of investment in real terms since 1983 and on planning for a further 75 per cent. increase over the next three years? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that much of that investment is concentrated on rolling stock in the south-east, which is long overdue for renewal? Following the Clapham junction disaster, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that finance will be made available for the rapid introduction of in-cab radio telephones, as there is some concern that that will not be done?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, there are substantial programmes to increase expenditure on rolling stock in the south-east. I have made quite clear the Government's position on Hidden. The Government do not know, because British Rail is in the process of working it out, what the cost of implementing Hidden's recommendations will be. When British Rail has done that, it will discuss it with us. We made some provision in the public expenditure plans and we shall discuss further financing with BR. I have made it clear to the House, and repeated it categorically today, that safety will not in any way be compromised by a shortage of funds. The necessary funds will be available.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Will the Secretary of State ensure that the necessary funds for safety are made available to ensure that all junctions with single-track lines are reconverted to dual-track lines so

[Mr. David Marshall]

that accidents such as the one at Bellgrove in Glasgow never happen again? Will he instruct British Rail accordingly?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. Many pieces of single track up and down the country work successfully. The cost of changing them would be enormous, but if the hon. Gentleman has specific areas where he believes that there is a specific threat to safety, I should be happy to hear from him. In the main, single-track working works well.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): May I apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House for having to leave immediately after asking my question to go to a Select Committee upstairs?

I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about the cost-benefit analysis. Does he accept that there is any relationship between the increase in complaints and the reduction in the public service obligation grant? Does he accept that the pursuit of efficiency must not be carried to the point where it undermines an essential public service? Does he ever think why efficient, prosperous and free-market West Germany spends three times as much taxpayers' money on its railways as we do?

Mr. Parkinson: I invite my hon. Friend to consider whether overcrowding has something to do with the fact that 25 per cent. more people are catching trains. I should have thought that their presence is the direct cause of overcrowding. That does not seem to suggest, as the Opposition attempt to suggest over and over again, that people are being priced off the line. Half the time the Opposition complain about people being priced off, but for the other half they complain about overcrowding.

My reply to my hon. Friend is no: the increase in the public service obligation grant has coincided with a substantial increase in other revenues. I hope that my hon. Friend is not suggesting that British Rail is not capable of cost saving or improving its efficiency, because that certainly is not the view of its management, who negotiated and accepted the objectives that I declared today. They are happy that they can meet them.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What price tag is attached to the phrase, "no economising with safety"?

Mr. Parkinson: I have already explained to the House that we are unaware of the cost of implementing the recommendations of the Hidden report because costings are still being done. I gave British Rail the objective of reporting within three months, one month of which has passed. It will come back to me after that time. When we are aware of the size of the bill, we shall discuss how it is to be paid.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement on investment, but does he accept that I am entirely unconvinced by British Rail's statement on the Channel tunnel link with the west coast of Scotland? Does he accept that we must have the facilities in place when the tunnel is opened or trade will never develop?

Mr. Parkinson: The problem with the west coast line is a passenger one. British Rail is not convinced that there will be sufficient passenger demand to travel from Glasgow to the continent by rail, simply because of the time involved. There will be many quicker ways of getting there. Proper provision will be made for freight to serve the west coast, because I realise that industry, especially round Glasgow, is extremely important. It appears that there will be not as much demand from passengers because of the time that it will take to complete the journey.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Merionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Secretary of State clarify what he said in his letter to Sir Robert Reid about investment in local regional services, particularly where the level of return does not immediately meet the 80 per cent. increase in the asset base? He said that a cost-benefit analysis will be undertaken on social grounds and grounds beyond the straight economic criteria. Will he tell the House precisely what those grounds are and what he will be taking into consideration?

Mr. Parkinson: I recognised in my statement that subsidy will be a continuing feature of the existence of local Provincial services. We accept that, which is why the reduction in subsidy over the next three years is relatively modest. We expect that to be a continuing feature of the Provincial network. We recognise that there are wider social and economic reasons, especially in the provinces, for considering investment in services. Against that wider background, we shall therefore be prepared to consider the case for investment in the provinces.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated by not only the users of British Rail but its many employees. As there are some 5,500 British Rail employees in my constituency of York, will he say why so far one significant omission from the objectives has been his plans for denationalisation? As they look forward to Santa's Christmas stocking, they should like to learn of the plans for that.

Furthermore, will my right hon. Friend say something about performance-related pay and the fact that British Rail has shifted the goal posts? Most hon. Members are conscious of the clock and are aware that "on time" means on time. British Rail has now fudged being on time from five minutes to 10 minutes late and related higher management pay to that. When can we return to accuracy and honesty with British Rail timetables?

Mr. Parkinson: As my predecessor made clear, the Government are considering whether and how denationalisation should take place. I must admit that that has not been a high priority for me since I arrived in my new job. It was made clear by my predecessor that it could not take place before the next Parliament and that that would be in at least three or four years' time. I have had rather more immediate problems to deal with, but the question is still on the agenda. I shall consider it and report to the House in due course.

The new performance targets represent a tightening up and meet a request made by the Select Committee on Transport, which said that off-peak and peak periods should be distinguished. We have agreed an overall target for performance and a subsidiary target for peak-time performance. In the past, peak-time performance was obscured by the overall performance figures. The figures are more open than they have been before, and it will be possible more easily to monitor performance.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): How long does the Secretary of State imagine that the travelling

public will take seriously someone who tells the Transport Select Committee that the roads are not capable of carrying a sufficient number of passengers and that, therefore, we must have an integrated service with railways and who talks about the need for environmental concern, but who increases fares and puts such squeezes on the finances of British Rail that it will find it exceedingly difficult to do any of the things that he has promised his electors?

Mr. Parkinson: I do not wish to take up the time of the House repeating myself, but last year we invested more money in British Rail than for 25 years. In the next three years, that will increase by 75 per cent. I know that that is very disappointing for the hon. Lady—*[Interruption.]* A Labour Government invented the concept of the external financing limit. It may be new to the hon. Lady, but it is not new to us; it was invented by her Government. Investment in British Rail is at an all-time high. The sooner she stops bad-mouthing it, the better will be the prospects for her constituents.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the commendable objectives that he has outlined today can be achieved only with a better trained, better motivated and better paid work force?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for the brevity of his question. It came as a pleasant surprise after listening to Opposition Members. I agree that that is at the heart of the matter. It is encouraging that management and unions are now discussing greater flexibility so that they can attract the quality of people that they need to man the system.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that in the past four months a Minister of State at the Department of the Environment and the Minister for Public Transport have visited the north London link line for Stratford to Silvertown in north Woolwich in my constituency and that ever since then the quality of the service has taken a severe dive? Why does he insist on a percentage return on so-called book assets? Clearly that must prejudice the maintenance of property, facilities and equipment which would provide flexibility and reliability, and therefore increase the reliability of the service? Would not the removal of those facilities encourage deterioration and attack the morale of the staff who are the railways' biggest asset?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend the Minister is aware of the deterioration in the service on that line and has called for a special report on it. I must make it clear that he is convinced that his visit was not the start of the decline. Maintenance and investment in safety are not taken into account in seeking the rate of return. Safety is specifically excluded from any consideration of the rate of return on the assets.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): May I thank my right hon. Friend for the forthcoming and welcome statement that he has made and say that I wholly disagree with the comments of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) about it? It was as welcome as my right hon. Friend's recent evidence to the Select Committee on Transport. I appreciate that British Rail will invest an additional 75 per cent. in the next three years. Will my right hon. Friend now look sympathetically and benevolently at the request to approve the electrification of the cross-city line, which I had the honour to open when I was chairman of transport in the west midlands in about 1979? At that time the stock was 20 years old and it is now that much older. May I hope that the long-awaited plans for British Rail which have at last arrived on my right hon. Friend's desk will meet with his approval, so that we can again surge ahead with this new method of motive power on that line?

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. I hope that he noticed in yesterday's announcement that the spine road for Birmingham Heartlands was approved. I hope that we shall be notching up a second achievement for Birmingham in the near future when we announce our decision about electrification. Over the next three years £3·7 billion will be invested. British Rail's five-year plan is for a £5 billion investment in the next five years. These are massive sums. They disappoint the Opposition, but they will delight the travelling public.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Should not this statement have been made by, preferably, a Treasury Minister? May I suggest to the Minister that he travels by French Rail and sees an example of subsidy for public purposes, such as safety, the environment, getting rid of congestion and regional development? Does not the narrowness of the statement tell us about the narrowness of Thatcherism in the past decade?

Mr. Parkinson: No. The hon. Gentleman, who normally knows better, is once again simply measuring everything by the extent of the public service obligation. That is not the only measure of a Government's commitment to the railway system. If it is, I must point out that the Provincial network will receive £345 million at the end of this three-year period, which is no mean sum. The Government and the country recognise that certain rail lines cannot pay their way and need subsidy, but that is no excuse for those that can pay their way remaining subsidised.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his announcemmnt will create enormous optimism and hope among the hard-pressed commuters of Kent? They will feel that they have received a Christmas present under the tree. However, they will have some doubts about whether the box has anything in it, because, first, British Rail plans to use two passenger lines for freight in this most congested area of the United Kingdom and, secondly, some construction work is thought to be required to build the Channel link through London. The assertion by a senior British Rail manager that British Rail hopes that it can do that by weekend working only has not struck complete confidence among my constituents.

Mr. Parkinson: It does not inspire me with confidence either. My hon. Friend has been the staunchest advocate of his constituents' case in resisting the proposals on the Channel tunnel rail link and I am sure that he will continue to be. Some of the alternative schemes offer a substantial threat to Kent, particularly the notion of doubling the number of lines so that freight can run parallel to the new passenger line. That would represent a major intrusion and I hope that my hon. Friend will think carefully about it as he continues to advocate it.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Secretary of State realise that his statement is wholly out of touch with reality for the commuters in my constituency and the rest of Greater Manchester who, for the past seven months, have waited regularly for trains that do not turn up, turn up late or turn up with insufficient carriages? The service has been so poor that the number of passengers travelling in Greater Manchester has decreased rapidly. What will the Government do to ensure that British Rail can provide the service that is essential if people in Greater Manchester are to be attracted from the roads to good-quality public transport? It is not being provided now.

Mr. Parkinson: There have been problems in Manchester and I understand that one of the reasons has been the failure of new rolling stock. Some people, including the hon. Gentleman, always insist on our buying British. British has not always been best for the rail system —*[Interruption.]* It is getting better. The hon. Gentleman will have noticed that the Government have announced a substantial grant towards Metrolink in Manchester and the provision of a £23 million proposed rail link to Manchester airport. Although there have been difficulties, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will realise that they are being tackled and that Manchester is getting its fair share of investment in the infrastructure.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): While the success and improved efficiency of British Rail to which my right hon. Friend referred may have been happening, is my right hon. Friend aware that this morning I received a letter from Sir Robert Reid, chairman of British Rail, saying that the service from London to Southend has reached a wholly unacceptable level? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in view of the serious problems in some areas and the utter misery of some commuters, there is a case for a trouble-shooting squad to look at special problems? Can he give some hope to my constituents—perhaps even the pledge of coming to visit Southend to see our transport himself?

Mr. Parkinson: I will be happy to come to Southend with my hon. Friend and see transport there for myself. I recognise that, after the north Kent line, the Southend line is probably the worst line left in England. We have announced a huge programme for north Kent and I am aware, because my predecessor was not uninterested in this subject, that Southend desperately needs the same treatment. I shall press British Rail to give it priority.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the Secretary of State not realise that the proposals for a direct service from the regions to the links with the Channel tunnel, and the proposals for King's Cross are, at best, second best for the regions? The regions, and the north-west in particular, need direct connections, bypassing London with public investment, and we need improvements to the west coast line and the electrification of the Manchester to Blackpool and the 'Roses' lines, and we want them now.

Mr. Parkinson: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman will be disappointed. Although there have been criticisms of the provision from the regions to the Channel tunnel, 3 million seats will be available from the regions through London to Paris and Brussels. That is a huge increase in the availability of transport to the continent from the regions. If there is a demand for more, the service can be increased. I do not believe that it is reasonable to say that provision for the regions is not adequate. It is a guesstimate, but it can be increased if it needs to be.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My right hon. Friend spoke of his support for British Rail's plans to improve the service to its customers. I invite him to tell the House which other nationalised industry, past or present, has shown any particular expertise in caring for the needs of the customer?

Mr. Parkinson: I think that most people would agree that privatised companies offer a higher standard of service. I am afraid that it is a great disappointment to Opposition Members, but it is a simple fact that when it was nationalised, a tiny proportion of British Telecom's public boxes worked. Now, more than 98 per cent. are regularly available for use. My hon. Friend is right; it is more difficult for a nationalised industry to give service. Nevertheless, British Rail, under the chairmanship of Sir Robert, has made a major effort. There is an improvement, and we want to see that continue under the new chairman.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is great pressure on the next debate, and there is an opportunity to raise this matter in the debate on the Consolidated Fund, particularly for hon. Members who represent London constituencies. Therefore, I will allow three more questions from each side, and then I shall call the Front-Bench spokesmen.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the consequences of British Rail's improved efficiency, which he referred to in the statement, is that elderly ladies are being mugged because of the removal of staff from many railway stations? An example is Kirkgates, which is one of the two major mainline railway stations in my constituency; all the staff have been removed. As a direct consequence, passengers are afraid to use that station. Will the Secretary of State consider the issue, and press British Rail to improve the situation and make funding available so that all stations have some staffing, in the interests of passenger safety?

Mr. Parkinson: I will look into the situation at that station in Wakefield. As the hon. Member knows, although there are proposals to reduce staffing on stations, they are accompanied by a substantial increase in monitoring equipment.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My constituency enjoys the dubious distinction of having had more railway lines under threat of closure by British Rail last year than any other constituency. I was relieved that my right hon. Friends said in his letter to the chairman of British Rail that in certain cases improved productivity may produce better results than bus substitution. While my right hon. Friend cannot give a definite commitment on the fate of those lines, will he keep British Rail up to the mark, and ensure that there is adequate publicity for lines? In recent years, we have been struck by the extent to which rural lines are run for the benefit of producers and the rolling stock, rather than the customer.

Mr. Parkinson: In my letter I draw attention to the fact that the case for bus substitution, or for investment and improved efficiency on the railways, should be taken into

account before arriving at a decision. It is also true that we are less enthusiastic about the possibilities for bus substitution than we were two or three years ago.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the Secretary of State accept that people in Northern Ireland would like to share the benefits that will arise from 1992 and the Channel tunnel? Does he agree that improved rail and passenger facilities at Stranraer, on the west coast of Scotland, would help the economy of the south-west of Scotland and of Northern Ireland? We could all benefit from improved rail facilities.

Mr. Parkinson: I think that I had better discuss with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether we can find a way to give the access that the hon. Gentleman wants.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the service provided by British Rail in my constituency is not what it might be, if the level of complaints is anything to go by? Does he agree that, as long as the railways are in the public sector, the levels of service and investment will always be inadequate? Does he agree that it is about time that we got that great industry where it belongs—in the private sector? We should break it up, along the lines of the pre-war railway companies, and get it away from the dead hand of state control.

Mr. Parkinson: I am sure that my hon. Friend speaks for an increasing number of people when he argues that privatisation could play a part in improving the performance of the railways. That is being considered as a separate matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is it not the truth of the matter that the Secretary of State came to the House last week and provided more than £1,000 million in public money to the road lobby, including his former employer, Tarmac? This week, he had a chance to provide money for British railways and he has refused. The truth is that he and his Government are better characterised by selling second-hand car number plates than running a national public railway.

Mr. Parkinson: One can always tell when the hon. Gentleman is on weak ground—his vehemence exceeds his ignorance. In the three-year programme that we announced the other day, we plan to spend £5·7 billion on the national road programme. We plan to spend £6 billion on public transport, so the hon. Gentleman is, as usual, talking offensive nonsense.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): When reappraising British Rail's objectives, and to optimise the opportunities that the Channel tunnel offers, will my right hon. Friend urge British Rail to reconsider its present plans, and the alternatives that are being discussed for a direct, fast and cost-effective link for passengers and freight from the whole of the United Kingdom to continental Europe?

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend knows, the range of possibilities were considered by British Rail before it took its decision to link up with Eurorail, pursue the line to Swanley and find an alternative route through to King's Cross and Waterloo. I have had a cursory look at some of the alternatives, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would be the first to admit that they are not without substantial problems. The plain fact is that British Rail feels that it must focus on coming forward with firm plans for its chosen routes, and it is concentrating on that.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the £3·7 billion forecast spending on British Rail have to be funded entirely from British Rail's own resources, or will the Secretary of State seek additional assistance from the Treasury for that long-awaited and much-needed investment? Has he discussed the plans with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment? What will be the impact on passenger carryings of increasing fares, in real terms, in Network SouthEast? Does the Secretary of State consider that it makes sense, environmentally, to transfer passengers from an over-crowded railway system to an already congested road system and does he agree that that will be the impact of his proposals? Does he agree that bulk freight's rate of return on assets is to be raised from 2·7 to 8 per cent.? Will that not reduce even further rail's share of the freight market, and lead to more heavy goods vehicles on Britain's already congested roads?

May I ask the Secretary of State about passenger transport executives, which he has not so far mentioned? [HON. MEMBERS: "No—too long."] Conservative Members should listen as their seats are at risk as a direct result of these plans. Does the Secretary of State intend that ratepayers in Birmingham, Manchester, Merseyside and Tyne and Wear, for example, must meet the full cost of rail services in and around those cities? What is the likely impact on the environment of such proposals?

The Secretary of State has had a fairly unenthusiastic response from his Back Benchers today because, in their hearts, they know that he is on a kamikaze mission, putting up rail fares in the south, and they are the accompanying passengers, whether willing or not.

Mr. Parkinson: I congratulate the hon. Member on taking about one third of the time of his leader and on being about twice as effective. Two thirds of these funds will come from the external financing limit, which is entirely guaranteed by the Government. The hon. Gentleman keeps predicting that, fares increases will drive people off the railways, but the evidence in Network SouthEast is that, as the subsidy has gone down, the number of passengers has gone up. The subsidy has fallen and there has been about a 25 per cent. increase in the number of passengers. To a slightly lesser extent, the same movement is mirrored in the Provincial system.

The Government and British Rail are following a Monopolies and Mergers Commission finding that too little of the true charge was being passed to the passenger transport executives and that the matter should be reconsidered. We, the taxpayers, are still paying an overwhelming proportion of the costs of Provincial. About 65 per cent. of the costs of Provincial are met by the taxpayer, and about one third is met by the customer.

We believe that there are substantial possibilities for attracting freight to the network. We believe that an increased return can come from a growth in traffic. That is why we are investing to ensure that that becomes possible.

Following is the letter:

Dear Bob,

New objectives for British Rail

Your current objectives were set by the Government in

[Mr. Parkinson]

October 1986 and cover the period up to the end of March 1990. They built on the success of the British Railways Board in meeting the objectives set in October 1983 on your appointment as Chairman. I am now writing to set out the Board's objectives for a third 3-year period from April 1990 to March 1993. These objectives will supersede the current objectives from next April. They supplement the statutory and financial duties of the Board and cover safety, quality and finance. They are aimed at producing a safe, efficient and high quality railway which is responsive to the needs of its customers.

Your progress over the last six years shows that a growing investment programme can go hand in hand with lower subsidies. Investment has broadly doubled in real terms since 1983 and is planned to increase further by some 75 per cent. over the next 3 years. InterCity has exceeded the targets set for it in 1986 by eliminating its losses and earning a positive rate of return. Excellent progress is being made with the electrification of the East Coast Main Line. Railfreight is being re-shaped into a business better able to respond to the changing needs of its customers, and is investing to improve the quality and reliability of its services. Parcels is undergoing major restructuring to meet the challenges it faces in a very competitive market. Network SouthEast is now beginning to keep pace with the growth in traffic. The Provincial Sector has improved efficiency and covers a higher proportion of its costs from revenue. The grant target for NSE and Provincial was achieved one year early. The grant that is needed is now nearly 60 per cent. lower in real terms than in 1983.

The objectives for the next 3 years need to consolidate and build on these achievements. You and I have agreed that we want to see further progress on safety, on quality (particularly punctuality, reliability and overcrowding) and on productivity.

Safety

Under the Transport Act 1962 it is the Board's duty to have regard to efficiency, economy and safety of operation. Providing a very high standard of safety must remain the Board's top priority. I know you are committed to acting positively and quickly on the report of Sir Anthony Hidden's Inquiry into the tragic accident near Clapham Junction in December 1988. We have agreed that the Board should complete, in conjunction with the Department, a review of its investment appraisal and funding arrangements for safety-related projects as soon as possible. Non-commercial projects intended specifically to improve safety are not expected to earn a direct financial return. I have made clear that in implementing the Hidden Report recommendations, finance will not be an impediment. The financial targets set out below take account of the additional safety expenditure you have already incorporated in your plans in anticipation of the Hidden Report. I want you to let me know within the next 2 months what further measures you judge necessary and what additional expenditure may be involved, so that appropriate provision can be made.

You have also begun work in consultation with the Railway Industry Advisory Committee of the Health and Safety Executive and with the Railway Inspectorate on a Safety Plan. I would like this Plan to be submitted to me by October 1990. The Board should update this annually and report on progress.

The Asset Base

We have agreed that the asset base of all sectors should be revised to include infrastructure (stations, track and signalling). This will require further work by the Board. When that work is complete, all investment will be capitalised. Meanwhile I have taken account of preliminary estimates of the full asset base in settling the equivalent CCA rate of return targets (before interest) for the commercial sectors given below.

The Commercial Businesses

InterCity earned current cost profits of £26 million in 1988-89 equivalent to some 1·3 per cent. on estimated asset values. I want to see further improvement towards the full 8 per cent. return needed on assets. As a further step towards this aim, I am setting an objective for InterCity to earn a profit of £95 million in 1992-93, broadly equivalent to 4¾ per cent. on estimated asset values. I want you to continue to report achievement on punctuality.

Railfreight is facing keen competition. A return of 8 per cent. is the right objective for this commercial business to earn and should be the basis for decisions on new investment. I recognise however that some parts of the business will not be able to achieve a full 8 per cent. return over the next three years. I am therefore setting an overall objective for Railfreight of earning a profit of £50 million in 1992-93, broadly equivalent to 4·5 per cent. on estimated asset values. I welcome your intention to prepare plans for bulk freight to earn at least an overall 8 per cent. return on its assets by 1994-95. I shall want to see those plans by July 1990. I also look forward to seeing by then the Board's plans to improve the financial performance of Railfreight Distribution, to maximise the involvement of the private sector, and to reshape the business to seize the new opportunities presented by the Channel Tunnel.

Parcels should continue to maximise returns from its increasingly successful Red Star business, and I welcome the £9 million profit target which the Board have set for the sector as a whole.

Channel Tunnel Services

The Board should prepare and undertake investment to make maximum use of the commercial opportunities presented by the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1993. I welcome your plans for a Joint Venture with Eurorail.

Regional and Local Passenger Services

Investment: The Government's response to the Transport Select Committee Report on the Financing of Rail Services (Third Report, Session 1986-87) clarified the criteria for investment in the regional and local passenger railways. I expect the Board to take full account of this in preparing investment plans and considering priorities. Both Network SouthEast and Provincial currently face growth in demand for their services. I expect the Board to increase services to meet this growth whenever the incremental investment can be shown to earn the required rate of return (currently 8 per cent.). Where exceptionally investment which increases the asset base cannot meet the 8 per cent. test, I shall want a cost benefit evaluation to be carried out in conjunction with the Department to enable me to decide whether capital grants would be justified on wider social and economic grounds (e.g. through the benefits of lower road congestion).

Fares: Over the last few years, progress has been made in relating fares more closely to costs and improvements in service quality. I expect this process to continue, but I want the Board to do further market research on the relationship between price and quality. I shall be looking to the Board to do as much as possible to improve productivity and make the most efficient use of resources so as to minimise the direct pressures of costs on fares. I want the Board to report annually on unit cost trends so that I can see whether satisfactory progress is being made.

Network SouthEast

On the Board's forecasts, continuing revenue growth and falling unit costs will enable Network SouthEast to break even by 1992-93. The large and growing investment programme will make a major contribution to this by enabling the Board to save energy and maintenance costs and by providing increased capacity and higher quality which lead to increases in revenue. The Board has already set an objective of reducing NSE's grant requirement to zero in 1992-93, which I welcome. I want the Board to prepare plans for NSE to achieve significant progress towards earning a commercial rate of return on its assets by 1995-96; I should like to see the Board's proposals by December 1990.

Quality: My predecessor set new quality targets for NSE in June 1987 and, following the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) into NSE services, he agreed with you that those targets should apply route by route. I want the Board to regard the targets as applying not only over the day as a whole but also to the morning and evening peaks (taken together) and to report on performance accordingly. You and I have now agreed that the overall punctuality target

should be raised from 90 per cent. within 5 minutes to 92 per cent. by 1992. We have also agreed that there should be a separate target of 88 per cent. for the morning and evening peaks. You have agreed to arrange for me to be informed whether there are any routes and any time of day on which any of the quality standards will not be achieved by March 1993 and when the Board expects to achieve them.

The present quality standards are based on market research carried out by the Board into the importance attached by the travelling public to different aspects of rail travel. Incomes and expectations are growing in the South East and I want the Board to complete its programme of market research to see whether changes in the quality targets would be justified taking account of passengers' willingness to pay for them. I shall want to consider in 1991 whether the quality targets should be changed in the light of this further work.

Provincial

Over the last 6 years the Provincial sector has been able to reduce costs, increase traffic, improve quality and charge more for it. Revenue has therefore increased in real terms. Subsidy including PTE payments has fallen from 75 per cent. of costs in 1983 to 65 per cent. in 1988-89. On the Board's own forecasts it should fall further to 57 per cent. by 1992-93. It will still be much higher on some service groups and it is clear that very large subsidies will be needed for the foreseeable future.

I have described above the Government's general policies on investment and fares for Provincial and NSE. What follows is of specific application to Provincial. You have now carried out a review of the scope for bus substitution on certain rural lines. Where bus substitution can provide customers with an acceptable alternative and is a more cost-effective solution, the Board will want to bring forward proposals. In some areas, measures to improve productivity and reduce costs may produce a better financial result than bus substitution. The Board will want to take this into account in drawing up proposals for these lines.

In preparing its full response to the MMC report on Provincial the Board will want to look closely at marketing and fares. Rail often provides a better service than buses running over parallel routes and it is right that BR should charge for the higher quality. There are also opportunities to exploit the attractions of scenic lines to tourists. I want BR to co-operate with others, including the private sector, to ensure that net revenue is maximised for these lines.

The Board has already set an objective of reducing the Provincial sector's grant requirement to £345 million by 1992-93, which I welcome. I would like you to examine ways of achieving further improvement of the order of £20 million by that year.

Quality

My predecessor set quality standards for Provincial services supported by the PSO on 28 July this year. Annex A summarises the quality standards for all the passenger businesses.

PTE Services

The MMC report recommended that the Board should discuss with the PTEs and the DTp the charging to the PTEs of the full measure of costs attributable to the operation of PTE services. We have agreed that BR should bring forward proposals for carrying forward this recommendation, in consultation with my officials and the PTEs. When the report has been considered it may be necessary to adjust the grant target.

Private Sector Involvement

I welcome the progress which the Board has made in broadening the participation of the private sector in the provision of services to the railway. The sales of BREL and Travellers Fare have been successfully completed, and the private sector is increasingly involved in providing ancillary services. I would like the Board to increase further the contribution of the private sector where this enables more cost-effective and competitive services to be provided, and to continue to report progress each year.

Public Accountability

I would like the Board to report performance and progress in achieving these objectives in its Report and Accounts each year. This should include:

(a) the quality of service achieved against the agreed standards;
(b) progress towards the grant targets for NSE and Provincial;
(c) the current cost operating profit before interest and CCA rate of return on assets for InterCity, Railfreight (both overall and separately for bulk freight and Railfreight Distribution) and Parcels;
(d) progress on increasing the contribution of the private sector.

Yours ever,
Cecil
Cecil Parkinson

Quality of service objectives *Annex A*

	InterCity	*Network SouthEast*	*Provincial*
Punctuality	90 per cent. right time and up to 10 minutes late.	92 per cent. right time and up to 5 minutes late all day. 88 per cent. in morning evening peaks.	*Express Longer Rural* 90 per cent. right time and up to 10 minutes late. *Urban Shorter Rural* 90 per cent. right time and up to 5 minutes late.
Reliability (Percentage of services to run)	At least 99·5 per cent.	At least 99 per cent.	*Express Longer Rural* At least 99·5 per cent. *Urban Shorter Rural* At least 99 per cent.
Train Enquiry Bureaux	95 per cent. of calls to be answered within 30 seconds.		
Ticket Offices	Maximum queuing time of 3 minutes off peak and 5 minutes peak.		
Carriage Cleaning			
Interior daily clean	100 per cent.	100 per cent.	100 per cent.
Exterior wash	95 per cent. (daily)	100 per cent. (daily)	100 per cent. (every 2 days).
Heavy interior clean (per 28 days)	95 per cent.	100 per cent.	—

[Mr. Parkinson]

	InterCity	*Network SouthEast*	*Provincial*
Load Factors	—	No more than 135 per cent. for sliding door stock or 110 per cent. for slam door stock. No standing over 20 minutes except by choice.	*Express Longer Rural* — *Urban Shorter Rural* No more than 135 per cent. for sliding door or 110 per cent. for slam door stock. No standing over 20 minutes except by choice.

Points of Order

5.34 pm

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order, but I ask the House to bear in mind the fact that we have a heavy day ahead of us. We have a three-hour debate, opposed private business and an order after that.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that your predecessors have ruled that right hon. and hon. Members, when making speeches, should not read them but may make use of copious notes, I understand that to be the ruling for speeches in debates. This afternoon, we have had two interventions from the Opposition Front Bench, one of which consisted of about seven pages of closely written foolscap being read out. I hope that you will give a considered opinion about whether in such circumstances it might be appropriate for you to intervene.

Mr. Speaker: Front Bench spokesmen have always had an opportunity to rest their notes on the Dispatch Boxes. They should not be read absolutely verbatim, but reference may be made to them.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you heard of any wish for a statement to be made by the Foreign Secretary on the mass killings in Romania? It appears that there have been further killings. I know that there is to be a brief Consolidated Fund Bill debate in the middle of the night on Wednesday, but I understand that that debate is on the whole of central and eastern Europe. May the House be given an opportunity to express its revulsion at the killings being carried out by the Romanian Government? The House has often expressed horror at atrocities and crimes committed by various Governments, and I hope that we may be provided with just such an opportunity before the House rises for Christmas.

Mr. Paul Flynn: (Newport, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. There are practical steps that Britain can take to curb the excesses of Nicolae Ceausescu such as intensifying our activities——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be far more appropriate for the hon. Member to make those practical suggestions in the Consolidated Fund Bill debate. There will be an opportunity in the debate on developments in central and eastern Europe.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed, in what is becoming virtually a weekly occurrence, that the business as announced at c. 1173 in *Hansard* last Thursday was once again amended within 24 hours by an order which was pushed through late on a thin Friday. Once again, private business, which many of us are not interested in, is being pushed later and later into the night and, as a result, Back Benchers on both sides of the House who believe that they are here to discuss Government business find that they have to be here longer and longer. Is there no way in which you can protect us from these extensions of the timetable?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member is not suggesting that Friday is not a parliamentary day. The motion was on the Order Paper and the hon. Member could have objected to it on Friday if he had wished to do so.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order concerns the statement about the ordering of frigates. Is it in order for the Minister to stroll into the Chamber, able to tell us the names of the three frigates that have been ordered but unable to say how many will be ordered in the next round or when he expects——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I was unable to call the hon. Lady to ask a question on the statement. It is perfectly in order for a Minister to name frigates if that is what he wants to do. It is not within my power to dictate that he should or should not announce what will happen in the future.

Mrs. Fyfe: What kind of Minister is it——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No. I am sorry that I could not call the hon. Lady earlier.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the golden boy of the Labour party, has again put forward an interesting blueprint about preventing people from owning second homes. The impact on marriage, the flow of funds from the country and the squeals of frustrated foreigners taking the matter to the European Court is not a matter for you, but what is a matter for you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. So far, I have not heard anything that is a matter of order. What is the matter for me? I do not have a second home.

Mr. Marlow: I, my colleagues and Opposition Members are concerned about the Register of Members' interests. There may be some truth in the assertion that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has two homes and that members of the Opposition Front Bench have two homes——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That would be a good subject to raise tomorrow if the hon. Gentleman catches the Chair's eye.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order arises out of Prime Minister's questions. A strong suspicion, which I share, of political rigging during Prime Minister's questions, was expressed by right hon. and hon. Members on these Benches. Question No. 2 was not called until after 3.27 pm, when there were less than three minutes to go because questions Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 were tabled by Labour Members. Only two——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member should not pursue that line.

In invite him to look at *Hansard* tomorrow and to see how many opportunities were given to Members on Opposition Benches to ask the Prime Minister a question as compared with those Members on the Government side.

Mr. Cohen: There were only——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Banks.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you think that you could order an early investigation into the acoustics of the Chamber? I have been here since June 1983 and, until recently, I have never had any difficulty hearing the shrill tones of the Prime Minister during Prime Minister's questions, but I and my colleagues at the back of the Chamber are now finding it extremely difficult to hear her. It must be something to do with the acoustics. I cannot believe that it is anything to do with the television cameras and the Prime Minister's new cuddly toy phase.

Mr. Speaker: I have instituted an inquiry into the microphones. My personal view is that they are not quite as good or accurate as they used to be. I am looking into the matter.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask about question 189 for written answer about the global budget of the National Health Service in next year's financial budget. The Secretary of State for Wales has not seen fit to make a statement about a matter involving a budget of £1·5 billion, 50,000 employees and every community in the Principality. The Secretary of State is giving us government by press release. Can you, Mr. Speaker, ensure that the Secretary of State for Wales will come to the House, make a statement and submit to questions so that we can tell him the problems that we see regarding waiting lists, the care of the elderly and the impact of inflation on the NHS budget?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not within my power to require the Secretary of State to come here. I am sure that what he has said has been noted on the Government Front Bench. We must move on to the debate.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not taking it. I asked the hon. Gentleman to sit down.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not taking it, and I have told the hon. Gentleman that.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Francis Maude.

ESTIMATES DAY

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY] [1ST PART]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1989-90

Class II, Vote 2

[Relevant Documents: second report from the Foreign Affairs Committee (House of Commons paper No. 281-I of Session 1988-89) on Hong Kong, the observations by the Government on the report (Cm. 927), and the minutes of evidence taken by the Foreign Affairs Committee on 13 December 1989 (House of Commons paper No. 58-ii).]

Vietnamese Boat People

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a further supplementary sum not exceeding £1,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on other external relations.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

5.40 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs will be grateful for the opportunity for us to debate this afternoon the appallingly difficult question of the future of the Vietnamese boat people—although, in view of the subject's sensitive nature and the deep emotions which it arouses on all sides, I am not sure how grateful the Chairman and Committee will be for the chance to put their heads in this noose.

The debate technically arises from the Estimates, as you, Mr. Speaker, reminded us, although the House will wish to address the principle raised by the Government's policy and decisions on the boat people. I shall briefly allude to the Estimates, which are by no means chickenfeed. We are dealing with expenditures already made by the British Government of £30 million and by the Hong Kong Government of £200 million to cope with the accommodation and expenses arising from their present policy for dealing with the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. We should note that substantial expenditure, but must turn our minds to the principle raised by the Government's policy.

How to handle the Vietnamese boat people—the refugees and migrants—poses one of the most agonising decisions for my right hon. and hon. Friends. It is possibly one of the most difficult decisions which they or the Government have had to face for a long time. That agony and difficulty deserves understanding—perhaps a little more understanding than it has attracted from some quarters recently. The responsibility of these difficult issues bears down heavily on the shoulders of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The Select Committee considered this issue when looking at the broader subject of Hong Kong's future last summer. The report issued by the Select Committee at the end of June, after the Tiananmen square horrors, mentioned this matter. The Committee's views were generally, unanimous. However, on the precise question of the Vietnamese boat people and how to deal with them, Committee members had various views. Some of the votes taken on the precise wording of those views reflect the agony and difficulty of any body of people, any hon. Members, any liberal people wanting to reach the best solutions in public affairs—as I hope that the Committee felt it was—when facing such as awkward choice.

The following statement about the boat people was unanimously supported in the Committee. It stated:

"Faced with a declining level of acceptances by resettlement countries and a suddenly and massively increasing population of boat people, we believe that the Hong Kong Government had no alternative but to introduce a screening policy."

That policy began to differentiate between those deemed to be genuine political refugees, fleeing from persecution, and those designated economic migrants.

The Committee's report continued—the words were unanimously agreed:

"We accept that the logical consequence of a screening programme is the repatriation of those who have been screened out."

That was accepted. There was a further sentence, against which some Committee members felt they had to vote. Therefore, although the sentence was in the report because it reflected a majority view, it was not unanimously supported. That sentence stated:

"We believe that, in the absence of significant levels of voluntary repatriation, however regrettable it may be, there is no alternative to the mandatory repatriation of those who are screened out."

Another set of views was supported by a different majority in the Committee. The pattern of different majorities forming shows how immensely difficult and complex the issue is. The different majority added:

"We note that these people are fleeing not from persecution but from extreme poverty and that over 50 per cent. of them are under the age of 20 years. This calls for special ways in dealing with these young people and if as a last resort, they must return to Vietnam, the authorities dealing with them must act in a humane way and ensure that they are adequately provided for. Assistance should also be given to allow them to settle down in Vietnam."

I have sought to represent as fairly as possible the Select Committee's position. My other Committee colleagues from both sides of the House will wish to give their interpretation of the report, but I have given the words used and the ways in which we reached our conclusions. The difficulties that we faced when debating the matter, even all those months ago, were a precursor of the immense difficulties that we would face when it came to making a decision.

My right hon. and hon. Friends face the choice of two evils. This is not one of those wonderful times when there is good on one side and bad on the other and a simple choice can be made. This issue involves the awful complexity of a Government having to reach decisions and carry responsibility when no course is a good course. The lesser evil is that of taking the decisions which have now been made, versus the greater evil of doing nothing, not making the decisions and seeking to obtain other support to resolve the problem. We would then find that we had inflicted more cruelty, suffering and inhuman conditions on thousands of hapless people.

Having tried all other avenues, it is right to act in these few days in which we are debating the matter—for the simple reason that, if we do not act, thousands and thousands more Vietnamese boat people will float in on the early spring tides. They will come in their tens, perhaps even hundreds, of thousands. They will not only constitute a huge migration but cause chaos in Hong Kong which will lead to suffering on a far larger scale than anything we have yet seen. When balancing the choice between the

evils, those who argue that we should once more try to delay taking action must face up to the responsibility that they may, by their good intentions, create many more difficulties and much more suffering than we have seen so far.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is it not also a very heavy factor in this most difficult choice that the Government who showed themselves to be so utterly ruthless in Tiananmen square have made it clear that they will feel no responsibility towards those hapless people if they are left in Hong Kong in 1997?

Mr. Howell: That is certainly the case. We tend to measure these matters against our own, we hope, high standards in this House. We forget the attitude towards the boat people and their activities that prevails in many parts of Asia. We forget at our peril that many of those boats are turned away from other countries and sent to sea again, where all the people in them—men, women and children—drown. We forget that a great deal of the current migration is organised not by people who, through good will, want to provide transport to a freer life and a better world—whether in Hong Kong, America or Canada—but by the most ruthless racketeers. They are ripping off those poor people, persuading them of all sorts of false objectives, removing from them their precious dollars and gold savings, and then cruelly sending them to sea in unseaworthy craft or putting them in buses and sending them up the coast. It is as much an evil trade as drugs or prostitution, and we are seeing its end product in the miserable camps in Hong Kong. The hapless people are bewildered, conned and misled. They have been driven to what they thought would be a better life, only to find that it is not.

That is the background against which the Government have had to make a decision. They have to carry the responsibility, and have little choice but to act now, as they are doing. My hon. Friend the Minister will make the Government's position clear when he speaks. I hope that the Opposition's position will also be made clear.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The right hon. Gentleman rightly said that the Vietnamese people were fleeing from poverty. That poverty largely stems from the blockade of Vietnam by western powers. Did the Committee address that matter with a view to changing policy to help to eradicate poverty in Vietnam?

Mr. Howell: I have given the view of members of the Committee—although not all members—that additional assistance should be mobilised in co-operation with and for Vietnam. The hon. Gentleman must accept that, although aid and assistance from outside can help a society and an economy, the basic conditions and the basic way in which a Government treat their citizens are matters for decision inside that society. We must face the fact that, in recent years, Vietnam has been an extremely nasty place to live for individuals and for liberal values. However, there may be a chink of light. The position may now be changing, and in that may lie our hope——

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) *rose*——

Mr. Howell: I do not think that anyone, not even the hon. Gentleman who wants to intervene, can claim that it is all beer and skittles in Vietnam.

Mr. Mullin: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that many of those people are fleeing not the Stalinist system of economics, which I probably deprecate as much as he does, but market forces? Many of them come from the coastal areas of North Vietnam such as Honggai and Haiphong. They are fleeing because the Government have adopted the World bank recommendations and cut off subsidy to the coal mines. Of course, the north of England is familiar with that. I shall leave aside the point that those towns were flattened by American B52s.

Mr. Howell: We are now getting into a debate about Vietnam's past. It has had its problems, but it has also brought problems upon itself.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I am dwelling not on the past, but on the present Vietnam. The report on the British refugee camps prepared by Alf Dubs and Lord Ennals specifically states:

"returnees are in no danger when they are back in Vietnam; that they can choose where to live and that they receive assistance to resume their lives."

They expressed the view that more people in Hong Kong should be aware of that truth.

Mr. Howell: That is an important point.

I have heard some unkind people suggest that the Opposition's posture was opportunist. I do not think that it is; I certainly would not lay that charge upon them. However, given the complexity of, and the obvious dilemma in dealing with, the problem, it is regrettable that those on the Opposition Front Bench have not appreciated the value of seeking a bipartisan approach on such an immensely difficult issue. It is their right so to choose, but it is a great pity for the aims of the policy and for the reputation of this country.

I suppose that those who are totally disinterested must ask why, if people find this forced repatriation not only appalling—as we all do—but so appalling that the even greater risks of doing nothing should be run, there are no feelings about the forced repatriation of people from Hong Kong to China, which happens every day on as big a scale as anything that we are contemplating. I understand that, last year, about 30,000 people were forcibly repatriated from Hong Kong to China, with the agreement of the Chinese Government.

We can all make comments about the state of affairs in different countries, but I do not think that since the summer anyone has argued that China is a home of happiness and liberalism and that those people have been returned to a wonderful, open and welcoming country. Indeed, I dread to think of what has happened to some of them. While I do not wish to make any party points, it must be recognised that if one takes a certain stance on the question of forced repatriation, the same stance and the same standards must be applied to the other forced repatriations that have been taking place for many years.

I want to be brief, but I must say a word about the United States of America. I have always admired that country and, in many areas of human rights, it has been fine. However, in this matter I think that Washington's policy is pure humbug. The Select Committee report quoted the words of Sir David Wilson—who, as Governor of Hong Kong, is in an immensely difficult position that requires some understanding in the House. He said about the boat people:

"they are . . . not trying to go to Hong Kong but to go to places of resettlement. Above all, they are trying to go to

[Mr. Howell]

North America which has said that these people do not qualify for resettlement in the United States as ordinary refugees because they come from north Vietnam . . . Hong Kong is caught between this upper and nether millstone."

The former Foreign Secretary, in evidence to the Committee, expressed his bewilderment that the United States seemed

"to support the prospect of indefinite accumulation of people in places like Hong Kong and that is clearly not a tenable position."

The Committee unanimously concluded:

"We believe the American position fails totally to understand the seriousness of the problem or its damaging consequences both to the people of Hong Kong and the Vietnamese."

It is also damaging to the many other people involved. The United States policy-makers—those who are currently influential in Washington—just as they appear to be wrong about Europe, are wrong about Hong Kong and are probably wrong about their policy on China.

This is a situation in which there is no choice but to take an ugly and difficult decision to avert an even greater injustice and conflict. Those who cry halt now—those who say that there must be some other way, even though every conceivable way has been sought—would themselves, I fear, carry the responsibility for the even more catastrophic consequences of inaction.

We are asked by leaders and guides in the world and by others among the public to search our consciences. Those who argue that this action should not now be pursued need to search their consciences just as minutely and carefully.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It is clear that a large number of hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Many will be disappointed unless speeches are brief.

6 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): We on the Opposition Benches welcome this debate, which is taking place not before time. We have been calling for a debate on this urgent matter for many months—*[Interruption.]* It has been a matter of Government responsibility. The Government have been dodging this issue on the Floor of the House, while at the same time secretly hatching their plan for forced deportation. I assure the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) that that is not the best way to achieve a bipartisan approach on this issue.

The motion is a technical one on the Estimates. The Opposition view is represented by motion No. 46 in the notices of motions, which cannot be tabled because of a procedural technicality. But that motion effectively is what my hon. Friends and I support tonight.

I also assure the right hon. Member for Guildford that Opposition Members appreciate the problems of the Governments of Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. The conditions in the camps are intolerable, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and I saw when we visited them in June. The outbreak of cholera, the rioting, the absence of education for the children and many other matters testify to the abject misery of life there.

We also recognise that if all that we do every time the boats arrive from Vietnam is to arrange the resettlement in the West of every person, the flow will continue unabated, and the situation will be increasingly difficult for Hong Kong and damaging for Vietnam. That is why we must tackle the root cause of the problem with a viable, long-term, stable but, above all, humane solution.

We disagree totally with forced deportation. Having said that time and again, our view should come as no surprise to Conservative Members. We have said it at Question Time and my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton and I have said it in statements. We oppose it because it is heartless and inhumane. I predicted that it would have to be done by a moonlight flit, and so it was —deliberately to escape the attention of the world's media.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) mentioned the return of illegal immigrants from Hong Kong to China, a policy that has gone on for many years. How does the hon. Gentleman square his ridiculous attack on the British Government's Vietnamese policy with the fact that when Labour was in government between 1974 and 1979—the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was a member of that Government—they returned from Hong Kong well over 100,000 illegal Chinese immigrants with very little screening? That shows the utter hypocrisy of Labour policy in this matter.

Mr. Foulkes: Chinese refugees are returned one by one at the border. We are here talking of people who have settled in camps and of families with children, some of whom were born in the camps. This is an entirely different issue.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Haynes and Harlington): That is typical of you lot—two-faced.

Mr. Foulkes: I will not take anything from that racist hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) must withdraw that remark.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is well known for his statements to the media, although not for his statements in the House. I let them stand on their merit and I withdraw——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw the word that he used.

Mr. Foulkes: I have withdrawn it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman's statement stands as testimony.

The Government have not explained why that moonlight flit was done at 3 o'clock in the morning, if not to try to dodge the attention of the media, or why, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said, nearly 200 riot police with riot helmets, shields and batons were needed—*[Interruption.]* The facts appeared in every newspaper, including *The Daily Telegraph, The Times* and *The Financial Times*. That was done to remove 51 people, 43 of them women and children. Why was violence needed? *[Interruption.]* The Conservative lackeys of the Foreign Office might read what was said—*[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members want to treat this issue seriously, they should stop barracking and listen carefully to what is

being said. They should also read *The Daily Telegraph* today—not a radical Left-wing newspaper—which reports that martial arts were applied in the deportations and that handcuffs were being used. It was described in an editorial in *The Times* as "a sordid action," and that is indeed what it was.

We have warned the Government repeatedly that there would be justifiable outrage when pictures of boat people being forcibly deported were seen on television sets in sitting rooms throughout the world.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): My hon. Friend will be aware that the Pope in Vatican City is responsible for Catholics in Britain and throughout the world. The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) said that the Pope should put his hands in his pockets and fork out money from the rich coffers of the Catholic Church to assist the boat people. Indeed, he suggested that the Pope could authorise the sale of two or three Vatican paintings to help the economy of Vietnam and thereby show what a good Catholic he was.

Does my hon. Friend agree that that reveals the hypocrisy of people such as the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington? After all, if the British Government had to take such steps to deal with the problems of the elderly, disabled and other needy folk in this country, it would be utter nonsense.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Perhaps we expect the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) to insult the Pope. It was even more despicable that an anonymous Downing street source should have done so.

On a number of occasions—for example, at Foreign Office Question Time on 25 October, at Prime Minister's Question Time on 26 October and, as the Minister will confirm, when I met him on 7 September—my right hon. Friends and I urged the Government to abandon their plans for forcible repatriation. The Government have used the phrase "an orderly return programme" and recently a senior Hong Kong Government official told me that they would send home only those who acquiesced. That is euphemistic, semantic hypocrisy.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): I confirm that the hon. Gentleman urged us not to go ahead with this policy. I also confirm that he had no alternative.

Mr. Foulkes: That is not true, and I shall be dealing with that point.

The Opposition have a number of serious concerns, not least about the screening of asylum seekers, who are told too little about the procedures. No legal advice or assistance is given to them and there are only six United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees monitors for 600 daily interviews, so they can attend only a fraction of the interviews. The whole system is biased in favour of rejection. Immigration officers have power only to reject. Acceptance must be referred up. How, in any case, do they differentiate in this instance between political and economic refugees? I hope that the Minister will give us some idea of the criteria used and whether they are the same criteria as were used when welcoming people from East Germany.

On 12 December, the Foreign Secretary said that the British Refugee Council had approved the screening procedures. I have read the report and spoken to the director of the British Refugee Council. He, like people from Amnesty International and other organisations, are critical of the screening procedures.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I am anxious to establish whether the hon. Gentleman is genuinely concerned about political refugees being turned back, particularly in boats. It takes us back some 40 years to another Labour Administration who turned away genuine Jewish political refugees who were trying to return to Palestine, sending them back to the Soviet Union and elsewhere in eastern Europe, almost certainly to their deaths. Is the hon. Gentleman part of that, or will he denounce it today?

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman does not have his facts entirely right, but I am sure that in any event he would agree that two wrongs do not make a right. An action of which he is understandably and properly critical provides no justification for the subsequent action that we are discussing.

We are also concerned about the lack of effort, enthusiasm and commitment devoted to persuading refugees to return. That is because the Government decided on forced repatriation many months ago, and have maintained a blinkered attitude ever since. They tried to persuade other nations at Geneva in June, and failed; their heart has not been in the voluntary scheme, because they wanted it to fail so that they could return to Geneva in November and persuade other countries to accept compulsion, but they did not succeed then either. Contrary to what has been implied by some Conservative Members, no agreement on compulsory repatriation was made at Geneva: the British Government are alone in that regard.

Mr. Maude: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the international community is unanimous in its view that there is nowhere for these people to go other than back to Vietnam? Is he seriously suggesting that the Government deliberately chose their present policy when there was a better alternative?

Mr. Foulkes: Yes, and I am coming to that alternative.

Only a programme of assistance for Vietnam to help to improve the lives of people there will help to encourage them to stay, and encourage those who have already left to return. Those who return will go back to an increasingly more tolerable life, and will send messages to those who remain, thus reinforcing the trend towards voluntary return. [HON. MEMBERS:"It will take years."]

That is a counsel of despair. Our approach is advocated in a letter to *The Times* last Friday by Chris Bale, Oxfam's Hong Kong director; by Nicholas Hinton, director of the Save the Children Fund, in *The Independent;* and by Mary Purcell, War on Want's Asia programme officer, also in *The Independent*. Those three people are committed, long-term officers who, unlike some Conservative Members, know the circumstances of refugees in Hong Kong.

The same course was advocated in the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1986, when the refugee problem was much less acute than it is now. If it had been adopted then, it would—as the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) rightly said—have given a sense of

[Mr. Foulkes]

hope to the people in Vietnam, and prevented the outflows of the past two years. Our view is also supported in an editorial in *The Times* on 13 December, which stated that "the economic misery is at the root of the exodus", and by *The Guardian*, which said on 14 December that there was an urgent need to do something about the sorry state of Vietnam, which was not so much a tyranny as a devastated economy crying out for help.

If we in the United Kingdom can lead a shift of opinion to restore aid from the European Community and persuade the International Monetary Fund, the Asia Development bank and the World Bank to assist Vietnam again, hope—as the hon. Member for Broxtowe said—will begin to return.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): The hon. Gentleman's remarks are very interesting, but as 30,000 to 40,000 people are leaving Vietnam for Hong Kong each year, the programme that he has outlined must be a long-term one, and may take two or three years to be effective. For how many years would he allow this rate of emigration to continue, and what would he do with those who are already in Hong Kong?

Mr. Foulkes: If we had accepted the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report in 1986, we would now be three years further forward. We have to start some time.

One issue on which I can agree with the right hon. Member for Guildford is the appalling hypocrisy of the United States. While rightly opposing forcible repatriation, the United States is unwilling to accept the corollary —the need to bring Vietnam back into the international community. It must cease its vendetta against Vietnam simply because it lost the Vietnam war: it must lift the trade and economic embargo. If the right hon. Member for Guildford thinks that the United States' attitude is humbug—I agree with him—why do not he and his Government lift their embargo? If they do not, they, too, can be accused of humbug.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): My hon. Friend will have heard Conservative Members jeering about "taxpayers' money" when he suggested a programme of aid for Vietnam. Does he agree that a House of Commons that can vote £150 million to help victims of the Barlow Clowes affair should consider providing some sort of aid for the people of Vietnam?

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend makes a valid point.

The United States Government and the French Government have a special responsibility to help in the reconstruction of Vietnam. The West as a whole, led by the United States, has constantly given a clear signal to the people of Vietnam: "Escape from Vietnam, and you will be resettled quickly in the West." That signal has been given for many years now, since the end of the Vietnam war, and to change the light from green to red so suddenly is unfair and inhumane.

It is entirely incorrect to say, as Conservative Members have on previous occasions, that other countries have refused to take Vietnamese refugees. Between 1975 and 1988 the United States took more than 700,000, Canada 121,000, Australia 117,000 and the United Kingdom fewer than 18,000. It is wrong for us to criticise other countries for not taking their fair share.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am genuinely unable to understand the hon. Gentleman's answer to the point about returning refugees from Hong Kong to China. If he is to carry conviction inside and outside the House, it is essential for the hon. Gentleman to have a clear and consistent policy in relation to the two very similar cases. I still do not see how he can justify turning back refugees: I watched it happen in China when I worked there, and it is not a pretty sight. They do not want to go; they struggle, and women and children are pushed back over the bridge. What is the hon. Gentleman's solution? Will he suggest a programme of economic assistance for the 1 billion Chinese to salve our consciences?

Mr. Foulkes: Before Tiananmen square we were rightly trading and investing in China, but we are not trading and investing in Vietnam; that is one difference. The hon. Gentleman might also make a comparison with East Germany, and ask himself whether he is being consistent. There is, of course, a distinction between individual crossings and the position of families who have been living in the camps for some time, including children who were born there. Assistance for Vietnam is needed to develop schemes for irrigation, reafforestation, transport and agricultural production. Trade liberalisation will help to make life there more tolerable.

Our third anxiety concerns guarantees and the monitoring of returned refugees. I know that the right hon. Member for Guildford and his Committee are rightly concerned about that. We are informed that those who have returned voluntarily have not been ill-treated or persecuted and are beginning to re-integrate. They are sending positive messages back to Hong Kong and that is encouraging more people to volunteer. However, Mr. Thach, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, reiterated his Government's opposition to forced repatriation in an interview in *The Sunday Correspondent* last week.

There are no guarantees and as all the agencies that might monitor the return of refugees have refused to monitor the return of those who are forced back, there will be no independent monitoring. The Foreign Secretary said in a letter to hon. Members:

"Independent observers will monitor the treatment of those repatriated."

When the Minister replies to the debate, he must tell us who will be responsible for monitoring. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has refused, as has the Save the Children Fund. None of the other voluntary organisations will monitor forced repatriation. Surely the Minister will not suggest the embassy, which consists of only three men who are very good but are certainly not equipped for the job and are certainly not independent. They could not monitor the return of thousands of refugees. The Minister must tell us today who will carry out the monitoring.

The Government's programme is flawed. It is misdirected, heartless, likely to be ineffective and widely opposed. It is opposed by President Bush and the American Congress, Amnesty International and all the other voluntary organisations, the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury. But we know that Conservative Members can dismiss the views of those eminent people.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): The hon. Gentleman has done his best to present to the House an alternative policy to that of the Government, and we

have listened very carefully. His entire policy appears to be centred round an aid package for Vietnam. If we are to take him seriously, he must tell us how much money the Opposition would spend on that policy if they were in government.

Mr. Foulkes: I do not have to tell the House immediately—[HON. MEMBERS: "How much?"] Of course I do not. I made the suggestion on 7 September and the Minister said that he was considering my suggestion. I did not suggest only an aid package. I suggested liberalising trade with Vietnam and aid packages from the IMF, the World bank and the Asian Development bank to Vietnam, to bring it back into the international community. Vietnam and Argentina were the only countries against which we operated trade embargoes; now we are liberalising and opening trade with Argentina and excluding Vietham.

Why are the Government pressing ahead despite all the opposition in Britain and throughout the world? It is for a very squalid reason. The Government and people of Hong Kong are pressing three issues. The Government know that they cannot give them what they want on the right of abode. They will not give them what they want and should have in terms of democracy, so they are sacrificing the boat people merely to satisfy one of those three demands. There is no other rational explanation.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Did not the hon. Gentleman hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) explain clearly in opening the debate that unless clear signals are given to people in Vietnam, another tide of boat people will arrive in Hong Kong in the very near future? In the light of those comments, will he withdraw the disgraceful allegations that he has just made?

Mr. Foulkes: They are certainly not disgraceful and I shall certainly not withdraw them. There is no evidence whatsoever that the despicable action already taken by the Government is having the desired effect. So it is proving to be ineffective as well as detestable.

I have given way many times and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends wish to speak, so I shall conclude my speech. I have outlined in detail our proposals for assistance to Vietnam, but I wish to outline a further dimension. On 13 September, the *Financial Times* stated:

> "More forcible repatriation can be avoided, but only with international help. The consequences of not resolving this issue next month will be a shameful indictment which will not fall on Britain alone."

Best of all, the *Daily Express*, which I do not usually quote, stated:

> "Mr. Hurd should announce an indefinite stay on the repatriation policy while Britain fights in every appropriate body to see that the international community comes up with a solution to what is an international problem."

How can the Government continue when the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) and Lord Ennals are being sent by the Government on a mission to Vietnam in the new year to examine the situation? Is it not a slap in the face for them if forced repatriation continues? How can the Government continue when there are no guarantees on monitoring arrangements and in the face of widespread and mounting opposition?

There is an alternative, and that is to bring some hope to Vietnam and its people—to bring them back fully into the international community and to try repeatedly to persuade and encourage more boat people to return to some long-term hope. They will return if they have better prospects for a more tolerable life.

Once again, I urge the Government to abandon their plan for further forced deportation. To continue that as the last vote in the House before we adjourn for Christmas would be an inhumane act of boundless folly and I urge the Government to think again.

6.26 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): We are dealing with what should be termed an immense human tragedy. It is not a question of right against wrong; it is what all tragedies usually are—a conflict of right against right. I do not altogether dissent from the conclusion drawn by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) when he quoted from the *Financial Times* and the *Daily Express*, but I hope he will forgive me for saying that the polemical partisan terms that he used were below the level of events.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): What about Albania?

Mr. Amery: What an absurd intervention. I read in the newspapers that the right hon. Gentleman was suffering from 'flu. I am sorry that it has had such an effect on his cerebral capacity.

Mr. Kaufman: In view of the fact that the right hon. Gentleman was delineating various suggestions as absurd —*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman is a very long-serving Member of the House and early in his political career he will remember recommending the bombing of Albania. That struck me as rather an absurd suggestion.

Mr. Amery: Obviously the 'flu has done its work. I never recommended the bombing of Albania. I have recommended the bombing of other places, including Nazi Germany, but not Albania. Of course the right hon. Gentleman got it wrong.

All I was saying was that the polemical speech by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley is below the level of the serious debate which we should be conducting on such an immense human problem.

First, we should be quite clear that Britain is involved with Vietnam only marginally by historical association. Hong Kong has come into the picture only because we have agreed that it should be a staging post for refugees. So far, it has carried out that role, but there is no question of Hong Kong being asked to bear any burden. If there is a burden, it should be borne by ourselves as the governing power, and by the international community. Obviously, we do not want to put any burden on Hong Kong as a result of this, and if extra personnel were needed, it would be up to us to recruit them.

I hope that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley will forgive me if I say that to bring Vietnam into the international community is no certain solution. It is all very fine to talk about reforestation, but we are talking about the problems of today and tomorrow. Hope might be given over a decade. Marshall aid took a long time to take effect so the idea that we can cope with the problem of the boat people now through the International Monetary Fund, the World bank or any other organisation is moonshine.

Mr. Foulkes: I also mentioned, as I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will recall, irrigation and other more short-term proposals. However, even the long-term proposals are meant not merely to provide immediate solutions, but to give some hope that there is a bright future for people in Vietnam. Surely the right hon. Gentleman agrees that that is one essential element.

Mr. Amery: I was involved in the old Commonwealth development irrigation schemes, and they took years. Dams have to be built and many types of equipment have to be provided. Such schemes will not solve the problem of people who are escaping, some from persecution and some from hunger.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley was a little nearer the truth when he talked about economic migrants, although the line between political and economic migrants, is difficult to judge. Were the 5 million Afghan refugees all political migrants? Nobody suggests that they should be sent back. Did the Palestinian refugees escape purely for political reasons? The Ethiopian refugees are escaping from hunger. Is that economic or political? This is a complicated and difficult subject, which should not be dealt with as the hon. Gentleman did by talking about long-term developments.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Amery: I shall develop the argument a little. The suggestions of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley might ignite hope, but are the people in north and south Vietnam really scanning newspapers and listening to the radio to see whether there will be a loan? I do not think so.

The coming of the next boat season, to which the Government have drawn attention, is also a problem. The Government have made out a cast-iron, logical case, which I find it difficult, in logical terms, to combat. And yet I cannot bring myself to accept the idea of the forcible repatriation of thousands of people from a British colony. I am not much influenced by international opinion or much afraid of facing up to harsh decisions, yet I find it unacceptable and even obscene to repeat what happened with the repatriation of the Cossacks, or with the Jewish refugees after the war when we blew up ships that tried to take them back to the mandate territory of Palestine. My hon. Friend the Minister would not put it in those terms, but he would think, "OK chum, what do you want to do?"

I have to answer the question of what we should do. I would not like to take the responsibility—nor would I like my hon. friend the Minister to take the responsibility—for denying sanctuary to people who have spent money and run considerable risks to escape from the prison house so that they would then be sent back to it. Vietnam is still a prison house and we make no bones about what we think of it, as we have gone so far as to support an alliance that included the Khmer Rouge because we dislike the Vietnamese Goverment so much.

What can we do? It is not given even to the wisest of us to read the future with any real clarity. The movement of history is sometimes slow and sometimes rapid. We have seen the whole of eastern Europe change overnight, like an avalanche or landslide. It might be wise to postpone the repatriation and to go to the refugee conference, where we could say, "All right, you won't take them, although it is your duty, but at least cough up some money to make the camps tolerable for the present refugees and, if there is another boating season, for the next lot. Pay up."

The space in Hong Kong is limited, but the New Territories are quite extensive, as my hon. Friend the Minister and I, who have been there, both know. We need not take a decision yet. Many problems in life cannot be solved at a given time. Time may work for us and the position in Vietnam may improve, although some of the developments about which the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley spoke will not happen quickly. We do not know whether the fear of what will happen in 1997 will inculcate a greater readiness for repatriation. I do not know, but we should avoid taking decisions now and putting ourselves in the position of denying sanctuary. The answer is to call the conference quickly and to say to the international community, "It is your job to pay. We shall maintain the camps for a year or two longer. If you do not accept that responsibility, on your own head be it."

6.36 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I listened with a great deal of interest and care to the impressive speech by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), which will bear careful study. I hope that the Government listened to his remarks as he made an important contribution.

There are some things that it is in a Government's power to do, but which they should decide not to do, not on the grounds of practicality or because there are no alternatives, but simply because such actions are wrong. Although I recognise some of the difficulties of the matter, the Goverment's actions a week ago last Monday were wrong. They were wrong by almost any standard by which one cares to judge them. Even if the policy of mandatory repatriation was right, it was wrong to go about it in that manner. The Government were wrong whatever the sinuous convolutions of facts and truth in which the Minister will, no doubt, get involved later. Even if the policy of mandatory repatriation is ultimately judged to be correct, it is still wrong deliberately to choose women and children to put at the front line of such a contentious policy simply because they will put up less of a struggle.

Whatever the situation and whatever conclusions we reach on this difficult subject, it is still wrong to put in place a screening mechanism that takes administrative decisions that condemn people to return to the tryanny from which they fled in fear of their lives. It is also wrong to put in place appeal tribunals that judge whether or not such administrative decisions are correct and at which the people who are so condemned are forbidden to be present, to have legal representation, to know the reasons why the decisions have been taken against them or to have access to judicial review. As I understand it, this is the first occasion in the history of British justice on which such a judicial review has been denied.

Whatever conclusions are reached about the rightness or otherwise of a policy of mandatory repatriation in difficult circumstances, it is still wrong for a Government to use the techniques of the 3 o'clock knock, to send in riot troops who outnumber those women and children by four to one and to cart those people off to detention against their will.

Last Monday morning I felt the same sense of revulsion at the Government's action and at the way in which they

have carried out their policy that was felt across the nation. That action has rightly caused international condemnation, opprobrium and obloquy to be heaped upon the Government. That action was wrong, and it shamed the Government, the Prime Minister and, ultimately, the nation.

Even if hon. Members do not accept my case that that action was, by any judgment, wrong, I ask them to reflect on what an appalling example we have set for the Chinese Government, who are to take over the care and safe keeping of our subjects after 1997. What if, after 1997, the Chinese state troopers turn up at 3 o'clock in the morning to carry off a British subject against his will and hand him over to a Communist state? How can we complain, since we shall have done it first?

Mr. Walden: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have finished my point.

What if the case of that British subject is put before an appeal tribunal and he is condemned to detention in a Communist state, and what if that British subject is not entitled to be present, to have legal representation or to know why the decision has gone against him? What if he is not entitled to judicial review? How then will we complain, since we shall have taken such action first?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): What difference would our complaint make?

Mr. Ashdown: It seems that the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene. I shall give way to him in a moment, after I have given way to the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden).

I ask the House to understand that we shall leave behind little enough as it is to protect freedom in Hong Kong. After 1997, probably the only thing that will stand between our subjects and the tyranny that slaughtered its own citizens in Tiananmen square is our system of legal justice, and how terribly we damaged that system last Monday night. What a dreadful legacy we have left to be picked up after 1997. Those who come to abuse their powers—we know that they have the ability and the stomach to do so—will say, "But this was the example that British justice set us." What an appalling example to have set.

Mr. Walden: The right hon. Gentleman has a tendency to talk in moral absolutes, and he must expect to be asked to live up to those absolutes. He has just stressed the iniquities of the mainland Chinese regime. I repeat the question that I put to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). We are returning refugees to a Chinese mainland, run by an iniquitous regime. How does the right hon. Gentleman square his repeated concern for the stability of Hong Kong with a moral argument that could lead only to the non-return of Chinese refugees to Hong Kong and the collapse of Hong Kong in very short order as a result?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that that is the central issue to which we who object must address ourselves. I ask him to remember that I have so far concentrated not on the policy—with which I shall now deal—but on the way in which it was implemented. The hon. Gentleman has asked an important question and I shall seek to answer it. If I do not, I shall be happy to accept another intervention from him.

I listened with interest to the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). I realise that this is an extremely difficult problem to tackle. I accept that it is no good Opposition Members simply standing on the high peak of their self-righteousness, and mouthing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I assure hon. Members that I shall be dealing with the policy itself. It is no good our merely mouthing our outrage. The central question must be whether the Government had an alternative, and I believe that there was, indeed, an alternative, and that it was an effective alternative. It was the international programme for the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees.

The difference between the Chinese refugee who comes over the border and the Vietnamese refugee who arrives in Hong Kong is that, in 1979, we explicitly encouraged refugees to leave Vietnam and we put in place an international resettlement programme aimed at resettling every single one of them—something that we have never done with the illegal immigrants from China. Those Vietnamese who are now flooding into Hong Kong have not understood—rightly or wrongly—that the policy has changed.

The Government must realise that there is no point in their saying that there is no alternative when it was the Government who were, in chief measure, instrumental in destroying that alternative.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that hon. Members will bear with me, as I wish to develop my argument.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose*—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Lady will forgive me—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The right hon. Gentleman is talking about the south Vietnamese.

Mr. Ashdown: Oh, I see. The hon. Lady thinks that there is a difference between the south Vietnamese and the north Vietnamese. I am sorry, but I do not recognise that there is a difference. The country is a singular and unitary country. They are all refugees who seek our protection.

As I have said before, in 1985 I may well have been one of the first hon. Members to visit a Vietnamese refugee camp. I told the Government in an Adjournment debate then that unless they fulfilled their obligation under the international resettlement programme, the programme would collapse. The right hon. Member for Guildford criticised the Americans tonight. I ask him to remember that when the programme was in operation te Americans took 25 times as many Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong as this Government did. They took 49 per cent. of those people, who were our responsibility, whereas the United Kingdom Government took 2·4 per cent. We took fewer than any other participating nation. Even Sweden took twice as many as we did.

It is all very well the Government saying that we had no alternative, but they were the instrument to destroy that alternative. I warned in 1985 that if the Government persisted in failing to carry out their obligations to the

[Mr. Ashdown]

international programme, that programme would collapse, and so it has. In 1980, no fewer than 37,000 people were taken under that programme whereas this year only 6,000 have gone. Since 1980, Britain's contribution has dropped from 6,077 to 101. If the Government had played their part in that international resettlement programme, we would now have in place a system that might begin to tackle the problem——

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Ian Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: Let me make this point before I give way to allow an intervention or two. It is quite simple. I can understand the reluctance of the international community towards bailing us out at this point when we have so signally failed fully to carry out our responsibilities under the programme previously.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way to me. He seems to be living in a different world from the real one. The whole world community has changed the rules on the treatment of refugees since 1979. All refugees who arrived in Hong Kong prior to last June when the screening process, started have been confirmed by the Government as being treated as political refugees, so they will be resettled internationally. Therefore, they will be treated as was previously intended. There was then a public announcement that there would be a screening process, and that screening process is acceptable internationally as the only way to deal with the problem.

Mr. Ashdown: Yes, indeed. The hon. Gentleman has brought me to my next point. The international agreement is now that the screening process should be in place—I accept that—but it also states that we should be giving the maximum input. Last year's agreement, reached at the June 1989 international conference, stated that the first option for a Government is to apply voluntary repatriation and that only after that had been in place and only after the "passage of reasonable time" should alternative measures be put in place, and then only after a proper programme had been established to encourage that process.

I do not believe that either of those two conditions has been fulfilled, and UNHCR takes the same view. A programme of voluntary repatriation that has been running for only six months cannot conceivably be said to have allowed a reasonable intervening passage of time, and nor has there been the education programme for voluntary repatriation to which the June 1989 conference agreed.

However, despite that, it can be argued that voluntary repatriation is achieving much more than most people had predicted, and I admit to the House bluntly that it is achieving more than I had thought it would achieve. Applications are now running at 150 per week. As I understand it, 637 people—let us recognise that that is 10 times as many as the Government have repatriated—have returned to Vietnam voluntarily and another 1,500——

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that the hon. Lady will agree that I have given way a fair amount. I am trying not to take up too much of the time of the House so that other hon. Members, perhaps even the hon. Lady, can make their own speeches.

About 1,500 people have now registered in that process but—and this is the point to remember—there has already been a significant fall-off in applications for the voluntary repatriation programme since the forced repatriations began. The Government do not have the right to follow through enforced repatriations until, in accordance with the agreement that they made in June this year, they give the voluntary repatriation process some time to develop. That is why UNHCR, Amnesty International and other respected organisations working in this area have refused to agree with the Government's action. They believe that the voluntary repatriation programme can be given a boost and be allowed to expand.

I want to make several points about the need to reform the screening process because, as other hon. Members have said, it is a disgrace. I have with me a letter from a firm of solicitors, Boase and Cohen, which is representing some of the boat people. Perhaps it would be instructive for the House if I read a small passage of it for the record, because the Government must address the points that are made in it. That firm of solicitors writes about its clients:

"What we have found is that we are obtaining great difficulties to get access to the camps even to advise our clients as to how they should deal with the questions at the initial review. Indeed, the Immigration Department do not even advise us as to whether our clients have been interviewed or when they are likely to be next interviewed. They also prevent us from attending at the interviews and making representations. Although the UNHCR may be able to monitor the interviews, my firm or any of my representatives are not allowed to be present. It is my experience from seeing the results of the initial interviews that the Immigration Officers dismiss out of hand pleas by my clients that they have been subjected to persecution. Indeed, at one interview, my clients had documentation to show that they had been placed in a Re-education camp but this was dismissed as being untrue."

I do not believe, UNHCR does not believe, and Amnesty International does not believe that the mechanisms by which we have been screening these people for a decision that will return them to the tyranny from which many of them have fled in fear of their lives is adequate. We believe that the wrong decisions are being taken and that many people are being returned who should not be returned and who will be subject to persecution on return.

Mr. Graham *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but this must be the last time.

Mr. Graham: Did the right hon. Gentleman see on British television the other night a British television crew wanting to interview some boat people in a camp, but being prevented from speaking to those folk by the guards? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is strange that a country that says that it has a democratically elected Government does not allow ordinary men and women who are suffering the right to speak to British television companies?

Mr. Ashdown: We need no clearer example of the Government's shameful policy than that it had to be carried out in the dead of night and under the blanket of secrecy, so ashamed were they of what they did. The House

continues—*[Interruption.]* Well, it cannot be in the Government's interests to lay down a system in Hong Kong that allows the Government of the day and the state troopers of the day to operate in such a manner. We can defend the rights of people in Hong Kong only if we are prepared to give the example of an open and free democracy, not the example of actions that are more in keeping with those of an east European state a year ago.

I have five brief points about what I believe should be done. I hope that the Government will consider them. First, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley was right when he said that one of the long-term issues that must now be addressed is aid to Vietnam. It is illogical to allow the embargo on aid to Vietnam to continue and it is idiotic that the United States should seek to preserve it. If the Government must act unilaterally to lift that embargo and provide aid, they should do so.

Secondly, it is important that we fulfil the agreement that we made in June 1989 to give time to allow the voluntary repatriation programme to work and that we resource it effectively.

Thirdly, it is important that we return to the forthcoming January conference because perhaps one of the few positive results of this painful and tragic episode is that the international community is now alerted to the problem. The right hon. Member for Guildford is correct that the Americans' condemnation of our action gives us a unique leverage so that we can turn round and say to them and others, "Right, you must put your actions where your words have been and put into place an international resettlement programme." However, the Government must play a part in such a programme, and not leave others to carry the major burden.

Fourthly, as is now suggested by some at UNHCR in Hong Kong, it is important that we now consider the possibilities of converting Tai Au Chau, which is an uninhabited island in Hong Kong, into either a permanent or temporary resting place for the Vietnamese boat people for the period until the problem can be solved. The Minister is shaking his head. If he wishes to intervene, I shall of course give way to him, but I should like to make one point before he does. We know from Hong Kong—I am sure that the Minister knows also—that there is a shortage of labour there at present. There is also a massive shortage of labour in Singapore, which is seeking to buy in labourers from Hong Kong. I do not believe that this proposal is impossible and to those Conservative Members who believe that it is impossible, let me just say that the opinion of many at UNHCR is that something can be done along those lines.

Fifthly and lastly——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a three-hour debate and this rubbish has been going on for 22 minutes. Could you bring it to an end?

Mr. Ashdown: I shall ignore that comment since much of my time has been taken up answering interventions from Conservative Members. If I had not done that, my speech would have been significantly shorter.

I hope that my fifth point will answer the right hon. Member for Guildford. There is a case for saying that we must do something that will stop the post-monsoon influx of arrivals in Hong Kong. Sending back 50, 150 or 250 people will not do that. We should use the intervening three or four months to put in place an effective, efficient and fast screening mechanism which would prevent people from being put in camps for several months and would effectively allow a decision to be taken on their future on the spot. In other words, we should treat them on exactly the same basis as we treat the Chinese illegal immigrants.

If in the next three months that screening process were properly resourced with an appeals mechanism that respected civil liberties, and if the Vietnamese Government were asked properly to propagandise that fact, we would be able to tackle the problem in a way that did not bring shame and condemnation on the Government or set such an appalling example for the Chinese Government who are to follow us in 1997. The alternative, as I have outlined it, would tackle the problem at its roots in the long term and in the short term without shaming Britain's reputation and infringing the civil liberties of a few helpless people whose only sin has been to seek freedom under our protection.

7.1 pm

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): In the past week, Hong Kong has moved centre stage and the eyes of the critical world are focused on the policies to be adopted by the British Government on two major immigration issues: will we repatriate further Vietnamese boat people, and how many insurance policies are we prepared to give to Hong Kong residents in the run-up to 1997 to stem the brain drain?

Given the little time that we have, to deal with the second issue would be wrong. Suffice it to say that major concessions to Hong Kong residents could seriously misfire and it would be the likes of my constituents who would yet again bear the brunt of our well-intentioned decision.

The extent of the humbug and hypocrisy that I have heard in recent weeks has made my blood boil and has prompted me to speak out tonight. It started particularly for me when I watched the events of Camp David, when Mr. Bush lectured my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That was followed by one international attack after another, culminating in the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury joining in. What they all have in common is that they have no solution, no offer of help, and, like those Opposition Members we have heard tonight, no policy.

I had hoped to hear constructive solutions tonight, but I have heard only a lot of idealistic fantasy. I have heard no way of solving the prolonged crisis that mounts by the day in Hong Kong while Opposition Members procrastinate. There are 56,000 Vietnamese boat people living in artificial homes. Some have been there for years on end, jammed into crowded and often insanitary detention centres. In two months, they face the prospect of being joined by a further 1,000 a week. The problem has grown out of all proportion and has been too long ignored. Hong Kong just cannot cope.

Those of us who have been to Hong Kong will have seen the living conditions there. There are 13,000 people to every square mile. For how long do we let people go on living in misery in the hope of getting out of the camps? For how long do we tempt further Vietnamese to come in search of the brave new western world? Is that what our critics call compassion?

I shall stick my neck out and congratulate the Government on taking control of an intolerable situation. That is a reflection of the strong leadership for which the

[Mrs. Maureen Hicks]

Government are respected and renowned. The British people will stand behind us. To run away from the mounting crisis, as the Opposition parties would have us do, and be ruled by sentiment and emotions that we have heard tonight, would be irresponsible. Tempting as that might be, our hearts cannot rule our heads.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Hicks: I will keep going, because of the shortage of time.

Constituents in inner cities such as Wolverhampton, which I represent, have long lived with the repercussions of an open-door immigration policy, advocated by many Opposition Members. The residents in the leafy glades of Yeovil have not. Too often I have listened to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who would not listen to me tonight, pontificating on the need for the Government to be generous, and I listened to him tonight savagely attacking the Government's actions. But for how much of his time has he had to live with the tensions of inner-city life? Has he ever had to watch immigrants arrive in a community, often small and overcrowded, and endeavour to integrate, competing for jobs, housing and schools with locals who were born and bred in the area? It is all too easy to preach as long as the problem is not in one's own backyard.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Hicks: The Labour party has no policy, but it will be quick to label me racist. But I am dealing with the realities of 57,000 people. I am not a racist; I am a realist. I have to consider the effect of any more immigrants on people of all colours and creeds whom I represent. Opposition Members say, "Let's be nice to everyone. Let them all in and to hell with the consequences." But they will blame the Government for the consequences. Opposition Members parade the plight of the homeless in one breath, then say hello to everybody in the next.

Little England is creaking at the seams, and we have our own problem of overpopulation.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Hicks: Time prevents me from giving way.

We have 232 people per square mile. But in the past week we have heard vociferous criticism from Canada and Australia. Canada has about 2·5 people per square mile and Australia has only 20 people per square mile. America, the most vociferous critic, and a country that I usually love and respect, has 25 people per square mile. Yet those countries lecture us. They preach one thing and practise another.

We have been condemned for returning 51 people, while Mr. Bush contemplates returning 42,000 Chinese students. What future can they expect after Tiananmen square? What about the forcible repatriation of immigrants from Haiti and Mexico? They are regularly returned. America, with its experience, should be able to give us help. As we have heard tonight, 50 people are daily turned back from Hong Kong at the Chinese border, and they have no right of appeal. Others seem to be able to do what they like with their illegal immigrants, but if we follow suit we are labelled heartless and there is an enormous outcry.

The Government, having taken a sad but honest decision, must guarantee that the Vietnamese boat people will be treated with dignity, and that physical force is never used against them. Boat people facing the prospect of repatriation must have their fears addressed and be reassured that their return to Vietnam will be peaceful and scrupulously monitored. Two embassy staff and three parliamentarians may be sufficient for the task of monitoring 51 refugees, but in the case of greater numbers, other agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must take responsibility in a concerted international effort to help the refugees re-adapt to Vietnamese life—living, as they will, in the knowledge that their dreams of life in the West have been dashed. Others in Vietnam must learn from their harsh experience and realise that it is not worth leaving home, because they will be returned.

The one plea that I make to my hon. Friend the Minister concerns orphan children held in the camps. There are conflicting figures, but I understand that as many as one third of them can be positively identified as orphans. To subject them to further insecurity by returning them to Vietnam now, while they are still young, would be tragic. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make every effort, in conjunction with every possible agency, to arrange for the adoption of those orphans by Vietnamese families already settled in the West.

We have enough experience to know that to continue talking around the problem, to live in hope of other countries offering help, or to hold the unrealistic belief that voluntary repatriation will ever solve the problem is misguided. I ask the right hon. Member for Yeovil how long it will take voluntarily to repatriate 57,000 people. That is the size of the problem. While 600 refugees were voluntarily repatriated over the past three months, over the same period, another 3,000 boat people arrived in Hong Kong. The vicious circle continues.

To avoid taking an unpopular decision now is just to avoid the inevitable. It would nurture false hopes in the Hong Kong camps and in Vietnam, and would simply put off the problem until another fearful day. The Government will be respected for taking the decision that they have. They had no alternative but to take action now, and I support their resilience in ignoring the wrath of hypocrites.

7.12 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The opening remarks of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), the Chairman of the Select Committee, were couched in proper terms. He presented fairly not only the report but the different shades and nuances of opinion expressed by its members. He was right to say that, however the Government's decision may be judged, it was an agonising decision—and one that no Government, of whatever party, could take except after the deepest reflection and considerable anguish of thought.

I share the repugnance of all those, including the majority of right hon. and hon. Members, who blench at the very thought, let alone the sight, of men, women and children being bundled on to ships or into planes en route for compulsory repatriation in Vietnam. Not one person of any decency of feeling does not share that repugnance.

Therefore, if voluntary repatriation could work, it is infinitely to be preferred, because it avoids a horrible dilemma and the decision that would otherwise have to be taken.

Hon. Members have mentioned international action to relieve Hong Kong of the burden of the 57,000 Vietnamese refugees. That is a wonderful prospect, but the plain fact is that no international solution exists. There is a distinction between present circumstances and those of a decade ago which the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) keeps describing. Under the 1979 convention, there was an international commitment to accept from South Vietnam people who were overwhelmingly political refugees, who had backed the Americans, and who were deeply implicated in years of horrible war. That is how the 1979 commitment arose and why it was honoured by the international community.

The current position is very different, as anyone who reads the Committee's report will learn. Today's refugees are not fleeing from the taint of American collaboration in South Vietnam. Rather, they are peasants, farmers and fishermen fleeing from North Vietnam, where there is no serious evidence of their political disagreement with the rulers of that country. It is a different sort of exodus.

The root of today's problem is entirely different. Whereas those who fled from South Vietnam risked all the savagery of attacks by pirates and others off the Malaysian and Thai coasts, the refugees leaving North Vietnam put into the Chinese coast two or three times in order to revictual, so that they could be assured of reaching sanctuary in Hong Kong. If we do not begin to recognise that central difference, we shall not begin to get the argument right.

Of course we want to reach a solution other than compulsory repatriation, but time is running out very fast. We have between six and eight weeks to mobilise international opinion—if it can be mobilised after the tremendous upheaval in world opinion and disturbance that greeted Britain's initial actions. If the Americans really felt the same outrage about North Vietnamese peasants that they felt about South Vietnamese collaborators, they would be as generous now as they were when they absorbed 700,000 South Vietnamese into their country a few years ago. The same applies to the rest of the international community. It has the chance to act now.

The Government have imposed a moratorium on movement, and it should be allowed to remain in force for up to six weeks. I say that because, in six to eight weeks, the next movement of boat people will begin. That movement is seasonal and depends on the winds and the weather. The North Vietnamese will start flowing out of their country again at the rate, some suggest, of 1,000 per week. The figure could be much higher. Their hope will be that, however temporarily inconvenienced they might be on their arrival in Hong Kong, the glittering promise of life in rich America, Canada or elsewhere, will stretch before them. There will be no cessation of the outflow, and that is why there must be no more than a few weeks' respite from making what will be a most painful and difficult decision.

There are 57,000 Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, whose own population is around 5·5 million to 6 million. If one expresses those refugees as a percentage of the British population, they are equivalent to 570,000 people arriving at the south coast of Britain in a single year, mainly because they were looking for a better form of life. How would we react to such a development? How would we face the prospect of those 570,000 people being followed by another 400,000 to 500,000 the year after? We must face the realities of sentiment in Hong Kong.

No one, with the possible exception of the right hon. Member for Yeovil, has suggested that it will be possible for Hong Kong to absorb another huge exodus of people from Vietnam.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the right hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene? He has misrepresented my comments.

Mr. Shore: I did not mean to misrepresent the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ashdown: Unlike the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), I made it clear that I should like refugees to be effectively screened and dealt with on the same basis as the unofficial illegal refugees from China, beginning with the next post-monsoon influx.

Mr. Shore: I am talking about how we could cope with another massive exodus. The right hon. Member for Yeovil suggested that an island might be used, but I doubt very much whether the physical space and facilities would be available for another such mass exodus. Even Mr. Hugo Young, whose conscience is as tender as that of any hon. Member, when writing in *The Guardian* about a week ago, had to try to draw a line between those who are already there and those who are yet to come. However much he accepted the case of those who were already there, he could not say, in all honesty, that one could do other than close the door to those who have yet to come.

Mr. Ashdown: That is precisely the line that I have just drawn.

Mr. Shore: But it is not a satisfactory line to draw, because the essence of the matter is that we have a deep moral obligation to give refuge to political refugees. Our duty lies with those who have a real apprehension of persecution and worse if they are sent back. The right hon. Member for Yeovil suggests that we should not even allow the next wave of people to be screened to discover who are genuine refugees, who are afraid of political persecution, and the rest who are looking for——

Mr. Ashdown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It cannot be in order for a right hon. Gentleman so wholly and disgracefully to misrepresent the speech that I gave——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. That is a matter for debate.

Mr. Shore: I should not wish to misrepresent the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Ashdown: The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has done so twice.

Mr. Shore: If I have, I apologise, but no doubt the right hon. Gentleman will have a further opportunity to set the record straight.

If there is not the space and facilities to accommodate the next 40,000 people from Vietnam, how can they be screened so that we can find out wo are genuine refugees and who are economic migrants? That is the essential physical problem. The right hon. Member for Yeovil should have to create space now to carry on the proper

[Mr. Shore]

screening process which he said he wants in the years to come. If I am still misrepresenting the right hon. Gentleman, I apologise, but I hope that I have made my point clear to him.

It is essential that we carry the distinction in our minds between political refugees and economic migrants. It is one thing to be sent back to a totalitarian regime to face prison, torture—as is often the case—appalling ill treatment, cruelty and persecution, but it is very different, although not necessarily very pleasant, to be sent back to conditions of economic hardship and squalor. If we cannot make that distinction, we shall not begin to get the issue right.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My right hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Is he aware that three years ago the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, of which I was a member with the hon. Members for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), recommended that when Vietnam withdraws from Cambodia the Government should contemplate some form of economic assistance? As that withdrawal is almost complete, and in view of the moral obligation of the United States to the economy of a country whose Government are evolving in a direction that we all understand, is there not an obligation on the United States and Britain to meet the Government of Vietnam to see whether those economic conditions can be ameliorated to get to the root of the problem?

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend is right. I see no reason why there should be any serious contention between hon. Members, particularly now that the great political problem of Vietnam invading and holding Kampuchea has been resolved, on resuming substantial aid to the war-shattered Vietnamese economy. It needs help, and we should now be prepared to give it. We and the Americans should have started that process some years ago.

Of course I understand the need for the most rigorous examination of the credentials of those who apply for refugee status. If we are not examining them properly and adequately under the supervision of the United Nations, we must put that right until we get general agreement that our method of sorting the two categories is as fair as possible.

We should be as generous as we can, and immediately, in giving cash aid not only directly to the economic migrants who are returning, but to the Vietnamese authorities who will cater for them and offer them accommodation and employment.

We should ensure that the mission of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Ennals and the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) is carried out seriously and not just cosmetically, and that they have sufficient support staff in Vietnam to do a thorough job.

7.25 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): As usual, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made a courageous, sensible and eloquent speech.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was also courageous and clear and has been consistent over the past few months on the issue, but the sad fact that we must face is that, if there were free movement for the people of Vietnam, the number who would like to come to Britain over the next 12 months would perhaps be 10 times the size of the population of Yeovil.

The root of the Government's problem is that every sensible inhabitant of Vietnam would like to leave and move to the West. That is not necessarily an absurd idea, because over the past 15 years more than 1 million Vietnamese have moved to the West, mostly to the United States. Last year, incredible though it may seem, the money sent back by Vietnamese in the United States to Vietnam exceeded the hard currency earnings of its entire manufacturing industry.

Some boat people have taken to the boats because of a fear of political persecution, and some have done so because of the actuality of grinding poverty. There are some signs that that poverty may be easing.

This summer, thanks to the Foreign Office, I met the Foreign Minister of Vietnam in London. He is a veteran Communist who, I am told, organised the great Tet offensive in 1968. When I met him it sounded as though he was seeking to be chairman of our Back-Bench finance committee. He told me that the economic problems of Vietnam had largely been caused by centralised planning, and that it would be able to cure its raging inflation with market forces. There are some signs that what he said is coming to pass, because visitors to Saigon and Hanoi speak of a renewed commercial vigour in Vietnam. There is also some hope that poverty will be relieved because of the run down of the vast Vietnamese military machine.

It is absurd that, 15 years after the departure of the Americans and 10 years after the Vietnamese army defeated the Chinese in a sharp, brisk, border war, Vietnam should still have the fifth largest army in the world, which absorbs about 20 per cent. of the GNP of that desperately poor country. Over the past 40 years, the Vietnamese army has defeated the French, partially defeated the Americans, conquered the south and seen off the massive Chinese army but, sadly, its greatest victory has been over the economy of its own country. The size of the military establishment has shattered the Vietnamese economy. It is absurd to talk of aid as the solution to the problem when 20 per cent. of the Vietnamese GNP goes on entirely unnecessary military expenditure.

What can we do in the short term? Clearly, it will take a long time to relieve the poverty. First, we should look at the interrogation system in force in the camps. When I was in Hong Kong in April, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative was unhappy about the screening process. Amnesty International and less liberal lawyers are unhappy about it. It is up to us and the British Government to ensure that the screening process is seen to be fair and thorough.

Secondly, we should accept greater responsibility for the camps in Hong Kong. The living conditions in some of them are disgraceful. We cannot ask the people of Hong Kong to contribute more. Admittedly, we have made millions of pounds available, but we should accept responsibility for the administration of the camps together with the Hong Kong Administration and assistance for the boat people in Hong Kong should have higher priority in the ODA budget.

Thirdly, we should take up the offer made by the Philippine Government at the boat people's conference at Geneva in June, when they offered to take political refugees into a transit camp in a town near Manila until they could be found homes. We should have grasped that

opportunity, which would have relieved the pressure on Hong Kong. Sadly, little seems to have happened. When I checked with the Philippine embassy a few days ago, we seemed to be no further forward.

Fourthly, together with the United States of America we should seek havens for the boat people outside the western welfare system. We should consider Mexico. Much has been said about the Americans returning immigrants froom Mexico, and they have returned a few, but one must be drunk, drugged to the eyeballs or crippled to be caught by the American immigration forces. Millions of legal and illegal immigrants have flooded across from Mexico into the United States. At the same time, the Mexicans owe a vast debt to the United States and recycling it is a constant problem. It is not beyond the realms of possibility to arrange with the Mexican Government for a few thousands or even tens of thousands of the boat people to be resettled in the southern part of Mexico. That is in the long term.

What about tonight? I am in some difficulties. I appreciate the Government's problems, but in the 1960s I went frequently to Vietnam. I had many Vietnamese friends in the army and the Administration who are now either scattered or dead. I cannot with a good conscience support a policy of repatriation of their friends and families, so I fear that I cannot support the Government. I hope that we can find an alternative, on which we can look back with a little less shame than our present policy.

7.35 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Part of the difficulty over the boat people has arisen because we in the West have dealt with Vietnam as an economic leper over the years, denying it both aid and trade. The problem has been compounded because until comparatively recently all those who came were accepted as refugees. In Hong Kong we have built up a large camp society. Tonight I shall consider how that problem has been dealt with and, most of all, condemn the means of forcible repatriation which, to say the least, is unBritish. I doubt if anybody would have accepted that solution if the people being deported were white, not coloured. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is disgraceful."] Deportation in this means is disgraceful.

We saw on our television screens how 51 people were deported. They were taken from their former camps and isolated in a group. The group was made up of 17 women, 26 children and eight men. They were awoken at dead of night by a thump on the door. Gazing out of the windows they saw the lights reflected off the riot squad helmets and equipment. Would hon. Members not have been intimidated? If that was not repatriation by force, it was repatriation by intimidation. Some 200 police stood outside waiting for them.

I know that the Secretary of State is an honourable man. The Government are all honourable men and women. What instructions were given to the police? I assume that they were not there to convey the seasonal greetings of the Foreign Office. What instructions were given if there was resistance? Is there any truth in the allegation that karate was used to persuade people to get on the aircraft? If it was an honourable exercise, why was it done in such a clandestine way, at dead of night, with little attempt to bring in official observers or the media? Something here does not bear the scrutiny of day, like most clandestine operations, and, in a free and democratic society, we require an explanation of that from the Minister.

The Government's argument is that those people are economic refugees, and therefore we must vet them. What form does the vetting take? It has been condemned by Amnesty International, and although the United Nations Organisation may have been asked for advice, it was not consulted, and has not given its stamp of approval to the methods that are being used.

During the first screening, there is no access to advice or legal representation of any kind. Is it not also true that the immigration officers who carry out the screening find it an unpopular duty? Is it not true that they do not write up their notes after the completion of one interview, but record them from memory, days or weeks later, after many more interviews? Is that a legally just procedure for a country with a reputation like ours to adopt?

When people appeal, is it not true that the appeal can be made only by written application? No legal or other representation is allowed, and the defendant—if I may use the term—is not allowed to appear at a tribunal that has the power to deport him or to keep him.

Will the Minister account for the fact that twice the number of people are granted refugee status after going to appeal when they first come before the first interview? Does that not show that it is not the appeals procedure that is fair, but the initial interviews that are biased, incompetent and inadequate for the type of cases that come before them?

Is it not also true that people's minds are conditioned, to compliance because they know that the people who run the camps—often the police—are responsible for their deportation? Is it not true that there have been complaints about police activity in raids in camps, which have resulted in the Hong Kong magistrates carrying out investigations? As a result of the investigations, and in spite of a condemning report, no action has been taken against those who acted against the people in the camps.

All those issues bear close investigation, as does the monitoring of what happens to people who return to Vietnam. If the Government are not moved by international concern from the Church at home and abroad, and from people with whom we are claimed to have a special relationship, at least Hanoi seems to be moved. If people who have been deported by the Government arrive in Hanoi and claim to have been deported involuntarily, the Hanoi Government have said that they will be returned. What will the Government's stance be on that?

Is the Secretary of State going to make a statement tomorrow that will allow some 200,000 Hong Kong economic refugees into Britain? How does he reconcile a policy of pulling in one group of Hong Kong citizens, into Britain and presumably leaving the rest of them to the tender mercies of the Chinese People's Army, with his policy of refusing asylum to people from Vietnam?

I know that it is a difficult and complex problem. If the Government argue that their actions are in accordance with the traditions of British empire I am not surprised that the sun never set on that empire, because not even God would trust it in the dark.

7.45 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I share with many right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken in the debate concern, anxiety and horror about the misery and privation that so many Vietnamese boat people suffered during their journey to Hong Kong, and the conditions in which they live there.

In 1983, I was on a police launch in Hong Kong when we rescued one of those boats. I saw the utmost squalor. There were open fires burning on the deck and it was one of the most primitive sights that I have ever seen.

I also saw the boat people in April this year, when I visited one of the camps in Kowloon with the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. But despite that background, I cannot see any alternative for the Government but to take the steps that they are taking to return boat people compulsorily whence they came.

I have listened to every moment of the debate but, with the best will in the world, I cannot for the life of me understand why illegal immigrants into Hong Kong from Vietnam are different from other illegal immigrants in other countries. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) sought to give some sort of explanation. He said something about the boat people being settled in camps, but they are not. They are not settled anywhere. They are held in camps preparatory to something being done with them. They have been there for some time, but it seems to me that that does not make them any different from the illegal immigrants in other countries whom we have discussed.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that for the past 15 years the West has had a programme of encouraging Vietnamese people to leave the country and settle in the West? That programme and expectation did not exist for the Chinese people, and that must be one factor that makes the boat people different.

Mr. Jopling: That issue was covered a little while ago. For many years it has been the policy to help people who had been of assistance to the Americans during the Vietnam war. That is a totally different issue.

No one in the House tonight has adequately explained why the boat people are different from the Mexicans or the Haitians who enter the United States, or the Chinese who enter Hong Kong illegally.

Mr. Lester: The reason is that for the past 10 years Vietnam is the only country which, for whatever reasons, has had economic sanctions taken against it when it already had a poor economy. That has made its people among the poorest in the world.

Mr. Jopling: That is not enough to justify these people being regarded as different from the others. If it is right to return illegal immigrants from Haiti, Mexico or China, I cannot see why those from Vietnam should not be treated in much the same way. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said that they should have some sort of judicial review. I have not heard him or any other Opposition Member say during the past few years that judicial reviews should be used by illegal Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong or even by people who come to Heathrow airport who are turned back if they have come illegally.

I hope that the Government will press on as soon as possible with the policy that they began last week, and send as many as possible of these illegal immigrants back home. I was hugely impressed by the speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), and I agreed with much of what he said. The message that he gave the House was about the urgency of the problem. The House ignores that urgency at its peril.

When my hon. Friend the Minister appeared before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee last week, he told us —I was not there, but he told the Committee—that, at the present rate, it would take two years to screen all the illegal Vietnamese immigrants to Hong Kong. Two years just will not do. The Government must ensure that more people are engaged, so that screening can be conducted a good deal more quickly. It must be completed in far less than two years.

I believe that the screening process is fair and reasonable. As my hon. Friend told the Select Committee last week, the scheme

"was devised in conjunction with the UNHCR who have unmatched experience."

It is essential that the Government continually make it clear to the world and to the British people that the rules agreed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are being closely followed.

The more successful we are at finding somewhere for these immigrants to go, the more others will be tempted to make the journey to Hong Kong. The House must ask itself a simple question. When we are faced with the proposition of giving the right of abode in Britain to an indeterminate number, so far, of citizens of Hong Kong, would we prefer to provide the right of abode for Hong Kong British dependent territory citizens who are fearful of the Chinese takeover in 1997 or to give such opportunities to illegal entrants, who are not refugees, from Vietnam? If we have space here, I would rather give it to the British dependent territory citizens of Hong Kong than to illegal entrants from Vietnam.

Mr. Foulkes: The right hon. Gentleman has misunderstood. The purpose of giving the right of abode here to the people of Hong Kong is to encourage them to stay in Hong Kong to keep the colony prosperous. The right hon. Gentleman seems to assume that they will all come to the United Kingdom. He had better get his argument straight.

Mr. Jopling: I understand that that is the case. The hon. Gentleman is correct, but however many passports or rights of abode we give to Hong Kong people, they may not come at once. It may be intended that they will not come at once, but the House should not forget that they could come at some time, and in huge numbers. The right hon. Member for Yeovil is one of those who say that we should give the right of abode to everybody in Hong Kong. I hope that, when he argues that in future, he will stop talking about 3·25 million people coming, as paragraph 410 of the Select Committee report makes it clear that we are talking about 5·25 million people. It should be understood in the country that the policy being pushed by the right hon. Member for Yeovil means that there would be an opportunity for rather more than 8,000 people to come to every constituency in Britain. That is what the figures break down to. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman has not thought about that before, but it is the truth.

Mr. Ashdown: I wonder whether the right hon. Member heard the speech of the Minister of State at the weekend when he said that the more passports are issued, the less chance there is of their being used. That is the point.

Mr. Jopling: I did not have the advantage of hearing what my hon. Friend said. I should be surprised if the number of passports that are issued had any effect on what the Select Committee described as the Armageddon scenario—that which would cause a huge number of those people to come here.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Heathrow airport is adjacent to my constituency. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the prospect that he has just outlined causes deep anxiety to my constituents and many other people in west London?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend is right to make that point, and I hope that he will make it often when we debate that issue.

Mr. Ashdown: I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the statement made by the Leader of the House when he was Foreign Secretary. He said that if the Armageddon scenario arose, Britain would have to accept responsibility for all of them. The difference between the Government's stance and mine is quite simply that we would accept these people as full citizens capable of investing in Britain beforehand whereas the Government would accept them under the Armageddon scenario as penniless refugees—as the Vietnamese boat people writ large.

Mr. Jopling: I heard the right hon. Gentleman say that on the radio this morning. My wife wondered why I exploded when I heard it. I was present last July when my right hon. and learned Friend the former Foreign Secretary told the Select Committee that, if the Armageddon scenario came about, the international community would have to take a responsibility. The right hon. Gentleman has twisted that to say that Britain should bear the responsibility. My right hon. and learned Friend was very clear about that.

What should the Government do? Above all, they should concentrate on doing everything possible to stem the flow of illegal entrants from the south. How should they do it? First, they should use every opportunity to obtain better co-operation from the Chinese. I understand only too well how difficult relations have become with the People's Republic of China since the massacre in Tiananamen square earlier this year, just after the Select Committee was in Hong Kong.

It is intolerable that the Chinese should support boats that port-hop up the coast. It is even more intolerable that a number of these illegal immigrants come overland by bus to the Pearl river estuary and take the short hop by water to Hong Kong. Despite the difficulties, we must do everything that we can to persuade the Chinese not to support and encourage those people.

Secondly, the Government must try to do more to help and encourage voluntary repatriation to Vietnam. Evidence was given to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that those who are voluntarily repatriated to Vietnam are given a greater cash incentive than those who are compulsorily returned. We should increase the cash incentive given to those who go voluntarily. I hope that the compulsory repatriation scheme will be restarted properly and that it gets going as soon as possible. As more and more people are compulsorily returned to Vietnam and it is seen in the camps that the rest of them will inevitably be returned in the immediate future, I hope——

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay) *rose*——

Mr. Jopling: I shall just finish my sentence. If there is then seen to be a greater cash incentive to go voluntarily, there may be a considerable increase in illegal immigrants prepared to return to Vietnam voluntarily.

Mr. Allason: If my right hon. Friend is advocating an increase in the existing money given to each returnee—which is about $620—rather than to the North Vietnamese authorities, that will have the reverse effect and be entirely counter-productive. It will encourage more people to make the journey, because $620 is an enormous amount of money to such people. If we increase the money and give it directly to the people, we shall increase the numbers.

Mr. Jopling: It costs a vast amount of money for them to go there in the first place. There is a huge extortion racket among those who provide the travel to Hong Kong. We should have to keep the matter in perspective to ensure that the policy does not have a counter-effect. We have some leeway to encourage voluntary repatriation.

Mr. Maude: In case there is any misunderstanding, I shall clear up the point. The vast bulk of the money given as part of the reintegration package goes not to the individuals or families, but the communities to assist the reintegration. Only a small part of it goes into the pockets of the families involved.

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for explaining that. I hope that he will consider my point.

I hope that the Government will be firm and will press on with the compulsory repatriation scheme as soon as possible, increase the pace of screening and tell the United States that this House regards the attitude of the United States Government as hypocritical and unreasonable. The Government should realise that a by-product of that firmness is that it will be a good way of demonstrating to Hong Kong that Britain still cares deeply about the problems in Hong Kong and recognises that the Vietnamese boat people are only one of those problems.

Action must be taken at once. Tonight's debate has dismayed me because the opposition to the Government's policy has been confined to hon. Members wringing their hands and expressing horror at making people who are in an illegal position do what they do not want to do. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley has, frankly, given a woolly series of uncosted, long-term hopes that do not take account of the urgency to which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney drew our attention.

One factor that unites the critics—whether the official Opposition, the Archbishop of Canterbury or all those in between—is the demand to continue dithering. Those policies are recipes for uncertainty. The critics would command much more respect if they could provide a sensible, workable alternative that addressed itself to the serious urgency of the problem—something that the House should never forget.

8.6 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): It does not seem that long ago that I remember the press in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales proclaiming to the nation that we were a haven for the boat people, and the Prime Minister welcomed with open arms the Vietnamese people who were racing from the embrace of Communism and a dictatorial society.

Britain was like an oasis, a shining star in the West. What could be more appropriate in the month of December, than the Prime Minister saying that we were a shining star in the West? We did not need three wise men; we had the Prime Minister, Reagan and a number of others saying, "Get out of Vietnam. Come to our land and we will put you in a home."

I remember the local authorities in Great Britain responding and I am delighted that they did so. In my constituency, they responded by giving homes to people from Vietnam.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the position was entirely different? The South Vietnamese had fought a bitter struggle with the Americans and, in return, the Americans gave them refuge in their country for the services rendered in that war.

Mr. Graham: I admit that things have changed, not for the better but for the worse. Like a spider's web, we have enticed many people from Vietnam. The Prime Minister has encouraged people to desert Vietnam in droves. They came to Hong Kong expecting to get shelter, aid and support to come to the West.

Some things have changed because there has been an election for a successor to Ronald Reagan, but there has been no general election for our Prime Minister. A spider's web has been set and the people of Vietnam have left their country because they thought that they could get aid, support and security in the West. Our Prime Minister has disgracefully led those people up the path and is now sending them back to a terrible and incredibly uncertain future.

I have recently read many articles about people whom this country sent back to face Stalin. No hon. Member would suggest that it was right to send back to Russia people who, it has now been conclusively proved, were executed in their millions by Joseph Stalin.

Surely conservative Members are not so naive that they see nothing wrong in sending back Vietnamese refugees to face that uncertainty. Surely they are aware of the anxiety that they feel. For years the Tory party has claimed that it is the scourge of the Communist party. Hanoi Radio recently told the western world that Vietnam is now incarcerating people because it wants to re-educate them and bring them into the fold. We do not know how long that will continue. I do not know whether it is even true or false, but Hanoi Radio has said that certain people are being taken in—

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Refugee Action estimates that 500,000 people are detained in the 150 re-education centres in Vietnam including 200 Catholic priests, 30 Protestant ministers and 3,000 Buddhists? That bears out what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. Graham: I am delighted with that clarification and sad that many people find themselves incarcerated in Vietnam.

The Government are wrong to repatriate by force. I use the word "force" deliberately. Even the *Evening Standard* clearly states that Vietnamese people are being repatriated by force. The police come to them, armed to the teeth, in the middle of the night. What do I mean by armed to the teeth? They do not need to have guns or other weapons, they just need to be strong and fit and able to throw a bloke. If somebody in Glasgow were stronger than me and he twists my arm up my back, that would be by strength and arms. Many refugees are being forcibly repatriated by the power and strength of the police. They are being forced on to planes. If any hon. Member wishes to contradict me, I shall be happy to show him that it is true.

The *Evening Standard* has never been famous for supporting the Opposition; it usually supports the Government. One woman—a wife—told her story. She said:

> "I suddenly felt something bad was going on and something was going to happen. I saw riot police carrying truncheons and shields. They beamed their flashlights at everybody and surrounded the bed. We were told that 21 people from the hut were to be moved immediately to another camp and we had one minute to collect our things."

Is that what this country is now about—threatening men and women in the middle of the night? Do we use truncheons and searchlights to bully people? This newspaper is not *Labour Weekly*, *Tribune* or *The Times*. I am quoting from the front page of the *Evening Standard*, a well-known supporter of the Government.

Britain faces international revulsion—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) is laughing. Would he want to be a refugee in one of those camps tonight, not knowing whether the police would arrive in large numbers with batons and searchlights to drag him away? Would he smile if his family had to face that tonight?

The position is appalling, and Britain faces international revulsion. My late father served for nine years as a Royal Navy service man. He was fully involved in the war. He said to me, "Thomas, son, there is one thing that we pride ourselves on in Britain, and that is being a democratic nation. The other thing that we pride ourselves on is sheltering people who suffer prejudice from other nations." We must, as a nation, support international brotherhood and womanhood.

The Government are betraying in principle the whole morality of refugee status. They are betraying the principle of the United Nations. We must do something to restore Britain, in the eyes of the world, as a free nation committed to democracy and to the right to life. One hon. Member earlier made a nonsensical statement about the United Nations. I thought that this Government had the most absolutely special relationship with America. I thought that the American Government would understand the difficulties faced by the British Government.

We must remember the Vietnamese conflict, the involvement of America in that conflict and the billions of pounds that it spent to keep that tragic war going while millions of people died. I thought that Britain had a special relationship with America that allowed us to discuss the problems of the Vietnamese refugees and the boat people, yet we are told by Conservative Members that it is all to no avail. Despite all its sins during the Vietnamese war, America has told the Prime Minister to get stuffed. It will

do nothing. It says, "Leave the refugees to languish in the mud. You deal with the problem." That is abominable, and it is equally abominable that the Government still claim to have a special relationship with America.

I shall end with a number of points—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down".] I am appalled that Conservative Members should find something funny in what I have said. Let them reflect that 50,000 people do not know what life holds for them in the new year.

I am pleased to note that the Pope has expressed worry about the situation and has urged Britain to take steps in the matter. Also, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Runcie, has spoken out on the issue. Although I see some Conservative Members smiling at what I am saying, I feel that others among them are sincere in hoping that this problem can be resolved amicably. I trust that Members in all parts of the House appreciate that I am sincere in speaking passionately about this issue.

I do not have the solutions to the problems of the world —of dictatorship and of all the other ills that beset mankind—but I offer the suggestion that we, as members of mankind, should do all we can to protect mankind. We should make sure that people have the right to life and we should fight for that right, however much it costs. We in the West, above all, should fight against the oppression of Communism and against other forms of oppression.

As we approach the new year, let us remember what Robbie Burns said about man's inhumanity to man. I hope that, whatever steps result from this debate, they will not result in the Vietnamese being returned to insecurity, prison, a deteriorating standard of life or even death.

The British Government have it in their power to bow to the wishes of international religious and other leaders who have said, in effect, "Please give hope for life to the ordinary men and women who have escaped trials and tribulations and who have sailed the seas in all sorts of weather to reach the security of Hong Kong. Please allow them to live in the West in freedom and security."

I urge the Minister not to be cynical. People in Hong Kong tonight rely on his judgment and sincerity. Let him forget the platitudes that have been used by the Prime Minister and other Ministers. We are looking for a miracle tonight so that folk may have the right to life.

8.22 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): Seven days ago the Foreign Secretary told the House that we had begun to put into effect a policy, long adopted by the British Government, to return to Vietnam those Vietnamese in Hong Kong who were not refugees. That decision gave pleasure to none and I acknowledge that it has caused anxiety to many, and many of those anxieties have been expressed in this debate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) opened the debate in a responsible and measured tone. That tone has not always been reflected in the subsequent contributions, but his speech and a few others captured the underlying feeling of the House. I refer in particular to the speeches of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling).

All those distinguished Members of the House come to the issue with long and distinguished experience of government. All of them are used to the assumption of responsibility and I appreciate their expressions of personal sympathy and support for my right hon. Friend and myself.

Those contributions were in stark contrast to that of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). He ended what I regarded as a grossly irresponsible speech with an allegation about the Government's motivation in this matter that I bitterly resented. It was an allegation that will have earned him the contempt of the whole House.

It is clearly essential for the House to understand fully the background to last Tuesday's return and the basis on which the decision was made. The House will be familiar with much of the background.

In the aftermath of the Vietnam war, many thousands from South Vietnam fled the persecution of a victorious and vindictive regime. The West responded with generosity and compassion. The first Geneva conference, called at our instigation in 1979, agreed that those who fled Vietnam in boats could be assured of first asylum wherever they landed, and that from there they would be resettled in the West.

But it soon became clear that the nature of the exodus from Vietnam was changing. As early as 1981, it was apparent that the majority of those arriving in places such as Hong Kong were not political refugees but people seeking a more prosperous life elsewhere. None the less, despite the evidence of this new pattern, the West maintained its commitment to take in all new arrivals. The United Kingdom, of course, played a full part in that. But by 1987, the numbers were so huge that the ability of the West to take in allcomers was strained.

Of course, there were still refugees, genuinely fleeing persecution, but the ability of the West to give asylum to the genuine refugees was being eroded by the sheer weight of the numbers. Accordingly, Hong Kong decided in June last year to introduce a system of screening, and I believe that it was absolutely right to do so. It was a thorough system, developed in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whose representatives can attend any interviews that are carried out under that procedure. Each applicant for asylum has a right of appeal from the initial decision and has the right to help from the UNHCR in preparing his case.

I know that Amnesty International has criticised some aspects of the process, and I am looking to see whether any of the criticisms are justified, but I believe that the procedure is fair and thorough. I know that, where doubt arises, that doubt is resolved in favour of the applicant.

The purpose of the screening is to distinguish between those who are genuine refugees and those who are not. This is an essential process, which must be carried out by every country that seeks to keep its doors open to asylum seekers. The only alternative to a screening procedure is to abandon the policy of first asylum. Hong Kong does not want that; we do not want it; and this House would not welcome it.

Mr. David Young *rose*——

Mr. Maude: I will not give way, because I want to deal with the points that were made during the debate.

It was thus that, in June this year, a second Geneva conference decided that screening should be introduced universally. That conference, attended by all interested

[Mr. Maude]

countries, and by the UNHCR, unanimously reached two distinct decisions. It decided that all those who had arrived before the introduction of screening, and all those whom the screening process found to be refugees, should be resettled in the West within three years. Undertakings have been given by participating countries to ensure that enough places are available for all those refugees. So the West's voluntary practice of taking in all refugees has been fully and honourably maintained, and once again, we have participated in this fully.

The conference's second decision, also unanimous, was that, for those who were found after the screening process not to be refugees, there was nowhere for them to go but back to Vietnam. I stress to the House that it was a unanimous decision, agreed to by every participant at that conference, including the United States and the UNHCR.

The conference agreed that repatriation should, in the first instance, be voluntary. The UNHCR has started this process in Hong Kong, and it has made a little headway, but the numbers returning to Vietnam are tiny as a proportion of the whole. The numbers returning hold no promise that those remaining in Hong Kong will be significantly reduced, or that next year's influx will be any smaller than this year's.

It is worth reminding ourselves—indeed, hon. Members may not be aware—that, since the whole process began in the 1970s, no fewer than 170,000 asylum-seekers from Indo-China have arrived in Hong Kong. To Hong Kong's eternal honour, that tiny territory—the most crowded part of the globe—has not turned away a single one. All have been given shelter, but the burden has become intolerable. Some 57,000 Vietnamese remain in Hong Kong camps, of whom some 34,000 arrived this year alone. It is because of the heavy financial burden that this throws on to the territory that we hold this debate tonight.

In the 10-year period before 1989, the Hong Kong Government spent about £110 million on building and running camps for the boat people. In the last financial year, that increased significantly, and spending reached some £39 million as the numbers arriving rose dramatically. This year, the Hong Kong Government expect to spend £90 million, and it is partly because of that huge increase in costs that we have felt bound to assist Hong Kong.

In the current financial year, we have provided £4·5 million for emergency accommodation. I announced last week a further pledge of £10·6 million for further emergency accommodation, and a 50 per cent. contribution to a new long-term camp. We shall continue to provide Hong Kong with help for as long as it is needed. In addition to those sums, over the past two years we have pledged or spent a further £15 million to help to resolve the problem more widely. We have given the UNHCR more than £8 million, primarily in response to special appeals for boat people, and also for the construction of a camp in Hong Kong. We are making available some £850,000 this year for our bilateral repatriation programme with the Vietnamese, and for monitoring those who are returned.

We have accepted for some time that a move to involuntary repatriation was likely to become necessary. I should add that involuntary repatriation is not a concept invented by Hong Kong in December 1989, but a process that goes on day in, day out across the world—a process that, by its very nature, involves the return of people against their will to a country that they have sought to leave.

A number of allegations have been made in tonight's debate about what was done on Tuesday morning last week. There was talk of handcuffs; I can tell the House that handcuffs were not used. There was also talk of force, but none was employed, and there was no resistance on the part of those who were returned to Vietnam. It was suggested that the number of escorts was excessive, but I can tell the House tha the number involved is customary worldwide for these procedures.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: No, I will not.

I remind the House that this was compulsory deportation: there is no escaping that. These people were being sent back—against their will—to a country that they had sought to leave, and it is inevitable that people in such circumstances should not be joyful. I assure the House, however, that there was no resistance.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Maude: No, I will not give way.

The suggestion that a blanket of secrecy has been imposed rings rather absurd, given that live television pictures were screened worldwide. It has also been suggested that there has been widespread international criticism of our action——

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: No, I will not. The hon. Gentleman had his say at considerable length, trying the patience of the House somewhat, and I have many points to answer.

The reality is this. The entire international community agreed at the Geneva conference in June that there was nowhere for these people to go other than back to Vietnam, and the international response to last Tuesday's events has accordingly been broad acceptance. Of course the United States has been critical—there are obvious historical reasons for that—but it has conspicuously not propounded any realistic alternative.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary told the House last Tuesday that we were considering the resumption of aid for Vietnam. We may be able to say something about that later, but I must say to the House —as did my right hon. Friend—that it is not an alternative to repatriation. Even if it were to start tomorrow, it would not discourage people immediately from leaving to seek greater prosperity elsewhere and, in any event, the large numbers already in Hong Kong would remain.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: No. I am sorry, but I have a number of points to cover.

The aid proposal—serious though it is, and earnestly though we are pursuing it—is not an alternative to repatriation. I am bound to say that I have found some of the arguments that have been advanced a little puzzling: the same people are arguing simultaneously that Vietnam is a tyranny too monstrous to return people to, and that we should be pouring money into it to prop it up. We have, of course, looked carefully at all the many suggested

alternatives to our course of compulsory repatriation, but nothing has emerged that has not either been done already or been universally rejected.

I should like to look briefly at some of the suggested alternatives. It is said, for instance, that we should renew efforts to increase voluntary repatriation. We are doing that, but it is inconceivable that it could suffice on its own. It is also said that we should increase the United Kingdom's quota of refugees but, as I have pointed out, places are already pledged for every refugee. In any case, that suggestion in itself provides no answer to the problem that we are addressing—the problem of those who are screened out as non-refugees.

The richest absurdity, however, has been the Labour party's so-called three-point plan. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that he would introduce a screening procedure with independent appeal: that is the first of the three points. Can he really be unaware that it already exists? He also suggests an international agreement to resettle all political refugees. Can he really be ignorant that such an agreement has already been reached, and that places have been offered for all refugees? As for his third proposal, it was thrown together in contemptuous disregard of the realities. In an interview in *The Independent*, yesterday, he said:

"You get on with the screening [of refugees] . . . you launch international discussions to see whether it is possible to find in the southern Pacific area a territory where a holding centre can be provided for screened economic migrants from Vietnam. The Philippines has been named as one; possibly Indonesia another."

When asked whether the Philippines or Indonesia would be prepared to provide such a centre, the right hon. Gentleman replied:

"Yes, well, I had a considerable discussion a short while ago with Mr. Dukakis . . . who is very heavily involved in the possibility of the Philippines. I was encouraged to believe it might work."

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: No, I will not. I have four minutes to go.

It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman, as well as talking to Mrs. Dukakis, did not bother to talk to the Philippines or to Indonesia. That possibility has been canvassed on several occasions, and I have news for the right hon. Gentleman. It should not be news, because he should have studied the position. I can tell him that, on every single occasion, every possible participant has rejected the idea unequivocally.

Even if it worked, what would be the substance of this great liberal alternative? It is that people should be removed from one closed camp in Hong Kong to another elsewhere.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Maude: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Member for Gorton accepts that that alternative could provide only a temporary pause on the way back to Vietnam. I noticed that, in the same interview, he was asked whether he would like the refugees to settle in this country. What was the answer from this great liberal?

"No, we've got lots of people who can open restaurants without having Vietnamese economic migrants who are basically peasants—fishermen and farm-workers and so on."

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. These matters were not dealt with in the debate—*[Interruption.]* The Minister is not answering the questions that he was asked.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may be a point of argument, but it is not a point of order.

Mr. Maude: The right hon. Gentleman ended his interview with the following ringing declaration:

"I wouldn't be a member of a Labour government"—

prophetically, perhaps—

"that forcibly sent people to somewhere they didn't want to go."

Again, I have news for the right hon. Gentleman. He was a member of just such a Government. During the previous Labour Government, in every single year when he was a Minister, between 10,000 and 19,000 people were repatriated from Britain. During the same years, Hong Kong, acting with the full authority of the United Kingdom Government, involuntarily repatriated tens of thousands of illegal immigrants to China. Does the right hon. Gentleman really believe that every single one of those people returned voluntarily? Of course not.

Those of us who have responsibilities in these matters are unable to avoid them. It is all very well for Opposition Members to wring their hands, stand on the sidelines and decry what is done, but they do not have to face the realities and accept the responsibilities. For those of us who have the responsibilities, they cannot be dodged or shirked, and we will not shirk them.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 219.

Division No. 25] **[8.40 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Alexander, Richard	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Allason, Rupert	Burns, Simon
Amess, David	Burt, Alistair
Amos, Alan	Butcher, John
Arbuthnot, James	Butler, Chris
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Butterfill, John
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Ashby, David	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Aspinwall, Jack	Carrington, Matthew
Atkins, Robert	Carttiss, Michael
Atkinson, David	Cash, William
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Baldry, Tony	Chapman, Sydney
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Chope, Christopher
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Beggs, Roy	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Bellingham, Henry	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Bendall, Vivian	Colvin, Michael
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Conway, Derek
Benyon, W.	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Bevan, David Gilroy	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Cormack, Patrick
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Couchman, James
Body, Sir Richard	Cran, James
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Boswell, Tim	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Bottomley, Peter	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Day, Stephen
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Devlin, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Dicks, Terry
Bowis, John	Dorrell, Stephen
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Dover, Den
Brazier, Julian	Dunn, Bob
Bright, Graham	Dykes, Hugh

Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durrant and
Mr. Alastair Goodlad.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faichett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin

Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heller, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Alan McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That a further supplementary sum not exceeding £1,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on other external relations.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to Order [15 December], to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Estimates appointed for consideration this day.*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1989-90

Question put,

That a further supplementary sum, not exceeding £2,881,927,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges for defence and civil services which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1990, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 603 of Session 1988-89—*[Mr. Lilley.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 255, Noes 8.

Division No. 26] **[8.55 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*

Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alistair Goodlad and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Loyden, Eddie
Meale, Alan
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Win Griffiths and
Mr. Alan W. Williams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

ESTIMATES 1990-91 (VOTE ON ACCOUNT)

Question put,

That a sum not exceeding £58,271,200,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for defence and civil services for the year ending on 31st March 1991, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 604, 605 and 606 of Session 1988-89.

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 7.

Division No. 27] **[at 9.07 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael

Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Loyden, Eddie
Nellist, Dave
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Win Griffiths and
Mr. Alan W. Williams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Lilley and Mr. Richard Ryder.

Mr. Peter Lilley accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31st March 1990 and 1991; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 12].

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I must inform the House before we begin the debate that Mr. Speaker has determined that the instruction is not being called, but it can of course be referred to in the debate.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have looked for a copy of the Bill, but one is not available. Will one be made available before business starts?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The papers necessary for the debate are now available in the Vote Office and have been for some time.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have referred to the instruction to the Committee, which I tabled but which was not accepted for debate by Mr. Speaker. You said that it will be in order to discuss it during the Second Reading debate. If the Bill is given a Second Reading, will it be in order for the Committee that might be established to consider the detail of the Bill to consider the matters referred to in the instruction?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes. It was because of consideration in Committee that the instruction was not selected.

9.22 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is a pleasure to have reached this Second Reading debate, although the carry-over debate was rather like a Second Reading debate and covered much of the ground. I shall try not to repeat myself and will attempt to be brief. I am forced to be excessively brief by the requirements of the House, but I want to give the positive developments that have taken place since the carry-over debate.

The Bill is a positive measure for the environment and for people. The economic case for it has been strengthening all the time. Interest in Cardiff continues to grow, as it has since Labour-controlled South Glamorgan county council took the first and major step of faith by building the new county hall in the derelict heart of my constituency. Commitment by the private sector waits in the wings for the Bill to go through. Confidence grows with the success of the carry-over motion, and will continue to grow as time goes on.

Not only Cardiff will benefit from the barrage and the economic development that will follow its building. Thirty per cent. of the jobs created in Cardiff go to people living outside it, and I cannot believe that, in the surrounding area, the local authorities and people of the valleys will want the scheme to be defeated and its benefits lost to the region.

Mr. Rogers: I accept my hon. Friend's argument that there is always a spin-off from any development to the surrounding area. He has emphasised that the main promoters of the Bill are the Labour-controlled authorities. If that is so, why did not South Glamorgan county council and Cardiff city council consult other Labour-controlled authorities in the surrounding area?

[Mr. Rogers]

Indeed, it was only after fairly strenuous opposition from me that Mid Glamorgan and the adjacent Labour authorities were consulted.

Mr. Michael: My understanding is that there has been plenty of discourse between the different local authorities.

The economic evidence shows the benefits that will come to the whole area. The private-sector leverage for the total scheme involving the barrage is assessed at 8·9:1. That means that £1 billion of private-sector development over the next 10 to 15 years depends on the barrage being built.

The scheme has been evaluated in line with Treasury guidelines: in terms of net economic impact, which assesses benefits against costs, the barrage far outweighs a mini-barrage or no barrage at all. The comparative figures at net present value terms are plus £77 million for the barrage, minus £61 million for the mini-barrage and minus £113 million for no barrage. The Select Committee can cross-examine that evidence and consider it in detail. I give that outline because it is an overwhelming argument for building the barrage. Those economic arguments should certainly be considered in detail in the Select Committee. The Bill and the barrage are needed to achieve the full regeneration of the docklands, the region of Cardiff and south Wales.

The second important aspect relates to groundwater. Hon. Members will know that, as recently as the carry-over debate, I reserved my position on groundwater. I said that, if all the evidence pointed to serious detriment to my constituents, I would not hesitate to say that that price could not be paid for redevelopment. I have gone on a genuine search for truth, and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has also been concerned about groundwater.

I sought the services of an independent expert of international standing. We did not just bring somebody in. I went looking for somebody who could approach the matter with complete independence and authority. I then went to the Cardiff Bay development corporation and sought its agreement to that on the basis of testing the evidence to destruction and hearing the worst, and access to all data, information and work undertaken to find the effects of groundwater levels.

The end result was the identification of Mr. Glyn Jones, who directs the postgraduate course in hydrogeology at University college London, to undertake the study. He was critical of the work done on behalf of the development corporation and exhaustive in his investigations. At the end of the day, he gave the barrage and certainly the work undertaken on behalf of the promoters a clean bill of health. He said:

> "The consultants have certainly built in a generous safety factor which should improve confidence in the less-than-precise calculations used for predictive purposes and outweigh any margin of error."

Mr. Rogers: My interventions are to establish facts. I have yet to be convinced either way. My hon. Friend mentioned the report by a completely independent hydrogeologist. Will it be available to hon. Members, perhaps not this evening, but at some stage? My hon. Friend will be aware that I have had reservations about groundwater reports in the past.

Mr. Michael: Yes, I can assure my hon. Friend that it is available to anybody who is interested. I have made a copy available to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West, who has a serious interest as the Member for the neighbouring Constituency. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library because it should be available to hon. Members. My hon. Friend will find it worth perusing.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): While I accept that there is no question about the academic credentials of Mr. Jones, surely they are no higher than those of Dr. Stuart Noakes, who reported in similar circumstances for the residents action groups. That was paid for by the Cardiff Bay development corporation, but commissioned by the residents action groups against the barrage and the Cardiff Bay development corporation, which together set out the terms of reference. Dr. Noakes came out with critical comments about the likelihood that studies done so far by the hydrogeologist commissioned by the Cardiff Bay development corporation did not give any guarantee against flooding. The one thing that is missing from Glyn Jones's report is any mention of the exact terms of reference.

Mr. Michael: I have undertaken to give my hon. Friend a copy of the terms of reference, and I managed to locate them this evening. My desk, like his, tends to be a minefield.

The report will be available to the Special Standing Committee, and I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West that it was done on the basis of tests to destruction, and that all the evidence and the worst possible solutions would be made publicly available. I do not accept his comparison of the expertise, but the Committee will be able to consider that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West knows that little difference was left between Dr. Noakes and the experts who acted on behalf of the development corporation, by the end of the House of Lords' consideration of the report.

I have a reference for Glyn Jones's expertise from Sir James Lighthill, the former principal of University college, London, which says:

> "Scientists from all over the world come to study hydrogeology with Glyn Jones, returning with a master of science degree in the subject, which is internationally recognised as a guarantee of excellence and sound knowledge in this field."

Other references have been taken up.

The independence of the work, which involved the testing to destruction of the available evidence, and the fact that it was overseen by me and County Councillor Peter Perkins, who represents the area nearest to the bay and has no connection with the development corporation, are assurances of the neutrality and validity of the report.

The end result of the investigation should give greater confidence than the evidence available in the House of Lords' report, when the Committee ended by giving a clean bill of health to the work done on groundwater.

Mr. Morgan: I wonder whether my hon. Friend would care to rethink one of the remarks that he made, because I think that he implied that the academic expertise of Glyn Jones is greater than that of Dr. Stuart Noakes. If he is asserting that, can he say why?

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend may have misinterpreted what I said. There is no doubt about the pre-eminence of

Mr. Jones in this field. There was hardly any gap between his assessment and that of Dr. Noakes, and the experts called upon by the Cardiff Bay development corporation at the end of the House of Lords session. However, I can assert with confidence that the Jones report is the result of the only study into all the work done to date, by a genuinely independent expert of international repute. His findings will, of course, be open to scrutiny by the Committee.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the scheme goes ahead, we could be presented with a unique opportunity to clean up the waters of the bay and, for the first time in many decades, it will also be possible to clean up the waters of the Bristol channel?

We know that sewage outfalls into the bay will have to be redirected. Presumably they will be redirected to the existing outfalls on the coast, including those in my constituency. We have a unique opportunity to ensure that the waters of Cardiff Bay are treated, and the existing sewage outfalls are treated, and that will clean up the Bristol channel.

Mr. Michael: That is outside the scope of the Bill, but, in fairness to my hon. Friend, I agree with him that there will be an opportunity to clean up water and sewage outfalls to meet European standards, and like my hon. Friend, I have spoken to the promoters of the Bill about that. I hope that it will be pursued.

My constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan share a boundary in the south Penarth and Lavernock area. I hope that the opportunity he mentions will be taken up, and I commend it for further investigation by the Minister.

During the weekend, I met the Butetown residents. Despite the title of the group, it stressed that it is not against the barrage but wants protection to be built into the Bill. I pay tribute to the tenacious way in which it has pursued that clear objective. It raised the protection period of 20 years and sought an assurance that common law protection will remain after that time. The promoters gave that assurance clearly to the Committee of another place, but the group fears that that assurance has not been written into the Bill. I am pleased to say that, at my request, the promoters agreed this week to amend the Bill so that such assurance appears on the face of the Bill.

I have pursued several vital issues with the promoters, such as affordable homes, and the retention of existing jobs even if their relocation is inevitable . There have been detailed discussions. They have sometimes been abrasive, but they have also been positive and productive. The local authority has a similar creative relationship with the development corporation. That is not always the case in other parts of the country.

The question that has to be answered today is whether there is any reason to deny the Bill a Second Reading. The answer must be a resounding no. We have the alternative proposal by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which bears a strong similarity to the idea it launched one year previously. While it should receive fair consideration, there are obvious problems with it, to some of which I have referred. If opponents of the scheme are so confident, why do they not allow the Special Standing Committee to consider all the evidence, including information about sites of special scientific interest, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) referred? I agree that some of the matters to be considered require serious consideration.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend referred to me and asked a question, so I must reply. The objection to the barrage is a matter of principle. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which has written to most hon. Members involved in the debate, has made it clear that the alternative it suggests does not involve the construction of a barrage. That is why the RSPB and many other conservation bodies oppose the Bill in principle.

Mr. Michael: I appreciate my hon. Friend's argument. It is something on which we have to agree to differ, as we have from the beginning.

The most vigorous campaign has been conducted by those who want to protect the natural environment. As the natural environment is one of my passionate concerns, I respect the motivation but believe that the wrong target has been selected. This is not a natural environment. It is manmade, derelict and polluted. That is what birds have adapted to. A real clean-up allied to silting would destroy an environment that suits them now.

The promoters have offered major investment in alternative feeding grounds. Nature will adapt to a cleaner, healthier Cardiff bay. The human inhabitants will benefit from a cleaner, healthier environment. It is they, the people of the communities with high unemployment and a poor environment who need the benefits that the Bill and the barrage would bring to their job prospects, their future and their environment. It is for their sakes that I urge the House to give the Bill a Second Reading, so that it can receive the detailed scrutiny of a Special Standing Committee.

9.33 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I am grateful for this opportunity to pursue the questions initiated, after a fashion, by the carry-over motion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said, a great deal has happened since that motion was passed. I want to draw attention to some of the new material.

We meet within seven days of the 10th anniversary of the last major flood of the River Taff, which runs through my constituency. On 26 December 1979, a major flood almost caught a large audience of children at Chipperfield's circus in my constituency. They narrowly escaped with their lives into the offices of the Transport and General Workers' Union in Cathedral road in which both my hon. Friend and the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and I have our constituency offices—[HON. MEMBERS: "On the fourth floor!"] The children were taken to the mezzanine floor.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): It is worth pointing out that the Transport and General Workers Union is wholly in favour of the Bill.

Mr. Morgan: I was not aware of any vote on the issue by the Transport and General Workers Union which sponsors me and my hon. Friend and, of course, the Leader of the Opposition.

In my surgeries I am still dealing with compensation cases which have not yet been completed since that flood 10 years ago. I hope that the House will understand just

[Mr. Morgan]

how badly scarred are the residents of the low-lying areas of my constituency—Riverside, Pontcanna Canton and Leckwith from the past flooding.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will my hon. Friend explain the reasons for that flood and the previous one, which have nothing to do with the Bill?

Mr. Morgan: I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) thinks that he knows the answer to that question, but I think that it is wrong. He thinks that the flood was caused by the inrushing tide coinciding with water coming down the river, but that is not the case. It was caused by human error in the operation of the flood prevention warning.

Mr. Flynn: I thought that.

Mr. Morgan: He did think that. My constituents are worried that human error can still occur and that, if there was a barrage, the consequences would be even more catastrophic than they were in 1979. Trauma still affects the elderly people in the low-lying parts of my constituency which were flooded in 1979 and 1960. Some people still come to my surgery to untangle the compensation cases, and even when the compensation right has not been contested by the city or county council, compensation has still not been paid in full. This is 10 years, less one week, later. That is why my constituents are extremely concerned about the effect on them of anything that alters the water regime to lock the water in, rather than letting it out.

Mr. Michael: I have frequently said that I understand the impact of those events on the inhabitants of my hon. Friend's constituency. Does he not accept that this has little to do with the actual or likely effects of the Bill and the development?

Mr. Morgan: I wish that were true. My hon. Friend has already adduced the names of various distinguished and, as he calls them, pre-eminent, academics such as Mr. Glyn Jones, who has assured him about the groundwater conditions in his constituency. Although I was not consulted about that exercise, I think that, for reasons best known to him, my hon. Friend believes that it also applies to my constituency. If my hon. Friend is interested in the views of pre-eminent academics, he will also be aware of the views of other pre-eminent academics, such as Dr. Gordon Saunders, also of London university, who say that this will increase the flooding risk. That is not only Dr. Saunders's view, but that of Dr. Stuart Noakes, who is at least as well, if not better, academically qualified and has more practical experience because he lives in south Wales and is more familiar with the flood risk to the low-lying terrain in the four wards of my constituency.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Morgan: I shall give way to my hon. Friend at the rate of once every 10 seconds.

Mr. Michael: Does my hon. Friend accept that Dr. Saunders's evidence cannot be tested because it has not yet been given?

Mr. Morgan: That is a mysterious definition. If my hon. Friend had read the local newspapers, he would have seen Dr. Saunders's views which they gave, in extenso, making it clear that this was the view of an academic who has an equal, if not greater, right to be regarded as a pre-eminent academic to the one whose evidence my hon. Friend used. My hon. Friend cannot come to the House and pick and choose which academics he wants us to believe. If he thinks that Mr. Glyn Jones is some sort of God from the sky, a Roger Quittendon type of figure, whom everyone in Wales must bow down to and accept without further reference to other academics who do live in or come from south Wales, he is asking an awful lot.

Three major academics—Dr. Saunders, Dr. Noakes and Dr. Miles—all believe that the research done so far by the development corporation into the barrage and its effects on flooding is deeply flawed and inadequately researched. No hon. Member would gainsay the fact that those three are also extremely distinguished engineering experts on underwater geology.

Mr. Michael: I contest that. It is only sensible to allow the Select Committee to consider the comparative qualifications of the different people and the evidence that they give.

Mr. Morgan: I wonder whether my hon. Friend might allow me some sort of intermission so that I can continue my speech. If he contests the principle that they are pre-eminent academics, he must say why—*[Interruption]*. Now my hon. Friend is suggesting that he does not contest that. It is nonsense. Perhaps he would allow me to proceed for, shall we say, 20 seconds?

Three matters have altered substantially since the carry-over motion. The first is the production of the "Living Waterfront" alternative by the Save the Taff Consortium, which is a combination of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other naturalist bodies, together with the residents action groups against the barrage. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said that the alternative was produced by the RSPB. It was not. The person who designed the scheme was a member of a residents action group against the barrage. The Save the Taff Consortium is a unique conjunction of conservation bodies and residents action groups against the barrage. It would be wrong to give the impression, as my hon. Friend did, that it entirely emanated from the RSPB.

The second change relates to grants from the EEC. We must allay any fears that the Opposition are opposed to persuading the Welsh Office to spend more public money in Cardiff, in the three Glamorgans, in Gwent, in Wales or in the United Kingdom. We are in favour of the spending of strategically designed sums of public money intended to engender more public and private investment. However, the Bill is the wrong way to do it.

The EEC determination will be rubber stamped tomorrow. However, I am sure that the Minister will confirm that it has already been taken. South Wales will be short of regional development funds. The four counties of industrial south Wales and the industrial part of Dyfed will have to manage on very short rations from the EEC for the next three years. Only £50 million will be available for four and a half counties of industrial south Wales. It is a cut of at least a half in what we usually have. The amount will have to be made up by the Welsh Office, because otherwise we shall be short of development money. Extra public money will have to go into the Butetown link.

I hope that Conservative Members will not accuse us of being churlish about the offer by the Welsh Office and the Treasury to spend public money on this scheme. We have much better ideas for what should be done with public money. The "Living Waterfront" scheme is a better barrage and our ideas for spending public money will produce far more jobs than would the sterile barrage idea. We are pro-development and pro-environment.

Some 550 people attended a meeting in the city hall at Cardiff to launch the "Living Waterfront" scheme. I thought that it was mad to book the main assembly rooms. I expected only the front three rows to be filled. In fact, the hall, which holds 800 people, was more than five eighths full. It was a most impressive gathering—a combination of conservationists and anti-barrage residents groups.

We must understand those critical factors. Industrial south Wales will be short of public money for development. A report by Coopers and Lybrand pleads the case for the Butetown link being given European regional development fund and Welsh Office support through transport supplementary grant or by an extra grant, through the back door, to the Cardiff Bay development corporation, which would pay it to South Glamorgan. The report makes it clear that there would be development in Cardiff bay if the Butetown link is built. That is far more important than anything that the barrage is likely to contribute.

There is absolutely no other way of interpreting the statement in paragraph 549 of the report. After interviewing people in the property development industry, the writers of the report said:

"A majority of interviewees not yet committed to investment would still consider investment in the wider area if there was no barrage."

Remember, the report is talking about property developers.

"However, this would significantly influence the timing and scale of their investment, the quality and value of activity and their choice of location either within the Bay or elsewhere. None of them interviewed would invest without improvement in road links in the Bay area."

The Butetown road link is the critical factor. That will not now get an EEC grant, and that will leave South Glamorgan either with a shattering level of poll tax in the coming few years or it will be necessary for the Welsh Office to up the level of grant to South Glamorgan because that road is now estimated to cost £116 million, making it easily the most expensive county highway project ever launched in Wales.

A grant of at least £25 million over and above the normal 50 per cent. transport supplementary grant is now necessary to replace the lost European regional development fund grant. I will not now go into the reasons why we lost that grant; that is a debate for another place and time.

Not only Coopers and Lybrand say that the barrage is not as important as other essential factors. For example, in the December 1989 issue of *Housing* magazine there is an interesting quotation from Barratt's south Wales general manager, Mr. Melhuish:

"Barry Melhuish, Sales Director of Barratt, South Wales, confirms this. 'Our development is planned as a waterside development'"—

he was referring to the Windsor Quays development on Ferry road—

"'which can cater for the barrage happening or not happening.' He says, 'We are proceeding without a care for the barrage.'"

Not only is Barratt's saying that. It is now as plain as a pikestaff. During the summer, Sam Pickstock of Tarmac South Wales said that he did not intend to wait for the barrage and that his investment decisions had nothing to do with whether the barrage went ahead—and that was the view of the largest housing developer in Britain.

With industrialists, the CBDC has become a dirty word. The CBDC has sterilised development for the last two years in the area of the old East Moors steelworks. Indeed, during the summer, things got so bad that the Welsh Office issued a warning to the CBDC to the effect that it must get its act together.

It is not unfair to say that the CBDC has, in Cardiff's case, been the biggest job destroyer since the Luftwaffe. In the middle of last year, AA Insurance Services was launching a project which would have brought an additional 500 jobs to Cardiff, but as a result of being messed about by the CBDC, that development went to Newcastle.

That is one reason why the CBDC has become a dirty word, although we could also quote in graphic terms Mr. Mike McGrane of Paul's Industrial Services, one of the major employers in the bay, with 400 jobs involved. When the predecessor of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, the former Prime Minister, now Lord Callaghan, was opening some premises, Mr. McGrane said:

"The main problem with Cardiff Bay is that I have always failed to get a response. Their development people have been courteous and helpful, but I believe their hands have been tied. I honestly cannot understand the motives of the Bay. It is also worth pointing out that as a local firm, we have never been asked to submit a tender for any of the work being carried out for them. How can they say that this is for the benefit of local businesses?"

It is interesting to note what Lord Callaghan said. On this occasion he was opening new premises, and the Cardiff Bay development corporation had already said that those premises would have to be knocked down. Lord Callaghan said:

"I shall never forget this day. Never before have I been asked to unveil a plaque for a building that was going to be knocked down."

That is the present state of affairs. The job-creation agency set up by the Government is destroying jobs before reaching the job-creation stage.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is quoting a series of examples which are not open to proper debate in the House. Indeed, it would be wrong for us now to debate those individual examples. Will my hon. Friend take it from me that I have been involved with a number of problems of concern to individual firms?

Mr. Morgan: I have the details of the examples with me.

Mr. Michael: I am aware of the circumstances to which my hon. Friend referred. I assure him that I take an interest in firms in my constituency, and I feel better placed than he is to say that he is grossly overstating the case.

Mr. Morgan: I find it difficult to understand how I can be grossly overstating the case when I am quoting what has been said by major employers.

The question, then, concerns the competence of the Cardiff Bay development corporation, something which grievously worries my constituents. Since the carry-over motion, the development corporation and the county council have attempted to correct the incorrect map that

[Mr. Morgan]

they signed. When we debated the motion, I was told that the issue of the incorrect map was a minor one, that all would be put right and that everyone would be happy. My constituents, however, are still extremely unhappy about the compensation map signed in error by Lord Elibank.

Lord Elibank has since signed a new plan, which has been displayed in certain public places—the city hall, the county headquarters and Baltic house, the corporation's headquarters. Lists have been sent out to local residents affected by the change in the line of the plan, telling them, "We are very sorry that we put your house on the wrong side of the line; we have now corrected our mistake." There is still a mistake, however.

The corporation told me about one further change that it had made, but it has also made further uncovenanted changes involving nine houses in Severn grove, Nos. 63 to 81. Those houses have still been omitted from a list in which—according to the original plan put before the House of Lords—they should have been included. The intent of Cardiff Bay and the co-promoter, South Glamorgan, is still being defeated. At 7 pm today, I was given a press release by Pontcanna Residents Against the Barrage, which has studied the plans most diligently. I am told that its secretary had the two maps in front of her, and saw that the large one did not tally with the small one that had been distributed to everyone.

The corporation's competence is in doubt on two counts: the destruction of jobs, and the failure to get the compensation maps right. Compensation is a major issue in my constituency, as I am sure that it is in Cardiff, South and Penarth. Tenants probably have not received letters at all, simply because they were addressed to "The Resident" —one resident per house—meaning that those in bedsit-land would not receive the information. That may be why the Woolwich Building Society is to publish tomorrow a survey of house price changes in south Wales up to the year 2000. According to tonight's edition of the *South Wales Echo*, the report—which I have not read—comments that concern about flooding may well cause the price of houses in low-lying parts of Cardiff to lag behind that of houses in other parts. The Bill, however, contains no proposals for changes in property values that penalise residents of low-lying areas.

Among the academics who have studied the geological aspects of the case, there are those who believe that there is nothing to worry about—for instance, Mr. Jones, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, and Mr. Roly Edwards, who works for Cardiff Bay and is a consultant to Wallace Evans and Partners—and three who believe that there is a great deal to worry about: Drs. Saunders, Miles and Noake, who are all extremely distinguished in their field. What marks out the opponents of the barrage, however, is their familiarity with geological conditions in south Wales.

I am in no position to judge who is pre-eminent, but it is surely more than a coincidence that the practical but highly qualified academics who are worried about flooding and groundwater were either born and brought up in south Wales or worked there—or both. That is not true of Mr. Jones or Mr. Edwards, who are not so well acquainted with the unusual geological and water conditions there. The level of rivers can rise dramatically following rain in the Beacons and the valleys, and when the great Atlantic depressions sweep across for three weeks, followed by a final great downpour, the river flow is strongly affected.

Mr. Rogers: I am sure that hon. Members are bored with the ping-pong battle between the consultant geologists. I am an engineering geologist by profession, and quite frankly I am completely bored with it. I do not claim any pre-eminence; all I can do is read the report that was financed by the Cardiff Bay development corporation. On table 6.1, Wallace Evans listed nine potential hazards in the area. It takes into account some hazards and discounts others. A closer reading of the part of the report that discounts the hazards shows that the consultants for the corporation cannot dismiss them completely, so it will become a matter of conjecture between the so-called experts because they are dealing with marginal hazards that have been acknowledged. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Morgan: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) who is academically, geologically and politically pre-eminent. I hope that he will be satisfied with my decision to leave geology and turn to environmental matters. I wish to depart from the chambers of the Royal Geological Society and turn to water quality, which has already been mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Newport, West, for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith).

One question that has emerged since we last debated the Bill is how to clean up the waters of the Taff beyond the stage at which all the sewage is treated without locking rich nutrients into the lake that would be formed behind the dam. I am told that the only way to do that would be to do what is done in parts of Germany, as most of Germany is landlocked—phosphate stripping.

Phosphate stripping is a major exercise which requires a large area of land, so it would have to be done somewhere in my constituency or that of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr Grist)—somewhere in Blackweir or Pontcanna fields. It would require a very extensive acreage for a large double treatment works so that the water entering the bay was cleaned of all the rich nutrients from the treated sewage from the Cynon valley, the Rhondda that is trapped at Cilfynydd and elsewhere at other sewage treatment works.

That would create a very major problem. It is not in the proposals of the CBDC or the Welsh water authority. It has not been costed or designed and it is not on offer to us, so we must assume that the water entering the lake would be extremely rich in nutrients from treated sewage.

Is there a way to prevent untreated sewage from forcing its way into the Taff on a massive scale? Last week, during the heavy rain, we all went down to check on the Taff and we saw a massive wave of plastic bags, council house doors, and sanitary items, as described by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) so graphically the last time we discussed these matters. The only way to get rid of that would be to have rainwater drains in the valleys so large that they would be something like 10 ft above the road.

The flashiness of the rivers in south Wales in response to heavy rain is such that the rainwater goes straight into the river on a colossal scale because there is no soil cover on the sides of the valleys as the trees were all cut down for pit props during world war one. There is no way of coping

with that. We shall always have that problem. In every heavy rain storm during the winter, untreated sewage will be forced into the river and trapped in the bay and the lake, making the lake extremely unsightly and microbiologically hazardous for anyone brave enough to think of immersion or occasional immersion sports.

Finally, the residents have every right to remain extremely concerned about their future happiness and security in their homes. They are deeply cynical about the way in which they have been treated over the past 10 years by the city council and the county council in respect of flood compensation claims. They do not, therefore, always believe what authority tells them. We might say that they should believe what authority tells them and that the scheme will reduce flood danger, but they know that academic opinion on the subject is divided.

People will naturally play safe and say that if all the academics had told them that the scheme would reduce the risk from flooding, they would believe them, but as the academics are split 50:50 and the experts who live in south Wales have said that we must be careful about the scheme because it could make matters worse, it is natural that those of my constituents who live in low-lying areas which are prone to flooding and who have experience of flooding will say that they do not want the scheme and that they do not think that it will be good for their environment. Whatever is good for the environment must not mean 4 ft of dirty floodwater from the Taff in their ground floor premises every 20 years.

It is all very well for people to say that the CBDC is staffed by experts and has the most expensive consultants that money can buy. Let us never forget that the Titanic was built by professionals, whereas Noah's Ark was built by inspired and very committed amateurs.

10.5 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): It may seem trite to say so, but the Bill seeks to build a barrage. If one looks at the long title to the Bill, it is also intended to build a lagoon at Wentlloog. I understand, from reading the evidence in the other place and from listening to what has been said tonight, that if the Bill does not become law, the development of the dockland area in Cardiff will still go ahead. It is not the purpose of any of us who oppose the barrage to oppose such a development. I concede readily that the development may be of a different form, and that it may be at a slower pace, but no one has argued that there will be no development.

There have been various objections, which I shall merely mention because I am not competent, as the Member for Llanelli, to deal with them. They are matters for my hon. Friends who represent Cardiff constituencies. One objection is that the barrage scheme will have a bad effect on the local community and there is the danger of flooding. There are also environmental problems, including problems for bird life, and the question of public subsidy. I have read the reports of the previous debate in this House and the debates in the other place, and the evidence that was given to the House of Lords Select Committee. It is surprising that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and other hon. Members did not mention the public subsidy. We deserve to know about it and I hope that the Minister will realise that he has a duty to tell us about it.

The Welsh Office issued a press release on 11 December this year which, in effect, boasted about the £100 million to be paid to the development corporation out of Government money over a period of three years, as I understand it. We were not told in the press release what the money would be spent on or what part of the Welsh Office budget the money would come from. I hope that we shall be told tonight what the money will be spent on, where it will come from and how much there will be. Apparently, the private sector can put in £8 for every £1 of public sector money. Let us be told how much the public sector will put into what is, in effect, a private venture.

All those objections are valid, but I should like to widen the debate a little and to concentrate on some other aspects of the scheme. To me and to some of my hon. Friends —I am sorry to say this in respect of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth—this scheme seems, as do so many others of its kind, to epitomise much of what has been wrong about 10 years of Thatcherite Britain. The scheme will contribute little, if anything, to primary production. It is concerned with consumption, not with production. It is about property, up-market housing, shopping malls, leisure and tourism.

Those are all no doubt good and worthy when they are the by-product of the fruits of production in a healthy economy. Such projects may be very worthy in France, Germany, Scandinavia, Japan and other countries with strong economies, but they are not something to boast about or to embark upon in the Britain of the late-1980s and 1990s, given our weak industrial base. Britain cannot afford them, and south Wales, with an even weaker industrial base, can afford them even less.

The scheme is all too familiar and predictable. Most of us know the syndrome, although perhaps on a smaller scale. First, one finds a consultant. The very word "consultant"—especially if one puts the word "management" in front of it—strikes awe and terror in many people's hearts and minds. Once one has found a consultant, he goes away and looks into the matter. I am sorry to say that very few of these guys have much imagination. They follow fashion and they are good at drawing up Bills, but they lack imagination. I have not seen a Leonardo da Vinci among them so far.

The fruits of the consultants' work are predictable. In this case, we have a barrage, or a lagoon, or a lake: it does not really matter what one calls it. As Cecil B. De Mille might have said, "You've got to get water, and plenty of water." That is where they start; then they put little boats on the water and build houses round it. Once they have done that, they need a golf course. After all, these hard-working consultants have to have a break between one report and the next. Then, if they can, they make a ski slope, which might be very difficult in Wentlloog.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Come to Merthyr. We have a fine ski slope there.

Mr. Davies: Indeed, but my hon. Friend does not have a lagoon.

I suppose that we could have a water ski slope in Wentlloog. I am sure that the corporation, whose representative must be listening to the debate, could come up with some sort of ski slope.

If one pays a little bit extra, one can also get a park for rare breeds of animals, such as Jacob sheep, or whatever. In Llanelli some time ago, it was suggested that land that used to be employed for a modern steelworks that was

[Mr. Davies]

destroyed in the early phases of Thatcherism—in the early 1980s—could be used as a park for pink pigs. Luckily, with their well-known wit and sense of the ridiculous, my constituents managed to laugh that bit of consultancy out of town.

Mr. Ron Davies: What was their colour?

Mr. Denzil Davies: They were pink.

Mr. Ron Davies: Well, most of them are.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Oh, dear!

The Bill is not about water but about residential and commercial property. No doubt somewhere in the pretty plans there will be a few sites for factories, just to satisfy those of us old-fashioned enough to believe in production and manufacturing. But most of the property will be residential or commercial because residential and commercial land values in that area are far higher than land values for factories, and it is easier to borrow on the basis of those higher land values.

Most of the properties will be housing; not any old housing, oh no! I have read the evidence from the other place and the Select Committee report, and I know that it will be up-market housing for the professional classes. The Select Committee gave the game away. If there is no barrage, we are told, there will still be about 2,700 houses, but unfortunately very few of them will be "of high quality". That means that they will be houses for the working classes, and that, of course, will not do. So—hey presto!—we have a barrage. Then we are allowed 5,000 houses, and three quarters of the 5,000 houses will be of "the highest quality". That means houses for the professional classes.

We have not heard any economic analysis. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth did not mention any economic benefits and there has been no study of them. Presumably, the "trickle down" theory applies. If houses are built for surveyors, stockbrokers, solicitors, lawyers and accountants, their expertise, wealth and everything that they contribute will trickle down and irrigate the land and the economy all around them. That is the theory, but I do not believe it and the history of south Wales during the past 10 years does not show that it happens. Indeed, despite all these wonderful developments, income per head of population in Wales during the past 10 years has fallen dramatically.

Housing in Britain is heavily subsidised. In my opinion, it is too heavily subsidised, but we could debate that matter on another occasion. Although it is heavily subsidised, the money that the Welsh Office will put into this project may not go directly into housing. However, it will be spent on roads, sewers and other ancillary matters needed for house building. In effect, the £100 million will be a subsidy to private sector housing—and to up-market private sector housing at that. If money is available for housing, I, and I am sure most of my hon. Friends, can think of better places and better ways of spending it.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a quarter of the housing that is to be provided will be low-cost housing for first-time buyers and that that will be of tremendous benefit to people in Cardiff?

Mr. Davies: I said that three quarters of the housing would be high-quality housing, so on that basis presumably one quarter will be low quality. About 25 per cent. of the housing will be for the low-quality end of the market—*[Interruption.]* Yes, my hon. Friend cannot deny that——

Mr. Wardell: It will be low-cost housing.

Mr. Davies: Well, "low cost" and "low quality" sometimes go together—*[Interruption.]*—but not always.

During the past 10 years, one third of Britain's manufacturing industry and base has disappeared. Probably more than one third of our industrial base has disappeared in south Wales and we may never get it back. Britain has a balance of payments deficit of £20 billion. We have an inflation rate of 8 per cent. and interest rates of 15 per cent. During the past 10 years, money has been poured into property development in the residential and commercial sectors, causing the kind of inflation that we now have and contributing to the high interest rates that are crucifying manufacturing industry.

If the property companies that are to be part of the development examine the cost of borrowing the money that they will need for the development, I wager that they will find that the average cost of the interest is far below the best or market rate of interest when amortised over the life of the property. Although small engineering companies, small foundries and small machine tool companies pay interest at 16, 17 or 18 per cent., pension funds or property companies pay nothing near that rate.

However, without the manufacturing concerns, the foundries or machine tool shops, all these developments will wither on the vine and eventually become white elephants. As for jobs, we know the kind of jobs that will be produced by the development. They are part-time, low-paid jobs. That is what we have suffered from in south Wales during the past 10 years.

In conclusion, the building of the barrage is a product of the excesses and profligacy of Thatcher Britain during the 1980s—of the borrowing and reborrowing on property. I do not know whether the Bill will become law, but if the provisions are enacted in 1990, the building will no doubt begin in 1990. However, the boom is over and the excesses will have to be paid for. I do not know whether the country will be prepared to pay in the early 1990s for the excesses of the 1980s. I do not know whether it will be prepared to pay for this development and, whether or not the Bill goes through, I suspect that we shall not be able to pay for this development.

10.18 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): My qualification for speaking in the debate is that I spent the first 30 years of my life living in Grangetown, an experience that few, if any, hon. Members will have shared. I have a passionate interest in the area and a desire to see its improvement.

I can speak about Llanelli with the same authority with which my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) spoke about Cardiff—nil. He clearly does not understand the effect that the Bill will have on a great circle of working-class homes that are already there. The area of Channel view, the Marl, Avondale road, the Hamadryad and going round to Splott has for several generations been shunned and despised by Cardiff.

We hear talk of Cardiff bay. When I was a boy I knew all about Tiger bay, but I had never heard of Cardiff bay. It has suddenly been presented as an area that is desirable and unique. It is unique in some ways. It is a vast mud slum surrounded by refuse tips. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds finds it beautiful. I know that distance lends enchantment to the view. We know that Cardiff bay looks attractive from Caerphilly, and from Scunthorpe it looks magnificent.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Does my hon. Friend accept that I have had letters from people who live in the area who share the view of the environmentalists that the bay is not only important environmentally but should be built into the city—that it is part of the city's heritage and should be developed and improved? I accept my hon. Friend's points, but does he accept that if the barrage were scrapped, the money could be diverted to enhancing the area so that we could have the bay, the birds and the improvements?

Mr. Flynn: I shall come to that point. My hon. Friend is a member of the ruling body of the RSPB, whose president comes from Iceland. From Iceland, Cardiff bay looks as beautiful as the Bay of Naples. It looks wonderful. When we previously debated the matter, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) complained bitterly that if the barrage is constructed the water will not be blue. But even the Bay of Naples is not blue. The Bristol channel is brown. Roath park in the centre of Cardiff is an ugly green colour, but it is acceptable and many of us use such areas with pleasure for recreational purposes. The only chance of the water becoming blue is if there is an outbreak of blue-green algae, which is the great threat to the barrage and could result in toxins being released.

But the great lesson here is not in the pessimism and the hundreds of reasons that people can think up why the project will go wrong. Rather we should look at the environmental crime that has been committed in Cardiff over the years. When I was a boy I used to swim in the River Taff from Penarth road bridge. The water there was not blue or brown, it was black, but it has improved enormously since. The crime is not that we shall create a lagoon that will be polluted; the crime is that we have allowed such pollution to continue all these years. The need to clean up the Rivers Taff and Ely must be part of the construction of the barrage.

I worked in the area for many years. I have walked from Grangetown to Victoria wharf. Such a slum of industrial buildings would never have been allowed in any other part of the city. Many people have come from elsewhere and they are playing on the fears of the people of Cardiff. I remember the two great floods and the terror and squalor that they caused. We must avoid a recurrence, and the issue of groundwater must be properly investigated. However, I understand that attempts—not made on a basis of fact—have been made to arouse people's fears. It is a shame that emotions should have been aroused so unnecessarily.

We have heard a great deal about birds and about the great environmental offence that is about to be committed. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said that for the first time a national body is to destroy an entire site of special scientific interest. It is interesting to consider just how many SSSIs there are. They already number more than 5,000, and the figure is rapidly approaching 7,000. There will be a time when 10 per cent. of the whole land area of the country will be designated as special.

We are talking here about the estuary of the Taff and the Rhymney—not about the estuaries of the Mawdduch Towry, or Tawe, or about various magnificent other estuaries in Wales. One could argue a case for preserving them.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Does my hon. Friend agree that when an SSSI is designated, great care must be exercised not to make that action counter-productive? In my constituency, there is an SSSI at Broughton, which has been designated so that the tide can come in and erode the cliff face. It is taking away a farmer's land so that a glacial till is exposed and the public can view it. One must remember that a farmer's livelihood is just as important as the facility to view a glacial till.

Mr. Flynn: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention.

How many SSSIs have been destroyed or threatened in the past few years? I can tell the House that the figure is nearly 300, so such occurrances are not unusual. The areas in question were not significantly special.

There has been a great deal of debate about the various species of birds on the barrage site. They include dunlins and redshanks. Is it not amazing that, since the time of the archaeopter, and through millions of years of evolution, birds have managed to survive in myriads of species, shapes and colours—all without the help of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Birds?

It is now being claimed that every possible bird habitat must be protected in aspic and left unchanged. The fact is that great changes are occurring anyway. Ports and industrial areas are closing and are being recolonised by birds. A particular feature of an estuary is that it is always changing. Cardiff bay has already changed enormously because dredging has stopped there. The area alters every year because of the growth of the salt marsh.

Birds are very robust. I remember one area being changed for the benefit of farmers, who seemed to reign supreme in these matters, in Gwent. A huge area at Collister pill was drained and the habitat of many thousands of birds was destroyed. They could no longer breed because the wetland had disappeared. Without the help of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the species concerned migrated to a wholly artificial, manmade ash pond a few miles away and happily multiplied in numbers. They found new feeding grounds on an area outside the Usk estuary.

Mr. Morley: Does my hon. Friend accept that the habitat of which he speaks is very different from that of Cardiff bay and that there is no comparison between the two? Does he acknowledge that there is a scientific case that in North and South America, as well as in Europe, many species of birds and animals are on the decline? As my hon. Friend rightly says, habitat changes are occurring, but unfortunately they are for the worse, not the better. To take out Cardiff bay would place even more stress on the habitat and hasten the decline of many species that has already begun.

Mr. Flynn: My hon. Friend gives a clue to the true purpose behind the RSPB campaign. It is interested not in

[Mr. Flynn]

Cardiff or the bay but in the estuaries around our coast, and it is using Cardiff bay as an example. It knows that the population of dunlin and redshank is not unique. There are probably millions of dunlins in the world; there is no threat to them. If there is precious birdlife, one has to go to Bridgewater bay to find it.

The RSPB is campaigning and putting Cardiff's prosperity at risk because it wants to fight the line at Cardiff. It knows that if it can win its case in a bay as ugly as Cardiff's, it can fight and win in the Mawddach estuary, the Towy estuary and other beautiful estuaries.

Mr. Rogers: I am listening to my hon. Friend with amazement. Speeches have been made about the development of the bay and its usefulness to the people of Cardiff and the surrounding area. My hon. Friend's outlandish attack on people who are genuinely concerned about conservation does the argument no good. He should consider the far more serious issues rather than making this silly attack.

Mr. Flynn: My hon. Friend will have an opportunity to make his own speech.

One of the fauna that exists in great numbers on the marl and foreshore of Cardiff bay is the rat. If one wants to see a living waterfront, one should go to certain areas —I shall not name them now—at high tide, when rats come over the sea walls. They are welcomed by the children of the area who trepan them with hammers. The rat is not regarded as an attractive animal, and because we do not have pictures of it painted by Peter Scott on our dining room walls it has no sentimental appeal. The environmental movement here is based on animals that are attractive.

When the presentation of the barrage was made, many conservationists and others came to Cardiff to fight the test case. The national press and its photographers were invited. I feel sympathy for Mr. Neil Libbert, a gifted photographer whose work I have followed for many years. His challenge was to present Cardiff bay as an attractive place. He had to turn down the F stop on his camera to fade into the shadows, and soft focus the squalor that surrounds it to present an attractive picture.

Cardiff bay is the least beautiful part of the city. Of course details must be discussed at length, but hon. Members should not be misled by the extravagance of the arguments of people who live many miles from Cardiff. There is a need to beautify the bay, and I hope that at this stage hon. Members will discuss the Bill, then sort out its detail in Committee and make a decision on Third Reading.

10.33 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) will read his speech carefully when it appears in *Hansard* tomorrow. I know that he has a sense of humour and that occasionally he likes to be deliberately provocative, sometimes with the objective of catching the odd headline. He referred quite specifically to me in his speech. I think that his remarks were very silly, offensive and unfounded. I am sure that he did not intend any personal affront, but I hope that on reflection, having read his speech carefully, he will want to withdraw some of his wilder statements.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West is the only hon. Member who has spoken in favour of the Bill, apart from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who moved the Second Reading.

Two tasks face those who promote or support the Bill. The first is to justify the construction of the barrage. No hon. Member so far has made any attempt to justify its construction. The second is to justify the destruction of a site of special scientific interest. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West poured scorn on the whole ideal of conservation, and he will regret that tomorrow. He mocked those of us who are concerned about our natural heritage. This proposal will entirely destroy an SSSI. I am prepared to accept that, where an overriding national interest is involved, those of us who normally rate conservation issues most highly would have to recognise that conservation came second. If there is an overwhelming national case to justify the destruction of an SSSI, it has not been made this evening.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth talked only in the broadest terms about the redevelopment of Cardiff. I will tell him and my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West until I am blue in the face that we entirely support the redevelopment of Cardiff dockland, but we question the wisdom of constructing a barrage and the idea that it will somehow facilitate or accelerate the reconstruction of our dockland. The House of Lords examined that in minute detail and it is abundantly clear to those who have read their reports that that case has been stripped away. There is no economic case.

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall make my speech. My hon. Friend will find another opportunity.

What happened in the House of Lords is a matter of record——

Mr. Michael: On that point?

Mr. Davies: I would prefer not to give way to my hon. Friend. He made his speech and I have many points to make. If he seeks to intervene merely to reinterpret what has already been said, I must tell him that I am not in the business of saying that my interpretation is better than his or that my experts are better than his. That is a matter of opinion. If he seeks merely to challenge me on matters of opinion, it would be better if I could make my speech in my own way.

Mr. Michael: The House of Lords Committee was convinced on evidence that the economic case was sound and investment prospects good. It accepted the need for the barrage. If there is alternative evidence, the details should be brought before the Select Committee and argued there. If, in stating a different view from mine, my hon. Friend is sincere in his belief, as I am sure he is, it is appropriate not to oppose the Second Reading, but to allow the Bill to pass to a Select Committee where the difference of view can be properly explored in great detail.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is wrong on all counts. I am opposing the Bill as a matter of principle because I believe that the construction of the barrage is wrong. It is no good my hon. Friend saying that we should refer the Bill to a Select Committee. I am opposed to the

construction of the barrage. I hope that he understands that. I referred to the evidence presented to the House of Lords Committee, not to the conclusion drawn by four or five geriatrics after considering the evidence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make disparaging references to Members of the other place.

Mr. Davies: I was wrong to make that remark and if I caused any offence, I withdraw it wholly and without reservation. That shows the danger of giving way.

My hon. Friend is wrong on many counts. The evidence presented to the House of Lords Committee stripped away the arguments for the barrage. If their Lordships in their wisdom decided not to accept that evidence, it is not a matter for me. I read the evidence that way presented and I hope that my hon. Friend understands that. Some time ago we debated a carry-over motion, and it was abundantly clear during that debate that there were four principal objections to the Bill: the conservation case, the argument about water quality, the question of the groundwater level and the water table, and the economic case—which my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) supported in a powerful speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said that the case for the barrage has been strengthened since that debate. However, my understanding is that what has happened in Cardiff since we had that debate does not strengthen the case.

The weekend after we debated the carry-over motion, a river in my constituency was subject to the grossest pollution. Given the geography of the valleys, and the juxtaposition of industry, commerce and the waterways, it is an undisputable fact that there will inevitably be flooding and there will be occasions when pollutants and toxins get into the water.

At present the Rhymney river flows out to the Severn, but if similar pollution occurs in the Taff or the Ely when we have a barrage, what will be the consequences? Instead of the natural system, whereby the toxins are flushed out to sea and can be diluted and broken up by sunlight and seawater, they will be pounded up behind the barrage.

We have been told that the National Rivers Authority will have a mysterious way to ensure the maintenance of water quality. It will have a big oxygenating plant, and it is going to turn the whole of the lagoon—1·8 hectares—into a bubble bath. It will pump oxygen through to burn off all the nutrients.

People who live in the valleys know about the everyday consequences of pollution, and that is one of the reasons that we have fears about the arguments on water quality.

In the summer, the *South Wales Echo* was one of the most fervent allies and advocates of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. It ran a campaign, calling Cardiff the dirtiest city in the United Kingdom. The city council and South Glamorgan county council could not keep the streets clean. Yet now they tell us that they will use new technology and all the marvellous modern methods that have never been tried before, to maintain water quality in 1·8 hectares of man-made lake. That stretches my incredulity, if not that of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

We were told in the previous debate that the experts had been called in. Hydrogeologists and geologists have looked at the groundwater conditions in Cardiff and they say, "Don't worry. There is nothing to worry about. The thousands of homes that are potentially jeopardised will be okay, the groundwater will not rise, it will not cause flooding, and if it does there will be compensation."

On 12 December I came across an article in the *South Wales Echo* referring to the Celtic Bay hotel. It is the hotel to which hon. Members were invited for a free weekend so that they could see the marvels of Cardiff bay. Many of us did not attend. It should be noted that the advisers of the development corporation would have been the experts who advised the hotel. The article reported:

"Cardiff's new Docklands Celtic Bay Hotel was flooded last night for the third time.

An urgent meeting with the architects and builders was called after carpets were ruined in the basement bar and Health Suite. The flooding of the hotel, opened in July, has followed high tides and heavy rain causing the water-table to rise."

If heavy rain and high tides make the water table rise, what will pounding all the rivers and creating an artificial lake do?

The article continued:

"South Glamorgan Fire Service were called to the £3 million hotel today and used suction machines to clear the basement. General Manager Mr. Essex said, 'We are becoming masters at coping with it.'"

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has to explain to thousands of people in Cardiff how they will have the resources of the county council and the South Glamorgan fire service to hand all the time and whether they will become masters at dealing with flooding.

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall not give way.

Mr. Michael: That is irresponsible and misleading.

Mr. Davies: I wish to make another point on which my hon. Friend may like to comment.

The economic argument has been the subject of debate in south Wales. It has been proved that pumping public money into the bay development is a way to put a premium on private investment and that it will be ripped off by the private sector. We know the role being played by the erstwhile Nicholas Edwards, now Lord Crickhowell, as director of Associated British Ports in 160 acres of prime development land. Cardiff city council has played sweetheart with the development corporation and the Secretary of State.

The *South Wales Echo* reported on 16 December:

"City hit by £40 million cut in budget. All council schemes in Cardiff—from house repairs to leisure projects—are threatened by a massive Government spending cut which will almost certainly mean loss of jobs."

It is the end of the capital building programme in Cardiff. If there is a case to be made for the regeneration of Cardiff—and there is—it must be based on decent homes for the people who already live there. It must be based on investment in manufacturing industry, in infrastructure, in hospitals and in leisure centres and recreation facilities. That is the type of investment that is needed. Instead, Cardiff bay gets money and the city council gets a £40 million cut in budget.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth may be tempted to say, as might others who live in Cardiff, that these are internal matters and that hon. Members from outside the area should not involve themselves in it. My response is that the promoters decided to come to the House to ask parliamentary permission.

[Mr. Davies]

They put the Bill in our court. Secondly, I must state in the strongest possible terms that all of us have a right to comment on a projected development which threatens our natural heritage. That natural heritage does not belong to Cardiff city council, or to Glamorgan, or to Cardiff bay or to my hon. Friends from Cardiff. It is part of our national natural heritage, and we all have a responsibility to ensure that it is safeguarded.

The overwhelming objection to the development must be that raised on conservation grounds. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West who I am glad to see has returned to the Chamber, suggested that only people from outside and the RSPB are objecting. The local groups who are objecting on only conservation grounds include the Severn Estuary Conservation Group, the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust, the Cardiff Naturalists' Society and the Cardiff branch of Friends of the Earth.

The national bodies which oppose the plan are the RSPB, which has more than 600,000 members, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and, most critically of all, the Government's own nature conservation advisers, the Nature Conservancy Council. They are the prime objectors to the Bill and have petition No. 1 against it. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth may have dismissed the local bodies, and he may want to dismiss the RSPB, but he should not dismiss the NCC. I do not think that he would want to do that.

I can do no better than quote what the RSPB has written, although I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) will develop this line of argument. I want to stress in the strongest possible terms the importance of the combined estuary of the Rivers Taff and Ely of between 5,000 and 8,000 waders and wildfowl. It is the most important estuary within the greater Severn estuary. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West should remain for a while.

Ian Prestt, the director general, of the RSPB said:

"Cardiff bay is one of Wales' most prestigious natural assets holding 5-8,000 birds each winter including dunlin, redshank, shelduck, teal and knot. Many of these birds travel thousands of miles from as far away as Iceland, Greenland and Siberia to winter on Cardiff's ice-free bay. The birds depend on this bay for their survival. We have an international responsibility to protect it."

When my hon. Friend makes his throwaway remarks about people from outside daring to criticise or people from as far away as Iceland making comments about our responsibility for nature conservation, he should understand that we all have responsibility for migratory birds. We cannot draw artificial natural boundaries around them and say, "Cardiff has this responsibility," or, "Wales has that responsibility," or, "Britain has that responsibility."

We all have a common responsibility because these winter residents are the summer breeding population in the rest of——

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mr. Davies: Let me finish my sentence and then I shall give way.

These birds are our responsibility during the winter when they are our residents and they are the responsibility of the north Atlantic breeding areas during the summer.

I shall give a final quote from the RSPB and then I shall give way to my hon. Friend who, I think, referred to the president of the RSPB, Magnus Magnusson, when he talked about Iceland. Commenting on the "Living Waterfront" scheme, the RSPB's president said:

"Acceptance of the Development Corporation's proposals would be a major tragedy for South Cardiff. The alternative 'Living Waterfront' scheme will enhance the living and working conditions of the local people while maintaining the wildlife interest. Unlike the barrage it will not cause problems such as poor water quality, insect nuisance, flooding and the destruction of a nationally important site for birds."

I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West and if my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is so agitated I shall then give way to him, but after that I want to continue my speech and come to a fairly early conclusion.

Mr. Flynn: I apologise for leaving the Chamber but, as my hon. Friend knows, I have a deep interest in the terrible events in Romania being revealed by the hour. That was why I was absent from the Chamber.

There has been a serious environmental analysis of what is likely to happen when the barrage is built. Is my hon. Friend aware that there are still huge areas of changing mudflats that will remain outside the barrage, on which the birds can grow, multiply and on which they now nest? They will be able to use the vast hundreds of square miles that exist in the estuary. How much land outside the barrage is being used by the dunlins and redshanks?

Mr. Davies: By definition, birds that overwinter in this country do not nest here in the summer. When my hon. Friend considers the nature of his question, he will find its answer in his own remarks.

Mr. Michael: I accept that this is a matter about which my hon. Friend feels passionately, which is why he has such a concentrated approach to it. His passion carries him a little too far. It is a little surprising that the RSPB discovered the tremendous importance of this area of Cardiff bay only when a development was suggested. It did not give it such importance in its previous publications. My hon. Friend undermines his case by overstating it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): My hon. Friend should try a bit of charm.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend suggests that I should try a bit of charm, but given the company that surrounds me, my natural charm is pressed.

The RSPB has not suddenly found Cardiff bay. It was the subject of designation as a site of special scientific interest in 1979. Nobody objected to that then.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Nobody knew.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend sometimes lets his tongue get him into trouble. He said that nobody knew.

In 1979 South Glamorgan included Cardiff bay in its structure plan as a site for nature conservation, so the conservation case is well established. No one argued against development prior to Nick Edwards's brainchild in 1986 because until then he had not had his brainchild. It was not until 1986 that anyone suggested that Cardiff bay should be developed.

My hon. Friend for Newport, West grossly exaggerated his views when he tried to dismiss the idea of designations of sites of special scientific interest. He tried to suggest that because there were 5,000 such sites one did not really matter. He should look carefully at those 5,000 sites, although not individually. Some 1,000 of them are sites of

scientific geological interest. My hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) made a telling point about that and there was a great deal of merit in his case.

The other sites are designated not by whim, not because someone simply says, "This is a nice site, let's designate it." They are based on strict, objective, scientific criteria. Those SSSIs that are estuarine and therefore have particular importance for migrating birds number only 48. My hon. Friend cannot say that there are 5,000 when there are only 48.

I resist the development of SSSIs to the extent that they would be destroyed, for the first time, by Government action. It sets a precedent. My hon. Friend was right to say that we are resisting it because it is the first one. I must ask him—and it is a rhetorical question; I do not want an answer and I will not give way to him—if we do not resist the first one, when do we start to resist? Will it be an arbitrary figure? Will it be the fifth, the 10th or the 48th? Will we destroy them all? If so, what is the point of designating SSSIs?

We have a moral obligation, which I believe to be overriding, although I understand that others may think differently. It is my view that our natural heritage has been handed down from those who went before, and it is our responsibility to conserve for those who come after. I freely admit that that is my own, perhaps idiosyncratic, view. Others may take a different view. However, even if they reject the moral argument, they cannot reject the constitutional argument. They cannot reject our statutory responsibilities to protect our SSSIs.

We have international obligations. The SSSI in Cardiff bay is part of the Severn estuary, which is a candidate for designation under our commitment to Ramsar—the treaty under which we have international obligations. We are internationally obliged under article 3 of the treaty to ensure the wise use of our wetlands. Article 4 states:

"Each contracting party shall promote the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl by establishing nature reserves on wetlands whether they are included in the list or not."

We are free and willing signatories to that treaty. I defy anyone to say how the construction of the barrage across the mouths of the Taff and Ely rivers and the creation of this midge-ridden polluted lake, destroying an SSSI, is a wise use of our wetlands.

The EEC directive on the conservation of wild birds requires the protection of species and especially of migratory birds. It makes it clear that, in the case of irreconcilable conflict, the legal obligation of member states is to give priority to ecological needs. Article 2 of the treaty does not say that there shall be a balance but that priority shall be given to ecological needs. For that reason, if the Bill reaches the statute book, that will not be the end of the matter. We will find ourselves before the European Court of Justice charged with a breach of article 2.

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I sat patiently while my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West made his case and I did not attempt to intervene. He has been absent—for reasons that I appreciate—for a large part of my speech. I trust that he appreciates that I, too, am entitled to make my speech without interruption.

I believe that the Bill flouts our legal obligations to conservation, that it defies logic in the matter of groundwater and the question of water quality and that the promoters of the measure are making a gross error of judgment in believing that the barrage will be a positive factor in the redevelopment of Cardiff docklands. I hope that the Bill will fail tonight and that, if it does not, it will fail during its passage through Parliament.

11.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): I thought it might be helpful, after that extremely deeply felt speech by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) if I gave the House a brief summary of the Government's attitude to the Bill. The Government have a substantial interest in the objectives of the Bill, as the intention is that the cost of building the barrage will be met by the development corporation with the assistance of grant in aid provided by the Welsh Office, which commissioned the initial studies into the proposal.

The Government believe that the key to the redevelopment of the Cardiff bay area is the construction of a barrage across the harbour mouth. The range of quality developments which will arise from this will benefit not just Cardiff and the people who live and work in the bay area, but also the economy of south Wales generally. The image and perception of Wales worldwide will also be transformed.

The Government carefully considered the wide-ranging and detailed studies of the economic, technical and environmental issues involved. We accept that the environmental considerations must be weighed against the great economic, recreational and other benefits expected to arise from a barrage, and concur with the view that the economic case for the barrage is very strong, a view shared by the Committee in the other place.

Indeed, it is the intention, once the barrage is in place, for the development corporation to carry out as part of the development the highest-quality environmental improvements and to create, with conservation groups, a superb freshwater, wildlife and natural habitat within the bay area.

The Government have already made plain their commitment to providing grant in aid to enable the barrage to be built if Parliament agrees the legislation. As a further demonstration of our commitment to this proposal, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales announced on 11 December that he was making £31·5 million available to the Cardiff Bay development corporation next year, and that, over the next three years, Government funding would total £100 million, bringing the total amount given, or announced, to date to some £150 million. Beyond that, we will ensure that sufficient funding will be made available to enable the corporation to carry through its task.

Mr. Rowlands: At last we are receiving an official statement about the public expenditure consequences of the Bill. The Minister spoke of the Government's commitment of £150 million and went on to speak about further amendments. We should not permit this stage of the measure to pass until we have teased out of him his estimate of the total of public and Welsh Office expenditure, and from which vote it will come.

Mr. Grist: I do not think that that is entirely germane to the proposal for a barrage, but capital costs of some £84·78 million are shown in the financial memorandum accompanying the Bill, and those are the costs for which parliamentary approval is being sought. There are, of

[Mr. Grist]

course, additional costs for sewerage diversion, environmental matters and so forth, which bring the amount to £113 million. The total cost to the development corporation is estimated—as the hon. Gentleman said in his last speech—to be some £402 million. He will appreciate that the multiple of private investment expected to follow that makes the operation very feasible.

Mr. Rowlands: We have now agreed that the total cost will be some £402 million. What proportion of that will be paid out of Welsh Office funds, and under which vote?

Mr. Grist: There will be transport grant funding for the Bute link; the rest will come out of the general Welsh Office block Vote, which is in the hands of the Secretary of State. *[Interruption.]* It is Welsh Office money. The hon. Gentleman has read the evidence given to the Committee in the other place.

That is why I believe that the House should agree to refer the Bill to a Standing Committee.

11.6 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I am grateful to the Minister, and apologise for twice interrupting him. At last we have been given some indication of the enormous public expenditure consequences of the Bill. When we last debated it, we tried to tease the information out of the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). I was mildly disappointed that, in opening today's debate, my hon. Friend made no reference to the public expenditure consequences. It took some time for us to extract from the Minister the information that the amount involved will be over £400 million.

Mr. Michael: Perhaps I can help; I was seeking to help the Minister on the same point. I referred to the public expenditure implications, but I must point out tht the £402 million mentioned by the Minister includes some £219 million which would be required without the barrage—the primary distributor road, for instance. We should be specific about which developments are barrage-related, and we would need the PDR irrespective of the barrage.

Mr. Rowlands: I am grateful to my hon. Friend: further teasing is producing more estimates and qualifications. It is about time. My hon. Friend mentioned none of this in his opening speech; he did not come clean with the House or with his colleagues. Even if that £200-odd million is deducted, however, we are still left with a £200 million public-expenditure Welsh Office grant for the scheme. As has already been said, the matter is no longer one of local concern; it has profound public expenditure implications for the Principality as a whole.

Let me prompt my hon. Friend to interrupt my spech again, in the hope of teasing out further information. In our last debate on the Bill, I mentioned operational losses of £652,000. How will that amount be paid?

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for posing his questions. I assure him that it is not a case of "teasing out"; the figures are in the public domain, and I am quoting from documents that my hon. Friend has read and from which he too has quoted.

The operational cost of the barrage and the inland bay are estimated at £1·1 million annually in the November 1988 figures, with expected revenues growing over time to a total of £0·475 million, leaving a deficit of £0·642 million. That is a little over half a million pounds. It is only fair to put it in perspective. The maintenance of Cardiff's parks —an expense that we do not begrudge—costs about £3 million annually. So the cost of the project is not as excessive as my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Rowlands: That is extremely interesting. The scheme is supposed to have enormous benefits and tremendous consequences for the development of the city. All that private money is to pour into it, yet the public —through the Welsh Office and the ratepayers or poll tax payers of South Glamorgan county council—will pick up the losses. That is the only conclusion I can draw.

Mr. Denzil Davies: My hon. Friend makes an extremely cogent point. It seems that losses will be £500,000 in the first year. Does my hon. Friend have any idea where that money will come from? Will it come from the Welsh Office or will it be raised through the poll tax?

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Rowlands: I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, who is seeking to intervene yet again, is about to tell us.

Mr. Michael: I am seeking to help my hon. Friend with answers to these questions. The maintenance of parks in Cardiff—which we properly consider to be an important matter of public expenditure—is of the order of £3 million. We are talking about a little more than £500,000 for the maintenance of the lake and the inland water area. I suggest to my hon. Friend that we use the term "subsidy" when we do not approve of something, but we say "expenditure on maintenance" when we do.

Mr. Rowlands: We are simply trying to discover the facts. Again my hon. Friend has not answered the question. I understand that the barrage will be owned by the Cardiff Bay development corporation. Will the corporation pay the operating cost or will it be paid by the community charge payers of South Glamorgan?

Mr. Michael: Initially, the corporation will fund the running costs. After its dissolution, it is intended to create a fund from assets to enable the successor body to pay for operating costs. Again, I refer only to what is public knowledge and is in the documents to which my hon. Friend has referred. One cannot deal with every detail. These matters have been open and available to my hon. Friend. There is nothing new in what I am saying today.

Mr. Rowlands: It is not a matter of detail, but one of considerable public consequence and concern. We now know that the Welsh Office will underwrite the capital expenditure . We all know about the concept of competing for resources. Ministers constantly tell us that the Welsh Office does not have a bottomless purse. Therefore, that money is coming from the same purse that could be paying the Welsh Development Agency to clear derelict land in Merthyr Tydfil or Rhymney or to finance other developments in other parts of the Principality. Therefore, we are rightly entitled to challenge the use of those public resources, as they come from one central budget that we share and for which we compete with Cardiff and other communities.

Mr Grist: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the development corporation will be raising money through sales of capital assets and land and will be arranging part of the financing.

Mr. Rowlands: That is fascinating. Does it mean that the Cardiff Bay development corporation is likely to pay back any part of the £400 million to come out of Welsh Office funds? I invite the Minister to reply to that perfectly reasonable question.

Let me ask the Minister again. He just got up and said that the Cardiff Bay development corporation will be able to raise money because it will sell houses and assets and develop its land. Does that mean that, if there is a nice large surplus, it will come back to the Welsh Office and pay off the £400 million initial investment? Are we talking about a pump-priming exercise which will be repaid to the Welsh Office, or can it be described as a £400 million grant for what is basically a private development?

Will the Minister answer the question? As he has not risen from his seat, we must make the simple assumption that the £400 million is all grant and that if the CBDC

[Mr. Rowlands]

earns lots of money as a consequence of the scheme, the money will not come back to the Welsh Office. That is the simple lesson to draw from our series of exchanges.

Having indentified an important issue, I must explain that I intend to vote against the Bill, because it is a matter of priorities. I do not share the priorities of some hon. Members, and I believe that other communities have an equal, if not greater, right to challenge the levels of expenditure, which make the valleys initiative of the Secretary of State look like meagre rations.

I want to underline a point that I made last time I spoke on the Bill, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth did not respond tonight. I refer to a previous experience, when I had the privilege to serve Cardiff, North. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), in a forceful speech, underlined the point about consultants. Consultants have a vested interest in grandiose schemes. The nature of their thinking —and sometimes of their fees—is based on the sum total of the scheme that they propose. There is an inherent tendency for consultants to produce grandiose schemes.

Cardiff has several times suffered from such proposals. It suffered when Ravenseft and Land Securities came along to build a huge addition to the centre of Cardiff, combined with the destruction of houses with the building of a hook road. Everybody in the city talked about the jobs that would flow from that and how Cardiff would become a great metropolitan centre if only we built that enormous shopping development and the hook road to feed it. I am grateful that, as a result of a switch in public opinion and the strength of resistance to those proposals——

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rowlands: No, because I have given way fairly to my hon. Friend.

I am grateful that those grandiose schemes were swept away. Cardiff is such a beautiful city now because it has grown organically. It has grown out of the existing centre and by rejecting the grandiose schemes.

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rowlands: No, because I have responded to my hon. Friend in a series of exchanges and I want to make a couple of brief points.

The city grew out of organic development from the existing centre. Much of what is now being proposed has the approach of those grandiose schemes of 20 years ago. To turn our backs on such schemes and to create a sensible, civilised development out of the existing dockland area would be a better choice than the scheme that is proposed in the Bill.

I want to answer the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth made about the "rippling" effect. He does not realise how much the concept that our development is a rippling effect from a marina in Cardiff, spreading to Merthyr Tydfil, to Rhymney and to Tredegar, is now resented in the heads of the valleys communities.

We reject that idea on two grounds. First, we do not believe that it would happen.

Mr. Flynn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rowlands: I want to make my point. I sat and listened patiently and I did not interrupt any hon. Member, so I intend to make my final comments in my own way.

The major rippling effect was a result of the enormous development of coal and iron from the valleys, which built Cardiff and created the great docklands and ports from which coal, iron and timber were exported. That was the original rippling effect, which came from the valleys. We do not believe that the development that my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli so eloquently described will ripple up in the same way to create jobs and investment for the people of Merthyr Tydfil or the heads of the valleys.

We not only do not believe in such a development, but we do not want it. We have spent the past 15 to 20 years fighting for a countervailing economic centre. We do not want a rippling effect from Cardiff up; we want to build an alternative economic development around the heads of the valleys. As my hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli said, we want that to be based on the real contribution that it can make to the industrial regeneration not only of our own communities but of the Principality and of Britain. That will not be achieved by giving enormous sums of public money to build a marina in south Cardiff.

This is not the first occasion on which we have fought against a grandiose scheme such as this. We opposed the whole idea of an equally grandiose scheme at Llantrisant. The whole project was based on the so-called rippling effect. We were told that, if only that new town was built at the bottom of the valleys, our problems would be solved; we should only have to travel as far as Llantrisant. Now we are told that we must travel to south Cardiff for our jobs and investment. We do not want to be told that.

We rejected the principle when we rejected the Llantrisant new town scheme. We should reject the principle when it is advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth in support of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. We do not want a rippling effect from a lagoon or pool in south Cardiff; we want to develop our own alternative economy, and we need a large amount of public expenditure to do that. I believe that we are competing for the same resources as the Bill, so naturally I oppose it.

11.22 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I am completely in favour of the scheme to develop the Cardiff docklands, but, like many of my hon. Friends, I oppose the development of a barrage, because there is only one reason why such a development is required. One tragedy of this debate is that Welsh Members on different sides of the argument are becoming more and more polarised, with the argument getting more bad-tempered as we proceed.

Mr. Rowlands: No.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, we have had some very bad-tempered speeches, and it is no good running away from the fact. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) was not bad-tempered at all, but other speakers have been very bad-tempered. I see no reason for that. I deeply regret the way in which the debate has developed.

Let us consider the history of the project. I see that the Minister is smiling. It is a pity that he could not have

smiled a little more during his speech and given us a few figures instead of trying to defraud the people of Wales of the money by putting it into the new outfit set up by his previous boss, Lord Crickhowell. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said in the letter that he sent out on 7 November:

"At this stage my plea is a simple one: Here we have Labour initiative".

He was eliciting the support of Labour Members, of course. But that was not true.

Mr. Michael: It was.

Mr. Rogers: No. The barrage was the brainchild of Nicholas Edwards, the former Tory Secretary of State.

Mr. Michael: It was not.

Mr. Rogers: It was the Tory Secretary of State who proposed it.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is misrepresenting the position.

Mr. Rogers: I shall certainly not attack my hon. Friend or add to the bad-temperedness of the debate.

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is trying hard.

Mr. Rogers: No. I am more concerned about Conservative Members and what they are about, because they want different things from us. In answer to Paul Foot, Lord Crickhowell, who is now chairman of the National Rivers Authority—[AN HON. MEMBER: "Smiling in the Gallery."] I cannot refer to people in the Gallery.

Lord Crickhowell said:

"There is hardly a conflict of interest. The position is that, on my instruction, anyone at the National Rivers Authority giving advice on Cardiff Bay must not refer to me."

I am sure that the noble Lord would not want to waste his time in the Gallery listening to our speeches. Who would want to waste his time here this evening? We are told that he is not interested in the barrage, that he does not care about it and that he wants to stand away from it because, of course, he must not have an interest. In fact, he has interests, but not as a public guardian of the cleanliness of rivers or of the pollution of the environment. His interest is as a director of Associated British Ports, which owns 160 acres in the Cardiff bay area.

However, he is not the only one who has a financial interest in the development of the scheme——

Mr. Michael *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: I was certainly not referring to my hon. Friend, but I give way to him.

Mr. Michael: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the consideration that guided Labour county councillors and city councillors in favouring the scheme and, in the case of the county councillors, in promoting the Bill was based on long deliberations and their sincere belief that it will benefit the area and the environment and enhance the job opportunities of the children and grandchildren of the area.

Mr. Rogers: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. The motives of most of the Labour county, district and city councillors could not be questioned in any way. But when the scheme was initially put forward, Nicholas Edwards, the then Secretary of State for Wales, now Lord Crickhowell, did not give the city or county councils any options. He said, "Either have the urban development corporation or have nothing." Naturally, having been blackmailed, the county and city councils accepted the situation. They acted, as many of us have as county and district councillors over the years when we participated in decisions, because they genuinely thought that they would bring a benefit. I am sure that the development of Cardiff bay will be of great benefit to the people who live in the area.

But over and above all that, there is something rather smelly about this. There has been a lot of talk about pollution, but there is something rotten about this business. There is something incestuous about it—too many people are involved. Apart from Lord Crickhowell, someone else has been extremely interested in our debate tonight. The chairman of the urban development corporation was the slight unsuccessful Tory candidate for the constituency of Ebbw Vale in 1979. There is a saying in Wales—coined by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)—"Lose a deposit and gain a quango." All that anyone has to do in Wales is to lose a seat and he or she can then become chairman of a quango or some other body. The same principle was exercised by the former Secretary of State for Wales, when the motto was "Leave a seat, gain a quango and several directorships on the way." An enormous number of conflicts of interest are involved.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth will convey to his friends who spoke on the conservation issue, such as the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), who has now left the Chamber, that I am sorry that this debate has been used to attack conservation principles and the principle behind the designation of sites of special scientific interest. At least the Minister said that his Department had balanced the environmental hazards against the economic benefits and had concluded that the economic benefits were more important. That is a good, honest statement and it is a pity that we have not heard more honest statements tonight——

Mr. Michael: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Rogers: Yes, in a minute when I have finished this point about conservation.

Many people outside the Chamber will consider what has been said tonight and will wonder what the Labour party's attitude is towards green issues. The performance on this was scandalous. I have told the hon. Members concerned that I would refer to them. It was scandalous that the principles of SSSIs should be attacked. They were established after a great deal of discussion and investigation, and after a great deal of opposition from many sources. It would be a tragedy if SSSIs were to disappear. We are nibbling at the margins of our special wildlife areas. God knows, south Wales has had enough pollution.

Mr. Michael: I said that it was right that the Select Committee should consider SSSIs in the light of the other factors involved. The natural environment is one of my passionate concerns and I respect the motivation behind the opposition. But the wrong target has been selected. I am not rubbishing the environmental considerations: I am simply saying that their application in this case is wrong.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend must not take this too personally. I was not referring to him. If he mentioned the matter it was not in an objectionable way, attacking the principle of conservation or the establishment of SSSIs, and I do not include him in my comments.

But this is the nub of the problem. Someone came up with the scheme and ever since it was mooted all that we have done is to try to shoehorn all the facts to fit the scheme. What my hon. Friend does not understand is that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said, we are concerned with a point of principle. We would support a scheme for the development of Cardiff bay if there was no barrage. An alternative has been suggested—the one for the living waterfront. The estuaries and the mouths of some of the fastest flowing rivers in the United Kingdom do not need to be dammed up. We have seen from the plans and the maps that very little land accrues from the construction of the barrage compared with constructing a containment around the present dock area and getting rid of the mess, to which my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, West and for Cardiff, South and Penarth referred.

I do not see why we cannot all be on the same side. There is no reason why the barrage has to be built. I am sorry, there is one reason—the profit, greed and selfishness of people who will not live there and who have no real link with the industrial development of south Wales but who are simply interested in making a substantial profit from the people of Cardiff and the other people of south Wales. That is where the real interest lies in this matter.

Even the literature sent to us today by my noble Friend Lord Brooks of Tremorfa says that the scheme will only create a lake. It may be a good lake or a bad lake—I do not want to go into that argument—but it need not be there. Factories will not be built in the middle of the lagoon or the bay. There need be no conflict at all. A simple containment on the east side of the estuary would give all the land that is required for the regeneration of the area. It would not have one of the 16 problems that have been identified by the opponents. Why does the Cardiff Bay development corporation have to be so entrenched in its attitude that it is not prepared to accept that? Even if the scheme is considered by a Select Committee, the removal of the barrage will still not be proposed because its purpose is to provide a place for people to park their boats.

My constituents may criticise me. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a majority of almost 31,000, and at the last election 35,000 people voted for me. I am sorry to say that that majority will probably go rapidly downhill at the next general election, because my constituents will complain, "Look here, Rogers. You stopped me from mooring my boat at Cardiff." They will turn away from me and I shall lose all their support.

Mr. Morgan: Does my hon. Friend realise that it is not part of Government policy to give yachts to the working-class people of the Welsh valleys, knowing that they would only keep coal in them?

Mr. Rogers: That just goes to show that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West is out of touch. We used to keep coal in our yachts, but today there is no coal left to keep.

From the wonderful pictorial representation of the area included in the map circulated today by my noble Friend Lord Brooks of Tremorfa, the deputy chairman of the urban development corporation, it is obvious that the living waterfront proposals would provide sufficient development. There would be no problem constructing a link road across the scheme. The Minister could indulge himself and spend all the money that he never seems to have available for other purposes, by building a link road across the existing swamp or another one.

I shall vote against the scheme because I am not convinced that it is needed. If the urban development corporation is prepared to amend the scheme by removing the barrage, leaving sufficient land and other resources to regenerate the southern part of Cardiff, and to provide even the 30,000 jobs that have been mooted, the proposal would have my complete support, and not one of my right hon. and hon. Friends would vote against it.

I hope that my plea will reach the ears of the urban development corporation and of Associated British Ports, and that they will reconsider the matter and return with an amended scheme. I would not oppose any money being spent in south Wales. God knows, it needs money and jobs to counterbalance the tremendous decline in industry suffered under the present Government. The Government have ravaged south Wales and the mining communities, and there has been no investment. If the Government are prepared to put money into the proposal, I am prepared to support it—but only if they get rid of that damned barrage.

11.33 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Representing Carmarthen, I have none of the first-hand knowledge that has been evident in many of the excellent speeches made this evening. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said, if the proposals mean that public money will come to Wales, I can guarantee that my constituency, and many others in Wales, could do with that money just as much as Cardiff.

As I support the Severn barrage, where does that place me in respect of the Cardiff barrage? I was surprised by many of the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), but my support for the Severn barrage is purely on energy grounds. Although it may create an environmental disaster for bird life, that must be set against the terrific energy that could be produced.

About 7 per cent. of the United Kingdom's energy could be produced by a Severn barrage for 100 years or more. There would be no greenhouse effect, no acid rain, and no nuclear waste. I advocate a barrage for the Severn for energy reasons, and I for one would be prepared to pay the environmental cost. The Cardiff bay barrage is a matter of economic development versus the environment.

I admit that I am not an expert on Cardiff bay, but like the Towy estuary it has mudflats, which are important to migrating birds. I am strongly influenced when the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds takes a line on development. In the summer of 1988, I watched a video on 500,000 dunlin dinners and was impressed by its content. I was not aware that Britain's estaries are home to 40 per cent. of the wading birds that traverse Europe; the estuaries are very important to those birds. They come from Scandinavia, Siberia, Canada and Greenland. When we consider the environmental impact of the barrage, we

must do so not as Cardiffians or Welsh people but as Europeans, and we must be interested in its global implications.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), when I visited Cardiff bay I did not stay at the Celtic Bay hotel for fear of being flooded by the rise of groundwater that he mentioned. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) think that the environment of Cardiff bay is fit for wading birds? The malodour of the Dettol being poured into it to protect wading birds from its filth was such that I wondered whether a major improvement in its environment was necessary, with or without the barrage.

Mr. Williams: Other hon. Members have fully answered that point, and the same occured to me when I was listening fully to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West. There is filth in many of our towns and cities and terrific pollution in many of our rivers. The answer is not to drown the filth and wildlife but to clean our rivers and to treat sewage. Two wrongs will never make a right.

Biologically, the mudflats in Cardiff bay are extremely productive—more productive than the most productive agricultural land. The food that they produce is extremely important to migrating birds.

I am concerned about the possibility of severe pollution if the barrage is built. The sewage that flows down the Taff and the Ely is rich in nitrates and phosphates. That is bound to cause problems, especially in the summer, because the high concentration of nitrates and phosphates in the trapped water in the bay will cause eutrophication. It is then a question of how severe that eutrophication will be. I believe that in the summer, rather than fresh water eutrophicated water will be trapped, it will stink of grey-green algae and its texture will be more like pea soup.

The main environmental concern must be that we are destroying a site of special scientific interest that is important to migrating birds.

Mr. Flynn: I agree strongly with my hon. Friend. Recently I tabled questions about eutrophy. Does he agree that the algae problems and what we are seeing in the North sea are so worrying that we must tackle them, not just in the Taff and the Ely, but in all the rivers that run into the Severn, which has been described accurately as the greatest flush toilet in Europe? If it was not for the scouring action of the second highest tide in the world, it would be a stinking mess now. Is that not a different problem? If the barrage comes to Cardiff, we must tackle the problems of our rivers.

Mr. Williams: That is not a different problem. The barrage would exacerbate the problem rather than contribute in any way to solving it. It would increase the problem and hold it within Cardiff bay.

The only argument in favour of the barrage is the economic development argument that this public money will stimulate private investment and create jobs and high-cost housing. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) completely demolished the economic case. I do not know what the figures are, but if £100 million is to be spent in Wales, I want the whole of Wales to share in the benefits. It is a case of priorities. Two weeks ago we debated tolls for the Severn bridge. Why not use that money to get rid of those tolls rather than spend it on Cardiff? That would benefit the whole of the Welsh economy. Then there is the M4. There are problems in Newport and on the stretch from Baglan to Neath.

My constituency needs a link road from the M4 to Ammanford and the upper Ammanford valley. There are no end of road infrastructure improvements which would help to bring jobs into all our areas.

I am impressed by the arguments of hon. Members representing the Rhondda, Neath and Rhymney valley constituencies. They are poor areas. Earlier this year I was privileged to be involved in the Pontypridd by-election. In those weeks I travelled and got to know Pontypridd, as I did not know any of those valley communities previously. There is terrific impoverishment. Those communities need public investment. Surely the money should go to these other areas of Wales.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli spoke about the neglect and destruction of manufacturing industry during 10 years of Conservative rule. Manufacturing should be our priority, particularly considering our massive balance of payments deficit. We should direct public money into manufacturing. That would attract private investment. The Cardiff bay barrage rates nowhere in the list of priorities for economic development; nor are there environmental arguments in its favour.

11.47 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): At the outset I must say that I find the private Bill procedure objectionable for gigantic projects which would normally be the subject of a detailed legal planning inquiry. That is a reason why the promotion of the barrage scheme is unsatisfactory and unhelpful in conducting the argument about the issues at stake for the citizens of Cardiff and south Wales.

Moreover, by using the private Bill procedure, the barrage scheme does not have to come under the direct legal scrutiny of the European Community's environmental impact assessment directive. Although environmental impact assessment studies have been made, the Commission cannot intervene in any way to assess the value of the barrage to the economy of Cardiff and south Wales, as against the possible environmental damage.

I am opposed to the way in which the scheme has been brought forward, on the ground that one should allow full public participation in the construction and development of the barrage scheme, and on the ground that it does not come under the legally enforceable directives on environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Surely my hon. Friend is not saying that every environmental development or consideration in Britain should always come under the scrutiny of the European Commission. He seems to be making the assumption that the European Commission needs to intervene in all our deliberations. One only has to consider what it has done in the case of two dangerous mutagens and carcinogens—carbadox and olaquindox—to realise that its interventions are often far from helpful to Britain, and that they can be extremely unhelpful.

Mr. Griffiths: I do not dispute that example. However, none of us is perfect all the time. I should have thought

[Mr. Griffiths]

that my hon. Friend would agree that that applies to the present British Government—they are capable of making mistakes.

There is a European Community directive that requires major schemes—not every little factory scheme that is being developed—that are perceived to have a major impact on the environment to be examined specifically to assess that impact and, because of the private Bill procedure, that directive has no force.

Mr. Flynn: My hon. Friend has referred to the document. A report has been made by independent people. He may be excused for not having seen it, because there is no copy in the House of Commons Library, but there is a copy in the House of Lords Library. I commend that report to him because it is a splendid study, and it was not made by anyone with an axe to grind. Few schemes of such a magnitude have been presented with such a thorough independent assessment of their environmental impact.

Mr. Griffiths: I think that my hon. Friend is referring to a study made by the university of Liverpool. I am aware of it and I knew that that environmental impact assessment was going to be made as a result of questions I put to the European Commission about whether it could intervene, and because of letters I wrote to the Secretary of State for Wales a number of years ago.

The directive has no legal force behind it to make an environmental impact assessment, and that is why I am against the use of the private Bill procedure; it does not depend on any legal force, but on whether any attention is paid to the assessment.

There is also the question of the amount of money that will need to be spent simply because the barrage is to be built. Several hon. Members have referred to that. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) referred to the additional costs, over and above the money that will go to develop the Cardiff docklands. He mentioned some £200 million in additional expenditure, and because of the existence of the lagoon, there would also be a need to spend £500,000 a year on its maintenance.

One must ask whether that is financially sustainable in the long term for the city of Cardiff. It is all very well for the Minister to refer to the ability of the corporation to sell land and other assets to help pay for development and the maintenance costs, but there will come a time when assets cannot be sold to pay for running the dockland area.

Mr. Rogers: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend was present when the Minister gave that information. After Associated British Ports has made extensive profits, the running costs of the scheme will be met by the Welsh Office. The Minister said that, after the initial capital grants of about £400 million, there will be sufficient funding for the scheme. The Welsh Office will run the scheme and the profits will be taken by the corporation and Associated British Ports.

Mr. Grist *rose*——

Mr. Griffiths: I am happy to give way to the Minister.

Mr. Grist: I must correct that impression. There is more than £400 million of expenditure, but £150 million of that will come from asset sales. The sum from the Welsh Office is about £250 million, of which £150 million has already been announced.

Mr. Griffiths: The one thing that we know is that, wherever the money comes from—some of it is coming from the Welsh Office—it is a major investment, but is it strictly necessary for the docklands to be developed? Can the docklands be developed without the barrage that is currently proposed? I think that there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the answer is yes. As some of the money does not have to be spent, therefore, could it not be put to much better use cleaning up the Taff and Ely rivers, for example, just to mention the two that are directly affected by the scheme?

Mr. Michael: Without the barrage, we were previously talking about £219 million of expenditure, so the balance of the £402 million is directly barrage-related. Does my hon. Friend agree that the appraisal has to describe the benefits, the jobs that will be brought in and the costs? Such detail is open to scrutiny by the Committee.

Mr. Griffiths: That is true, but we are taking an unnecessary step if we go for the barrage scheme. I believe that we can get virtually the same results and have more balanced development across south Wales if some of the money is used for other projects which could be just as useful for the economy and the environment. We should not spend it all on the barrage, against which there are so many question marks. That is why I shall not support the Bill being sent to a Committee. I would have much preferred the matter to be dealt with by public planning inquiry procedures in Cardiff.

11.57 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I am glad to speak after the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). We have had a well-balanced debate so far. It has even been relatively good-tempered. I calculate that, including interventions, seven hon. Members have spoken in favour of, and seven against, the Bill. I shall add to the majority by speaking in favour of it.

I do not understand or accept the do-nothing approach of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who talked about resenting and rejecting a ripple effect out of Cardiff. I far prefer the tone of a letter from Councillor Bill Herbert, of which I think all Welsh Members have a copy. He was last year's Labour Lord Mayor of Cardiff. He comes from the valleys and, like many of us in Cardiff, has a considerable affinity for them. He anticipated the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. He rejected the idea of a ripple and talked of a river of development and opportunities flowing from the south Cardiff redevelopment.

I far prefer the real enthusiasm displayed by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). It was a contagious enthusiasm as he described his experiences of living in Cardiff and his view of the south Cardiff redevelopment. I know that the hon. Gentleman has strong connections with Cardiff. His brother, Michael Flynn, is a Labour councillor in my constituency, and I am glad to have him there. He is certainly as hard-working and diligent a member and servant of the Labour party as the hon. Member for Newport, West. I appreciated the enthusiasm of the hon. Gentleman.

I share that enthusiasm for the regeneration of south Cardiff. It is necessary. Cardiff is an attractive city with many fine features—old ones such as the castle and civic centre and newer ones such as St. David's centre which, despite what the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney said, did not come about by organic development, but through the planning process. It moved on from the Ravenseft development to which he referred.

The regeneration of south Cardiff will create 6,000 new homes, 25 per cent. of which will be important low-cost housing. It will create 5,000 to 6,000 sq ft of industrial business units and 3,000 to 4,000 sq ft of office space. Estimates have ranged as high as 30,000 jobs from the redevelopment of south Cardiff. Those jobs will not be confined merely to Cardiff or south Cardiff, but will be taken up widely through south Wales.

In my constituency on the northern edge of Cardiff I have the obvious example of Amersham International and A.B. Electronics. Between them, since 1983, those two firms have created more jobs than the total unemployment in my constituency. According to that narrow theory, a naive person might imagine that unemployment in my constituency has been eliminated. That has not happened; many people travel to work in Cardiff—to those two firms in my constituency—and will certainly travel to the new jobs created in south Cardiff.

The regeneration will provide a dramatic expansion to the economy of south Wales. It will increase the region's importance. As a capital city of Wales—

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Jones: The evening is late, I must not hold up the debate too much and so should not give way.

I often see Cardiff as rivalling the city of Bristol across the Severn. I see us rapidly overtaking Bristol in importance. We will soon outstrip that provincial town in England, and Cardiff and south Wales generally will, properly, rank alongside Birmingham.

This necessary regeneration of south Cardiff will improve our environment. It will change the present rundown docks, which are only a shade of the past. It will rejuvenate the variety of assorted and not too attractive buildings, and the other traces of industrial dereliction—which all too often include waste, litter and debris being dumped on the waterside.

Mr. Rogers: I support all that the hon. Gentleman asks for—I do not want to make his speech for him. Will he comment on my proposition about achieving the same purposes without the barrage—just a consolidation of the area which, I accept, is desperately run down?

Mr. Jones: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I intend to come to that point in a minute or two.

The regeneration of south Cardiff will eliminate those mudflats which are best seen at low tide. I defy anyone to describe those mudflats as attractive or beautiful. At low tide we see, essentially, the results of industralisation and digging out Cardiff docks. That involved the extensive reclamation of our coastline, which has totally changed since the docks were dug out.

The present mudflats are the result of accretion since the digging out of Cardiff docks. I understand from experts that this is demonstrated by the presence of spartina grass, which is found growing only on high level, stable mud. Cardiff bay is natural, but the present mud is not. It is ugly and its appearance can be improved upon. The environment of not just Cardiff but the valleys could be improved.

The economic benefits will not be confined to Cardiff. The barrage will be a catalyst for improving the Taff and the Ely rivers that flow through the valleys. One advantage of water privatisation was the splitting of the functions of poacher and gamekeeper. There is now a proper gamekeeper in the form of the National Rivers Authority.

What will happen with the barrage and the south Cardiff development will be a great challenge for the NRA—probably its biggest challenge for the foreseeable future. Can it rise to the occasion? I am confident that it can. The barrage and the south Cardiff development will be the catalyst for an improvement that will flow up the rivers through the valleys. The people will demand for their valleys what they see happening in south Cardiff.

I am in considerable sympathy with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. I remember being almost a lone voice calling out that the case for the birds and the environment was too important to go unheard. My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) was the only other Member who, in the 1985-86 Session, shouted "Object" when the County of South Glamorgan (Taff Crossing) Bill came before the House.

Mr. Ron Davies: I am reluctant to intervene, as I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman wants to make his speech. However, for the sake of accuracy it should be put on the record that I objected to the County of South Glamorgan (Taff Crossing) Bill. It was only when the hon. Gentleman said that he was prepared to continue to block the Bill that I withdrew to allow him, as a local Member, to voice his objections.

Mr. Jones: I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman's remarks, which certainly do not fit in with my recollection. However, I do not want to quarrel with him, because I know that he has strong sympathy with my point.

I welcome the RSPB's constructive contribution. I was grateful to receive a letter from its parliamentary officer this week which provided most useful information. Early in the letter, he said that the RSPB is not against the redevelopment of the city. The word "not" was underlined. Instead, the RSPB is proposing a living waterfront scheme. The proposal is well-intentioned, but I am not sure that it is as well worked out as the scheme before us. I understand that its proposal would involve the loss of slightly more than 15 per cent. of the SSSI and would increase accretion in the remainder of the bay, which would in turn enlarge the amount of salt marsh, which would have the effect of reducing the feeding grounds. I also understand that there is a problem with the water supply, which might be much more expensive for the living waterfront scheme than has been imagined. That would lead to further problems with water quality for the scheme.

A survey, not of the living waterfront scheme, but which might be close enough for our purposes at this stage, was carried out by Peat Marwick McLintock. It tried to estimate the most likely effects on Cardiff of a barrage, of a mini-barrage, or of not having a barrage at all. The mini-barrage is not dissimilar to what is now proposed as a living waterfront. Peat Marwick McLintock estimated that the mini-barrage would create just under 15,000 jobs, but that the full barrage would create more than 22,000 jobs. Private investment for the mini-barrage would

[Mr. Jones]

generate only £607 million, while £1,051 million of private investment would come from the full barrage. Most importantly, the mini-barrage would require a leverage of private to public investment of only 4·8:1 and the full barrage would require 8·9:1. The net worth of the development would be more than £77 million from the full barrage, but there would be a loss of £61 million from the mini-barrage. That substantially makes the case for the barrage. It makes it superior to the mini-barrage and probably also to the living waterfront scheme proposed by the RSPB.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that studies throughout the world show that such large-scale investment in a capital city gives rise to the danger that the periphery becomes relatively poorer because of the rapid expansion that follows elsewhere? What does he think the Government would do to invest money in the valley communities—over and above what is in the valleys initiative—to ensure that they develop and there is no huge gap between the standard of living in Cardiff and that in the valley communities?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman asks a pertinent question in arguing what appears to be a highly academic case. I suggest that the peripheral areas would be relatively better off.

I am more than willing, in my regard for the RSPB, to countenance the society fully arguing its case before the Committee that will examine the Bill. Indeed, I regard that as another important reason why the measure should receive its Second Reading tonight. The RSPB is right to point out that the suggested artificial feeding area is only theoretical. There is a real risk to the bird population. There are uncertainties about the artificial feeding alternative and about the birds relocating in other estuaries.

We welcome the commitment of the promoters to develop alternatives, but I still call for all efforts to be made to achieve the greatest success of the alternatives. In turn, I want the RSPB's fullest involvement. The artifcial feeding ground is an innovation and an opportunity, and the RSPB should be involved in managing it. It would have the greatest chance of getting it right and of developing the potential use of the concept elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney made a wide assumption about the cost and funding of the south Cardiff redevelopment. I expect that the total cost of £402 million will, in large part, be met by land sales and other receipts, and certainly not solely from grant aid. In addition, we shall have the leverage of much larger commercial investments. It may not mean a return to the Welsh Office of money expended, but it will mean much less than £402 million having to leave the Welsh Office.

I note that the best argument against the Bill came from a supporter, "The Insider" columnist in *The Cardiff Independent*, who wrote:

> "If CBDC really believe there will be so little damage within their arbitrary lines and none outside, they have nothing to lose by offering full compensation for all damage, wherever it occurs, because if they are right—and there is no excuse if they are not—there will be little or no damage, and so they will have to pay little or no compensation. It is simple—but unanswerable."

But it is answered. Clause 12 of the Bill provides full protection. There is a protected property area based on a six-metre ground water contour. That should be well beyond the furthest extent of any affected property. But that does not limit it. Anywhere outside the protected property area is covered. In other words, anywhere in the United Kingdom is covered. A claim anywhere can be made against the CBDC and if, by independent survey, loss can be shown, there will be full reimbursement. We have the fullest protection and the fullest potential. I am more than happy to give the Bill a Second Reading.

Mr. Flynn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the House aware that there is terrible news tonight? The massacre in Romania is continuing, with at least 2,000 men, women and children having been cut down by the secret service police. Can you use your good offices, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that by tomorrow, the House will have an opportunity to express its outrage at, and to use our great influence on, President Ceausescu, who has driven his country to a state where it can no longer be regarded as a civilised country?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is a serious matter, but it is not a point of order for the Chair. Doubtless what has been said will have been heard by the occupants of the Government Front Bench.

12.14 am

Mr. Elliot Morely (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I recognise that I am an outsider, but for that very reason I want to talk about the national significance of the scheme, and its national impact.

I appreciate very much the role played by local Members of Parliament, and feel that the people of Cardiff are very fortunate in being represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). Those two excellent and hard-working Members have put the cases for and against the barrage with sincerity and diligence, and they deserve every credit for so doing.

I have my views on architecture, design and even popular planning, but I do not wish to speak about them: those are issues properly to be decided by local people, who will have to live with the designs. I want to discuss the way in which the importance of Cardiff bay fits into the national scale of things, and also to answer some specific points—particularly those raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) about the effect of the barrage on the bird population.

Cardiff bay is important in its own right. It is a site of special scientific interest, and its destruction will create a precedent. I would not claim that that is why it has attracted attention, but that is not to say that the area is not valuable in itself. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has defined it as the most important small estuary around the shores of the greater Severn estuary, and there is no doubt that the Severn estuary is a site of international ecological importance.

The Severn, including the Taff area, has been identified as a wetland of international importance, and is a candidate for listing under the Ramsar convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance. It also qualifies as a special protection area under article 4 of EC directive 79/409, on the conservation of wild birds.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Most of us have been here for well over three hours. Now other hon. Members have come into the Chamber, and are

standing at the Bar of the House making a ridiculous noise. Can you bring them to order, or else throw them out?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Members who have just come into the Chamber will be prepard to allow the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) to make his speech in the same manner as earlier speakers.

Mr. Morley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It could be argued that the RSPB has a vested interest, and is therefore keen to stress the area's importance. Let me refer hon. Members to a report given to the Committee in the other place by the Nature Conservancy Council, the Government's own body, which is given the duty of presenting impartial scientific advice on which the Government may make their decisions. In the council's view,

"it has become very clear before this Committee that its importance"—

the importance of Cardiff bay, that is—

"bears no relation . . . to the size ratio between it and the estuary."

The point was put to Dr. Parker on day four:

"'So though we were told in opening, I think, that the whole of the Severn Estuary site is some 37,000 acres and Cardiff Bay itself is only 400 acres, the importance of Cardiff Bay, the Taff-Ely estuary, is far greater than those proportionate figures would perhaps suggest?'

'Yes', he said, 'there cannot be any argument on that point'".

It has been mentioned that the estuary was artificially created. In the 18th century it was far larger, and would have supported a greater diversity of species than it does today, owing to the artificial changes in the construction of the docks. Nor is it true that its importance is due to the enrichment of the mud from nutrients flowing through sewage in the rivers. According to the NCC, that enrichment

"is not a matter which is dependent totally on the sewage coming down the rivers, it is matters mixed in from the sea including sewage and other nutrient algae and matters found in the natural marine waters."

The bay is therefore not dependent on pollution.

The crux of the issue is that the development of Cardiff bay should concentrate on clearing up the waterside and getting rid of pollution and dereliction, rather than spending money on the barrage scheme.

There is no evidence that the barrage scheme will necessarily attract inward investment. There is a great deal of evidence that if the area is covered by water, because it is a sheltered feeding area and the mudbanks are higher than the Severn estuary, it would remove an important feeding area for the species on the Severn estuary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West referred to increased density. Scientific research has shown that if Cardiff bay is closed off, the density of birds on the Severn estuary will be increased by 70 per cent. in the case of dunlin, the main species that would be affected——

Mr. Michael *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 112, Noes 15.

Division No. 28] **[12.20 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coleman, Donald
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Mans, Keith
Mates, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gwilym Jones and
Mr. John McFall.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan W. Williams and
Mr. Win Griffiths.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 105, Noes 16.

Division No. 29] **[at 12.31 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony

Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Boyes, Roland
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coleman, Donald
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
McWilliam, John
Mates, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McFall and
Mr. Gwilym Jones.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Win Griffiths and
Mr. Alan W. Williams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed.

AGRICULTURE

Ordered,

That Mr. Elliot Morley be discharged from the Agriculture Committee, and Mr. Keith Bradley be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

ENERGY

Ordered,

That Mr. Michael Brown be discharged from the Energy Committee, and Mr. Michael Stern be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

ENVIRONMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Paul Boateng be discharged from the Environment Committee, and Mr. George Howarth be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

HOME AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Tony Worthington be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee, and Mr. Alan Meale be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

Ordered,

That Dr. Lewis Moonie be discharged from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee, and Mr. John Garrett be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITION

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

12.41 am

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): It is a pleasure and a privilege to present a petition to the House signed by 2,047 persons in respect of the deficiency of the television service provided for the deaf.

This is part of a national appeal on behalf of deaf people who number about 4 million in the United Kingdom and who believe that they are deprived of full and equal access to television because there is not adequate subtitling and sign language.

The petition prays that television channel operators should have a duty to make their programmes more accessible to the deaf by a fixed date. I wholeheartedly agree with that petition and with that plea.

To lie upon the Table.

Homelessness (Strathclyde)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

12.43 am

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): It is my pleasure to have an Adjournment debate on homelessness in the Strathclyde region and it is ironic that, as we approach the end of the final decade of the 20th century, the problem of homelessness in many of our towns and cities is reaching Dickensian proportions. The Government's onslaught on public housing over the past 10 years has resulted in a staggering 41 per cent. increase in homelessness in Scotland, and the pace is accelerating.

Homelessness has increased by 76 per cent. over the past six years. Bald statistics alone cannot convey the despair and anguish caused to many thousands of people through the lack of one of life's basic necessities—a home. Today, 192,000 people in Scotland do not have a home, and the policies being pursued by the Government show no prospect of improvement. Indeed, it is hard to detect any real concern by the Government for the plight of the homeless.

The statistics reveal only the extent of official homelessness as documented by those who apply to local authorities for help. The voluntary housing and caring agencies emphasise time and again that the true level of homelessness in Scotland is much higher when the "hidden homeless" are taken into account.

As a consequence of the Government's deliberate policy of under-investment in public sector housing, there has been a steady reduction in the number of decent homes available for rent from local authorities. An analysis of Government expenditure over the past 10 years clearly shows that housing has been wilfully neglected, while expenditure on law and order and on protective services increased during the same period by 59 per cent. Spending on industry, energy, trade and employment rose by 51 per cent., but that on housing decreased by 41 per cent.

If public authorities had been able to invest through the 1980s at the same levels evident in 1978, district councils would have spent an additional £821 million. The Scottish Special Housing Association—now Scottish Homes—would have an extra £289 million, and the new towns £384 million. A total of £1,494 million could have been spent on modernising and rebuilding Scottish housing.

One could easily gain an impression from an analysis of Government policies that, far from working to eradicate homelessness, they are conspiring to increase it. Fewer public sector houses are being built now than in any peacetime year since the 1920s.

It cannot be argued that the private sector has stepped in and soaked up the demand for housing. In 1976, a total of 16,304 private house starts were made in Scotland, but by 1985 that figure had fallen to 14,500. If the Government's present policies are maintained, that situation is unlikely to improve in the 1990s.

Only this month, the Under-Secretary announced a £90 million reduction in Scottish local authorities' capital housing allocation for the coming year. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities anticipated council housing investment increasing from £474 million to at least £512 million, to allow for the present high rate of inflation. In COSLA's words,

"the Minister has set an allocation of £421 million and attempts to defend such a reduction, which is £90 million in real terms, as a good deal for local government . . . the announcement is a terrible blow to housing authorities and their tenants."

COSLA is surely correct in its analysis.

The Government's high interest rates have put house purchase beyond the means of many thousands of our fellow citizens, and repossessions in Scotland rose by 1,000 per cent. over the past 10 years, placing ever-increasing pressure on dwindling resources of local authorities' dwindling resources.

What is there in the Government's housing policy that will provide a solution to the distressing and ever-growing problem of homelessness? Certainly that cannot be done by Scottish Homes. It was not established to deal with waiting lists and homelessness. The housing associations that Scottish Homes services can at best hope to add another 4,000 units per year to their housing stock, although current funding allows for considerably less. Even if we take an optimistic view, by the end of the century housing associations will still control only 4 per cent. of Scotland's housing, and they will make only a marginal impact on homelessness. No doubt the aggressive sales policy of the SSHA will be continued by Scottish Homes, which will further aggravate the position.

The Government's encouragement of the private rented sector is largely a matter of tenure changes, and the simple fact is that changing landlords does not increase the supply of houses. Homelessness is accelerating at a frightening rate, and on its own the cost of temporary accommodation has increased by 500 per cent. in the past four years. Nothing that the Government are doing or intend to do is likely to reverse that process.

A number of statistics show the negative impact that the Government's housing policies have had in Strathclyde region and Scotland. Between 1982 and 1986, the number of people on local authority waiting lists increased by 34 per cent., and each year 30,000 people become homeless. In my constituency, homelessness has increased by 279 per cent. in the past six years. One of the saddest aspects is that that has meant increased competition for housing between unfortunate groups of people. Local authority officers have been faced with Solomon-like judgments, and it is clear that in Strathclyde, as elsewhere in Scotland, the single homeless have lost out. In my constituency, the number of single homeless has increased over the past 10 years by 900 per cent. Within that group, the percentage of young single homeless has grown even more rapidly—by 1,000 per cent. in Dumbarton district in the past 10 years.

The Government have tried to evade their responsibility for the young single homeless by pretending that there is no problem and that leaving home is a matter of young people exercising choice. That is a flawed analysis. A national survey by the centre for educational sociology in Edinburgh showed that it is fallacious to regard youth as a universal category of people who have identical needs, who undergo similar experiences and who all have families who are willing and able to support them. It is a highly differentiated group, and it is people from higher social classes, with good qualifications, who are most likely to leave home at an early age. For them, it is usually a straightforward transition to adult life. But for others it will not be a matter of choice. They may have been thrown out or asked to leave following a breakdown in their

[Mr. John McFall]

relationship with their parents, or they may be victims of physical or sexual abuse and have no alternative but to leave.

Research has shown that one third of the single homeless come from a care background and do not have stable family relationships to fall back on. The situation for many of those young people is perilous. If they cannot find the security in their own community which a home would provide, they will be forced to drift through society seeking shelter and comfort where they can and will be prey to every kind of exploitation.

The Government have recognised the special dangers facing young people and have built the concept of vulnerability into the codes of guidance accompanying the homelessness legislation. Although vulnerability is not defined in the legislation, there is recognition that the category should include the physical and mentally handicapped and young people who are exposed to sexual or financial exploitation. Any civilised society should provide that safety net for its vulnerable young people. I must tell the Minister that it has been rent asunder by the pressures put on local authority housing over the past 10 years. The need to update and make suitable positive changes to the code of practice is urgent.

A few months ago, the National Children's Home published the results of a major survey of housing authorities throughout Britain and 85 per cent. of local authorities in the United Kingdom participated in it. Its results make depressing reading indeed. Although the attention of housing authorities is drawn to young people in danger of sexual and financial exploitation, only two fifths of the responding housing authorities said that they would recognise a girl under 18 who comes into this category as vulnerable. Only one fifth of respondents said that they would regard a young homeless care leaver as qualifying under the conditions set out in the codes of guidance. Although it is hard to imagine, only one in eight authorities said that they would deem as vulnerable a young homeless person with no parents and no support. A similar percentage said that they would regard as vulnerable a young homeless person under a probation or after-care order and only one fifth would regard as vulnerable a young person with serious family or relationship problems. If young people in such appalling circumstances cannot qualify for housing under the vulnerability provisions, in what circumstances can they apply?

Does the Minister recognise that specific requirements to extend the code of conduct so that all young people recognised as being in priority need due to vulnerability when homeless should be considered? It is essential that any extension of the powers of codes of guidance is matched by an increased financial commitment to Scottish local authorities.

It is not the vulnerability of these young people that is in question. It is simply the fact that there are no longer resources available to meet this manifest need. Housing officers are being forced to act pragmatically, even if it means disregarding the law. After all, the law cannot provide the houses. That is the Government's job. Housing officers have been asked to make impossible decisions between competing claims from equally desperate groups, and the young single homeless are the ones to lose out most heavily.

There are also clear differences in policy between authorities operating in various parts of the country. A young care leaver's chances of being accorded priority need status on the basis of vulnerability in Scotland is comparatively favourable, with an applicant having a one in three chance. In some parts of the United Kingdom the chance of such applicants is one in eight. The variation in what should be a national consensus should worry the Government, and it calls for action by them. The determining factors seem likely to include the relative size of the authority's housing stock, but are also likely to reflect political and social attitudes of members.

Ten years ago most young single people with housing needs had a reasonable range of accommodation options. Today the picture is very different and the need for a dependable safety net for the most vulnerable of our young people has never been greater. The present legislation simply does not work and the Government must tighten the relevant provisions to ensure that vulnerable young single homeless people who apply to the local housing authority under the homelessness legislation receive an objective assessment of their needs rather than a pragmatic assessment based on an analysis of competing pressures for housing, which is what is happening at present.

The present effective discretion of housing authorities must be translated into a legal duty to assess young single homeless people's cases objectively. In addition, it must be recognised that the only effective way to deal with the social scourge that homelessness represents is to invest more money in public housing. In the short term, the acute nature of the problem of homelessness in Strathclyde and, indeed, in Scotland demands that extra funds be made available.

The Government have already conceded that point in relation to homelessness in London, the south-east and Wales. Scotland needs a parallel financial package of at least £30 million to deal with homelessness before it is further exported. It is already estimated by the caring agencies that 15 to 18 per cent. of the homeless in London and other major English cities are young Scots. Why have the Government been so complacent in failing to respond to this demand from local authorities and voluntary agencies, which are so well placed to assess housing needs? It is incomprehensible that no such decision has yet been made in respect of Scotland and I urge the Minister to make an announcement that additional funds will be made available forthwith.

12.53 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on securing this Adjournment debate and on setting out his position lucidly and expressing genuine concerns. In the time available, I shall respond to all the points which he raised.

Several exaggerated claims have been made about the level of homelessness in Scotland. First, on statistics, a number of exaggerated claims have been made. The facts of the matter are that the number of households that have applied to local authorities in Scotland, under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act

1987, have, for the past three years, remained relatively stable at about 25,000 per year. Of that total, the local authorities have assessed about 9,500 as homeless and about 7,500 as potentially homeless. Again, the figures have shown little variation in recent years.

In Strathclyde, the number of applications over the past three years has remained at 13,000, of which the number assessed as homeless is about 4,500 and as potentially homeless, 2,500. In Dunbarton, the numbers of applications have risen from 927 in 1986-87 to 1,383 in 1988-89, but in 1988-89 some 461 were assessed as homeless and 244 as potentially homeless. In both cases, the figures are lower than in 1987-88, when 483 were assessed as homeless and 334 as potentially homeless, on the combined basis. That represents a 12·5 per cent. reduction in the numbers assessed as homeless, or potentially homeless.

I am aware that Shelter claims that the level of homelessness in Scotland is higher than that shown by the Scottish Office figures. Shelter has failed to make clear the basis on which its estimates are made. The Scottish Office figures are not based on a survey; they are compiled from returns made by local authorities I am satisfied that they are an accurate reflection of the position notified by authorities. I recognise, of course, that the statistics should be treated with caution, as they measure local authority activity in relation to homelessness, rather than homelessness itself. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the available figures do not indicate that homelessness is increasing.

I do not wish to dwell on the statistics, however. As the hon. Member will appreciate, we cannot consider the problem of homelessness solely in terms of numbers. To be without a home is a personal tragedy and at this time of year it is a tragedy thrown into sharp focus.

The Government are committed to maintaining an effective legislative framework for dealing with the homeless, and the hon. Member is right to concentrate on the code of guidance. As I made clear in my earlier remarks, it falls to local authorities to carry out the tasks of providing advice and assistance to the homeless and, in certain circumstances, of securing accommodation. Authorities are required to exercise these functions in accordance with the code of guidance which was issued in 1980 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) when he was Secretary of State.

The code of guidance sets out the way in which local authorities should exercise the homelessness functions placed upon them by statute. Among other things, the code explains the action which a local authority should take when a household applies to be considered as homeless. The code discusses the circumstances in which the local authority should secure accommodation for homeless persons. In addition, the code provides advice about how local authorities can prevent homelessness arising in the first place, and about co-operation between authorities and other agencies. The code of guidance, as the hon. Member said, requires updating to take account of new legislation since 1980, such as the matrimonial homes legislation, to reflect changes in such areas as social security and, most importantly, to respond to the greater concern which society now has for protection of children in danger and to the greater awareness of certain other social problems.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for replying constructively. Will he consider the possibility of the code of practice being made statutory? I know that that is under consideration at the moment. I told the survey of the National Children's Home that local authorities are not obeying or being guided by the code of practice. Therefore, I think that a statutory element is important.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall obviously consider what the hon. Gentleman has said, but we do not have a housing Bill before the House this year.

With regard to the revision of the code of guidance, the Scottish Development Department has been consulting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, as well as interested bodies in the voluntary sector, including Shelter, the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless and Scottish Women's Aid, with a view to the preparation of a revised code of guidance. A draft of the new code will be issued shortly. The revised code will not only take account of the consultations which have been held, it will also reflect the results of the research which the Department has been carrying out into local authority procedures in dealing with homelessness. One of the main aims of the revised code will be to ensure that local authorities operate more consistently and fairly when dealing with homelessness applications. When the code is revised, one area that will require attention is that concerning how young people are dealt with. The present code makes it clear that homeless young people who are at risk of sexual or financial exploitation should be treated as having a priority need for accommodation. The revised code should consider the possibility of strengthening and expanding our advice on that.

Research is also being carried out into local authority waiting lists, which the hon. Member will appreciate are an important indicator of housing needs. A more accurate assessment of housing need should benefit the homeless by ensuring that authorities' housing provision more closely meets housing need.

With regard to resources, I should mention that, from 1974-75 to 1979-80, there was a reduction in real terms of 8 per cent. in housing capital investment, whereas from 1979 to 1989-90, there has been an average real increase of 2 per cent. a year in capital investment. The hon. Member referred to the additional resources that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced for homelessness in England, and complained about the apparent absence of a similar package for Scotland.

The English proposals are mainly directed towards bringing empty houses into use, particularly in London and the south-east. There are proportionally fewer empty public sector houses in Scotland. In Scottish circumstances, rather than earmark a specific allocation for homelessness, it makes more sense for the problems of homelessness to be considered in the context of housing needs generally.

I can assure the hon. Member that we have been no less generous in terms of the provision of resources than was my right hon. Friend south of the border. On the first of this month, I announced that there would be a substantial increase of £64 million over last year in the 1990-91 provisional net allocations for housing revenue account capital expenditure. This is to help local authorities to meet housing needs in their areas, including those of the homeless. It is for local authorities to take account of homelessness and other problems when drawing up their capital programmes. When making the provisional capital

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

allocations to individual authorities, which I expect to announce shortly, I will of course take account of capital programmes and the needs, including homelessness, which they are designed to meet.

The hon. Gentleman asked about new houses. Some 195,203 homes have been built in Scotland since 1979. Of those, 138,894 were built by the private sector, 27,616 by local authorities, 13,638 by housing associations, 7,048 by new towns, 7,503 by the Scottish Special Housing Association or Scottish Homes and 504 by Government Departments. That is approaching 200,000 new homes, which should assist considerably to meet housing need.

The answer to homelessness, however, is not simply the provision of more houses. We must also make better use of the houses we already have. It has been estimated that there are about 130,000 empty houses in Scotland, many of which are in the private sector. I believe that the reform of the private rented sector brought about by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988 will increase landlords' willingness to make more property available for rent. The resulting increase in the supply of accommodation will help to alleviate homelessness, particularly for those sections of the population, such as single people, who have traditionally relied on the private rented sector.

I recognise, of course, that not all Scotland's empty houses are in good condition, but the availability of improvement grants will help to ensure that investment in the private rented sector will remain viable. Some £119 million is being made available for local authority assistance to the private sector in 1990-91.

On a small scale, the recent Shelter initiative on rural housing, to which the Government contributed £30,000 over three years, shows what can be done. With the help of housing improvement grants, the initiative brought into use some 150 private sector houses in rural areas for families on council waiting lists.

Nor should we neglect the contribution which can be made by the public sector. There are about 25,000 vacant council houses. This represents only about 3 per cent. of the total council house stock, and I accept that many of them are empty because they are awaiting repair or are being held to decant households during modernisation and improvement programmes, but at least 4,000 have been vacant for more than three months. In my meetings with local authorities—I have been to 33—I have taken every opportunity to encourage them to reduce levels of vacant stock. Bringing such houses back into use could directly assist the homeless. I urge local authorities to keep that in mind.

Empty houses in both the private and public sectors represent an unused resource. For various good reasons, it will never be possible for there to be no empty houses, but the Government have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that this resource is brought back into use wherever possible.

However, the distribution of empty houses does not necessarily correspond to the distribution of homelessness. It was for this reason that a more imaginative approach to dealing with homelessness was signposted in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988. Under that Act, local authorities are enabled, with the Secretary of State's consent, to adopt schemes whereby cash incentives may be paid to council tenants to persuade them to move into the private sector, thus releasing housing for homeless families or others on council waiting lists. Experience elsewhere in Britain has shown that this can make a worthwhile and cost-effective contribution to dealing with homelessness.

It is important to remember that, for the cost of building one new house, such schemes will release four or five existing houses for the homeless; and, what is more, will do it more quickly. In recent months, I have taken every opportunity to encourage local authorities to adopt such schemes. I know that Scottish Homes is considering introducing a similar scheme soon for housing association tenants; I welcome such a positive development and I hope that local authorities will follow suit.

I have already mentioned our financial commitment to local authorities next year. I should also point out that we have increased the resources available to Scottish Homes. Discounting loan repayments, Scottish Homes will be able to plan for expenditure of £348 million in 1990-91, £36 million above the comparable figure for the current year. That will enable Scottish Homes to make real progress in expanding the housing association movement and investing in its own stock, both of which will be of particular benefit to the homeless.

I should perhaps remind the House that the housing association movement has been one of the greatest housing success stories of the 1980s. The Government have spent nearly £930 million in encouraging the housing associations, and this has resulted in 32,000 new or rehabilitated houses. I am particularly pleased that many of these houses are designed to meet the needs of the elderly or of the disabled; while these may not have been of direct benefit to the homeless, they have eased pressures in the housing market and have released other accommodation which can be used for the homeless. In response to the hon. Gentleman's point about the single homeless, I should say that more than 3,000 of these houses have been specifically designed for single people and have been instrumental in relieving homelessness in this sector of the population.

We must remember that homelessness is not merely a result of the lack of houses. As I have already made clear, Scotland has a surplus of houses. We now understand that homelessness is caused by a mix of social, economic and demographic factors. The Scottish Development Department's statistics reveal that 66 per cent. of homelessness cases last year arose either because of marital breakdown or because relatives or friends were no longer willing or able to accommodate those involved. Less than 10 per cent. of homeless cases arose from court orders, evictions or other actions by landlords.

Finally, I reiterate my assurance to the hon. Gentleman that the Government not only care about homelessness, but are taking active steps to deal with it. This is not a task which we can accomplish alone. All the housing agencies in Scotland have a part to play. I hope that I have explained tonight how the Government—working in partnership with local authorities, Scottish Homes, housing associations and the voluntary sector—approach the problem of homelessness.

The motion having been made after half-past Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fourteen minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 December 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL

Orders read for consideration of Lords amendments.
To be considered on Thursday 11 January 1990.

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL

Orders read for consideration.
To be considered on Thursday 11 January 1990.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That Standing Order 205 (Notice of Third reading) be suspended and that the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Bill read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Environmental Studies

1. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to locate a centre for climatic and other environmental studies in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently announced the Government's intention to set up a United Kingdom centre for the prediction of climatic change.

Mr. Maclennan: The north of Scotland has outstanding centres of scientific excellence. Do Scottish Ministers back the proposal that the EC Environmental Protection Agency should be located there or do they back the Prime Minister's proposal that the centre for the prediction of climatic change should be located there? Both would be welcome.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman raises two separate issues. It is likely that the centre for climatic study will have close links with the Meteorological Office near Bracknell. That is still to be confirmed. We are spending £1 million on environmental studies. With regard to a centre for environmental studies in Scotland, we always support locating the headquarters in Scotland. The attractions of Aberdeen and Edinburgh were carefully considered, but eventually the choice fell on Cambridge, for the simple reason that several factors were of influence, including the fact that the world conservation monitoring centre is located there.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister recollect that I wrote to him to advise him of Grampian's bid for a European environmental agency to be sited in Aberdeen? He replied that it was too early to have a meeting on the bid, because the matter was still under discussion. A couple of days later, we discovered that it was proposed to site the centre in Cambridge. Has not the Minister fallen down badly on the job? Should he not have allowed us to push the case? Why did he abandon his responsibility in such a cavalier manner?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Ten per cent. of the British population live in Scotland. We compete with the rest of the British population for European institutions. All the factors are weighed on their merit collectively by the Government.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that while the location of any centre to examine climatic change is important, it is more important that changing climatic conditions in Scotland are carefully noted? In particular, such matters as the short days in the winter months and changes in lighting-up time—and, indeed, the time when anything else happens—are important. We do not want dayrise to occur at 10.30 am, as the proposals put forward by the European Commission envisage.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We particularly note my hon. Friend's point on lighting-up time and changes to summer time. With regard to cold weather payments, we have a common test throughout Britain, which starts at 0 deg C. People living in areas where cold weather is more prevalent stand to benefit most.

British Steel

2. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of British Steel; and what matters were discussed.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I met the chairman of British Steel on 26 October. We discussed a number of matters of current interest affecting the steel industry.

Dr. Reid: Is the Secretary of State aware that that answer will be a bitter disappointment to thousands of steel workers and their families? Is it not about time that he faced up to his responsibilities? Will he make a start today, first by joining me in congratulating the workers of Clydesdale on their productivity efforts and, secondly, by making it plain to British Steel management that a failure to reward that effort with the necessary investment will be a gross betrayal of the workers and of the promises the management made to them? Thirdly, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give a public pledge to the people of Scotland that, if any one of the three Lanarkshire steel plants goes, he will do the honourable thing and go at the same time?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not know why it should be a disappointment to the hon. Gentleman that I met with the

chairman of British Steel on 26 October. As he well knows, since then, I have been in correspondence with the chairman following the productive meeting that I had with the Ravenscraig shop stewards.

I share the hon. Gentleman's view about the importance of the British Steel works in Scotland. I have communicated my view and that of Her Majesty's Government that we expect British Steel to honour its commitment that it expects to continue steelmaking in Scotland at least until the 1990s. I am happy to join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the excellent work done by the steel workers in his constituency and elsewhere in the steel industry.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the substantial investment in Ravenscraig has been fully justified by the results—all credit to the work force? Will he impress upon British Steel that it would be inconceivable that it should start to run down the industry in Scotland after 1994, and that, were it to do so, there would be universal opposition to that decision?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. It is significant that, in the two years since the privatisation of the steel industry, British Steel's operations in Scotland have never been so fully worked, and the work force at Ravenscraig and elsewhere have been fully occupied. I share my hon. Friend's view that we want that to continue for many years to come.

Dr. Bray: Does the Secretary of State agree that the formal commitment to continue steelmaking until 1994 means very little if the investment is not undertaken to maintain the steelworks in a fully operational condition, complete with the cold strip mill at Ravenscraig?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course we welcome any investment that British Steel may think appropriate in the steel industry in Scotland. In the past, Ravenscraig has received substantial steel investment, and it is important that that should continue.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Does not the Secretary of State agree that British Steel's commitment to Scotland is not good and that we cannot have any confidence in its commitment to the future of the Scottish steel industry? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman therefore say today that he will use his influence and authority to establish an independent Scottish steel industry with secure investment and a long-term future, which would not be subjected to the constant threats of closure?

Mr. Rifkind: At the time of the privatisation of the steel industry, British Steel said that, in the event of not wishing to continue its steel operations in Scotland, it would be open to making the steelworks available to any other interested purchaser. At the present time, British Steel says that it has every intention of continuing its steel operations in Scotland. If that ever ceased to be the case, the alternative option would have to be seriously considered.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that everyone accepts the importance of a steel industry? My right hon. and learned Friend's commitment to that steel industry is well known on the Conservative Benches. Does he also agree, however, that Opposition Members are practising a gross deception on the Scottish people if they suggest to them that any industry can have the guarantee of remaining in operation for ever, regardless of commercial conditions, especially bearing in mind the fact that the vast majority of the steel produced in Scotland is not used in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly the case that the future of any industry depends upon the demand for its product. It is also true that, when the previous Labour Government were in office, employment in the steel industry in Scotland fell by some 5,000 and a number of Scottish steel plants were closed. That shows that, at the end of the day, it is economic considerations that are important. I believe that Scotland deserves to have a steel industry for a good number of years to come, and I believe that the work force at Ravenscraig have shown that they can be competitive with steel workers elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dewar: While the pledge about steelmaking to the end of 1994 is important, does the Secretary of State agree that the key to the long-term future of Ravenscraig and the industry is investment? Will he join me in publicly pressing British Steel to implement the realistic £10 million investment package for the strip mill at Ravenscraig, which will improve our competitiveness and do wonders for morale in the plant? Does he accept the urgent need, and importance to the Scottish economy, of modernising the mill at Clydesdale so that Scotland can continue to supply the North sea tubes industry? If he does, what specific steps is he taking to fight for that investment and ensure that, when considering where to place any plate mill built by British Steel, full weight is given to the claims of Dalziel? Will he assure us that, now that the industry has been sold off, it will not be a case of Scottish Ministers simply shutting their eyes, crossing their toes and hoping for the best?

Mr. Rifkind: I can give the hon. Member a complete assurance on the last part of his question; our activities over the past couple of months are clear evidence of that. We have already made it clear to Sir Robert Scholey and British Steel that the Scottish Office would welcome further investment by British Steel in the Scottish steel industry. We would also expect it to consider the claims of Dalziel in relation to the future of any new plate mill in Scotland.

Disabled Students Allowance

3. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of Scotland whether he will review the disabled students allowance given to SED-funded students in higher education.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): Yes. The level of the disabled students allowance for the session 1990-91 will be reviewed together with other supplementary allowance rates.

Mrs. Fyfe: I am grateful for that answer, but I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman would give a statement about the amounts today. Is he aware that my constituent, Caroline Munro, a profoundly deaf young lady, has been funded until this Christmas by the charity of an Edinburgh business man who read of her plight in *The Mail on Sunday*? What advice can the Minister give Caroline Munro? Should she look for more charity or do a lower-level course which the Strathclyde region can fund if his Department will not?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady might like to know that the level has risen from £180 in the last year of the Labour Government to £765 now—a substantial increase. The constituency case to which the hon. Lady referred involves a student who is profoundly deaf and needs special help. The young lady might like to apply to Strathclyde regional council's social work dept, which is able to help people with deafness problems.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister must know that we are talking about a small group of students at universities and further education colleges in Scotland. Given the size of that group, can the Minister give a guarantee that, when students are unable to obtain outside support, he will ensure that they have the necessary support to continue their courses?

Mr. Lang: I can give the hon. Gentleman a guarantee that we shall review the levels, which will be increased in line with available resources and the needs of the students involved. We have already made a substantial increase from £180, during the last year of the Labour Government, to £765 now.

Homelessness

4. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of homeless people in Scotland in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Some 9,500 households were assessed by local authorities as homeless during the year ending 31 March 1989.

Mr. McKelvey: I am sure that the House will be horrified by those figures, which are probably an underestimate. Will the Minister give serious consideration, perhaps over Christmas when he spends time with his young family, to those young homeless who are out on the streets with nowhere to go? This growing army of modern Oliver Twists have a nomadic life and no respite from their troubles. Will he try to match the money that has been given to England and Wales, so that the authorities can start to lay the foundations to provide somewhere for these young people to live?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer is yes. We have ensured that Scottish local authorities have an increase in net capital funding allocations of £64 million, which we have announced. We shall announce the individual allocations to local authorities this week. In those we shall have taken into account the incidence of homelessness. We are revising the code of guidance on homelessness, as it urgently needs updating. I debated this in the early hours of this morning with the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I wonder whether the Minister watched a programme on television which showed a typical example of a homeless person who came from Aberdeen to London? He made only £50 a day in the tube stations and preferred, despite the advice of his mother, to remain in London making it, paying no tax and living in a cardboard box, rather than return to Aberdeen where he could have got a proper job.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) spent the night looking into these matters last week. It is significant that his advice was that young people should not come to London unless they have accommodation or are going to a certain job. Often that has not happened in the past.

Mr. McAllion: Can the Minister explain why, during the progress of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, he refused to give any responsibility for homelessness to Scottish Homes and insisted instead that responsibility should go to local authorities? Why, in the time since then, has he increased Government support in real terms for Scottish Homes, while cutting it in real terms for local authorities? Is that not evidence of the Government's betrayal of tens of thousands of homeless people in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I specifically told Scottish Homes board members, whom I saw recently, that they should give priority to homelessness projects in co-operation with local authorities; but we have given substantial funding to local authorities by increasing their net capital allocations by £64 million. Scottish Homes will be coming forward with a cash incentive scheme to enable residents in its housing to move out into home ownership, so as to enable homeless families to move in.

Mr. Ian Bruce: How many council houses in Scotland are lying empty, and how long does it take to refill a council house when a tenant moves? Can my hon. Friend give some estimate of the number of homes that are vacant in the private sector because people do not believe that the housing legislation allows them both to let their houses and to get them back when they need them?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I most certainly can. There are about 25,000 empty council houses. Many of them are needed for decanting, but at least 4,000 of them have been vacant for more than three months, and I urge local authorities whenever possible to bring them back into use.

Of the approximately 128,000 empty houses in Scotland, most are in the private rented sector; by means of improvement grants and in every other possible way, we strongly encourage the private rented sector to bring these houses back into use.

Mr. Maxton: When will the Minister stop being so cruelly complacent about homelessness in Scotland, and recognise that the true figure of 30,000 homeless people there represents a major crisis for him, for Scotland and for all whom he represents? Why does he—unlike his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment—not realise that there is such a crisis and allocate as much money to Scottish homelessness as his right hon. Friend has given to England and Wales? Will he announce today that he is giving £30 million to deal with the problem of homelessness in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, it is up to local authorities, when spending the extra £64 million net capital allocations, to decide on their most pressing needs. I invite the hon. Gentleman to consider the fact that the problems of London are not exactly reproduced in Scotland; most of the £250 million funding goes to London and the province of the south-east. I believe that

local authorities should have the discretion to choose their priorities; projects against dampness and provision for the disabled might be given higher priority in certain areas.

Hill Farming

5. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed hill farming with the National Farmers Union of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble Friend the Minister of State and I met the National Farmers Union of Scotland on 25 October to discuss hill farming.

Sir Hector Monro: I welcome the increase in suckler cow subsidy, but is my hon. Friend aware that the true hill farm depends on the amount of hill livestock compensatory allowances? Will he do everything possible to ensure that payments in 1990 and 1991 will be every bit as high as in 1989, in order to help that particular sector of the rural economy?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I recognise the importance of the hill farming sector in Scotland. Hill livestock compensatory allowances totalling almost £45 million have been paid annually. We shall make a statement concerning 1990 shortly. As to 1992, we voted against the proposals made in Brussels, and eventually had them moderated—but they were eventually adopted by a qualified majority. We shall bear in mind the points that my hon. Friend made, as we are aware of the importance of the allowance to conservation, the environment, jobs and the sturdy way of life in which hill farmers are involved.

Mr. Hood: There are many hill farmers in my constituency, which has a large farming community. Is the Minister aware of the great alarm felt among the farming community at the lack of availability of anthrax vaccine? Many farmers who are crying out for vaccine for their herds are discovering that it cannot be obtained. Will the Minister say what advice I can give the farmer who visited me recently, Mr. William King of Hawksland farm in Lesmahagow, who lost a herd in the 1970s through anthrax and who is now concerned that, because of the lack of the vaccine, he may lose more of his stock?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall follow up the hon. Gentleman's inquiry and will write to him as soon as possible.

Mr. Wallace: If there is to be a headage limit on HLCA payments, that will represent a limit on the European Community contribution, as I am sure the Minister will agree. As HLCAs were devised by the United Kingdom Government and are widely recognised as a most useful form of support for the hill farming industry, will the Government undertake to meet any shortfall from the European Community?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That proposal will come into operation in 1991, and it would be premature to make a statement about rates now. We secured agreement to have the headage limits reduction set at £2·5 million instead of 4·8 million ecu. As I mentioned earlier, we voted against the Agriculture Council as we thought that the headage limit proposals discriminated against hill farmers such as those to be found in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. We made a firm stand.

Warrant Sales

6. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to abolish the system of warrant sales in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The system of warrant sales was reformed by the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987. Those reforms removed the most resented and harsh aspects of the procedure. Those reforms were welcomed by the Opposition.

Mr. Marshall: The Secretary of State's answer is pathetic and disgraceful, and he should be thoroughly ashamed of it. Despite the change made in 1987, warrant sales are degrading and humiliating. The practice belongs to the middle ages, not the 1990s. Does the Secretary of State not appreciate the urgency of the situation, when the Government's iniquitous poll tax is forcing thousands of poor people into utter destitution? Will he not reconsider even at this stage? Is it not legalised theft to allow sheriffs' officers to value goods worth many hundreds of pounds at a mere pittance? There are other methods of dealing with the matter. Why will not the Secretary of State use them and abolish warrant sales once and for all?

Mr. Rifkind: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Scottish Law Commission examined the matter, and as an independent advisory body pointed out that the system enforced in Scotland is similar to that permitted in virtually every other country of whose practices it was aware. The hon. Gentleman referred to non-payment of community charge. One year ago, when the question in Scotland was of non-payment of domestic rates, Strathclyde region issued summary warrants against more than 77,000 people—but at the end of the day, there were only two warrant sales. It is very much open to the hon. Gentleman's own Labour-controlled regional council whether or not it wishes to adopt warrant sales.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Secretary of State accept that Opposition Members believe that such an outmoded form of debt collection should be abolished? They will be introducing a Bill to that effect later today. Is the Secretary of State aware that the Scottish National party finance convenor for Grampian regional council preferred to lose his post rather than condone the continuation of the warrant sales system?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Ewing: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Does not the Secretary of State think it a disgrace that Labour councillors—so-called Socialists—are threatening thousands of people with warrant sales and are happy to serve as Thatcher's poll tax collectors?

Mr. Rifkind: While the hon. Lady is criticising the Labour party, which I have no doubt that she is entitled to do, she might also inquire into the practices of the only local authority controlled by the Scottish National party —Angus district council—which I understand is properly carrying out its legal obligation to implement the community charge. I congratulate the authority and

commend it for taking what is clearly a more responsible attitude to its legal obligations than the hon. Lady seems to wish.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that four SNP councillors in Midlothian who had promised not to pay the community charge are now paying it? Does he share my hope that the habit is contagious and that Labour Members of Parliament who have refused to pay the charge will soon do so, because by not doing so they are restricting the extent of local authority service and hurting those in greatest need?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to say that the vast majority of members of the public are paying the community charge —up to 98 per cent. in the Borders and more than 90 per cent. in Fife. As for those who say that they will not pay, it will soon be brought home to them that if they succeeded in their objective they would simply impose an increased penalty on the other 90 per cent. of the population, for which they would not be thanked. As I have said, the vast majority are carrying out their legal obligations, as Parliament would expect them to do.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Secretary of State agree that the great majority of Scottish local authorities, especially Labour authorities, have an excellent record in not pursuing warrant, sales? Does he accept that the new pressures on local authorities derive entirely from the imposition of the poll tax, to which virtually all Scottish local authorities of all political persuasions were opposed? Will he guarantee that the Scottish Office will take no punitive action against councils which, on grounds of human decency, do not use the abhorrent weapon of warrant sales?

Mr. Rifkind: It is for the Commission for Local Authority Accounts, not the Scottish Office, to examine any allegations made about individual local authorities. The level of payment of the community charge is broadly comparable with domestic rate payment levels at this time a year ago, when local authorities were issuing tens of thousands of summary warrants against domestic ratepayers. More than 77,000 were issued in Strathclyde region. There has been no change in the procedure, or in the legal rights of local authorities, and I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me about that.

Employment (Renfrew)

7. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what meetings he has had recently concerning employment in Renfrew district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I recently met a deputation of local councillors and trade union representatives led by my hon. Friend when we discussed the economic situation in general in Renfrew district, and in particular the possibilities for protecting jobs at Armitage Shanks in Barrhead.

Mr. Stewart: I thank my hon. Friend, and congratulate him on his immediate acceptance of the proposals put to him at that meeting by Renfrew district council, the trade unions and the shop stewards. Does he agree, however, that there are a number of disturbing features in what has happened—for example, the attempt by senior management just after the announcement to provoke industrial action by locking out of the factory honest, decent people who simply wanted to go to work as usual? Will he emphasise to the holding company, Blue Circle Industries plc that a positive response to constructive proposals would be in the interests not only of the work force and the community, but of the shareholders of this large, profitable and well-known company?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend's concern about, and involvement in, the company's problems are well known and I pay tribute to them. The decision must be a commercial one for the management of Armitage Shanks, but I am very pleased that the Scottish Development Agency is to participate in a feasibility study of employment opportunities in the area. Which I consider to be a constructive move. I have written to the chairman of Blue Circle Industries plc the parent company, urging him to defer the redundancies until the study can take place.

Mr. Allen Adams: I thank the Minister for his prompt action. Does he not agree however, that the parent holding company, Blue Circle Industries plc, is indulging in downright grammatical inexactitudes in trying to allege that the decline in industry in Barrhead is due to the fall in the lira, which it claims has led to the dumping of sanitary ware in Scotland and in Britain as a whole? Does the Minister agree that the real reason for the decline is undiluted greed on the part of a company which made £231 million last year?

Mr. Lang: I cannot agree with the argument to which the hon. Gentleman refers. He mentioned the Italian lira and imports of products from abroad. In fact, the movement of the lira in the past 12 months has helped domestic production and reduced the threat of imports.

Nature Conservancy Council

8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Wildlife Link about his proposals for the future of the scientific capability of the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Rifkind: The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Wildlife Link both stressed the need for cohesive scientific advice on an all-Britain basis. I am happy to confirm that the proposed reforms will ensure that this is achieved.

Mr. Dalyell: Why has the Secretary of State refused the eminently sensible request of his Cabinet colleague, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), for an independent chairman of the science co-ordinating committee?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must not jump to conclusions with regard to that proposal. The proposals on nature conservancy have been warmly welcomed in Scotland, as the hon. Gentleman knows, by the Scottish council of the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Scottish Green party and more than 90 other organisations and individuals. We broadly welcome

the proposals from the Nature Conservancy Council United Kingdom headquarters for a joint committee. I believe that the proposals were constructive and helpful.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory non-answer to that question, I shall raise the matter at 5.30 am tomorrow in the Consolidated Fund debate.

Health Service (Waiting Lists)

9. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to effect further reductions in waiting lists in the Scottish Health Service.

16. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to effect further reductions in waiting lists in the Scottish Health Service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): Following the success of our waiting list initiatives, I will make £7 million available next year to make further progress in reducing waiting lists.

Mr. Davis: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent reply, and for what it augurs for the people of Scotland. Does he agree that while the decreases in waiting lists have been primarily associated with Government initiatives, the increases have been critically associated with trade union strike action? Does he agree that the best thing that the National Union of Public Employees and the Confederation of Health Service Employees could do to improve the Health Service is not to posture on television, but to earn the sobriquet of the caring profession by encouraging their members to stay at work?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is right to point to the effects of industrial action on waiting lists. In-patient waiting lists in Scotland currently stand at rather more than 60,000. The industrial action in 1982 added about 20,000 people to the waiting list and industrial action in 1978 did the same. It is important for everyone who supports strikes in the National Health Service to realise that it is the patients who are the victims.

Mr. Summerson: The figures that my hon. Friend has given to the House will be welcomed by everyone. Will my hon. Friend compare and contrast the excellent record of the Conservative Government in Scotland with the truly lamentable record of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is correct to draw attention to the record of the last Labour Government. I am sure that they did not mean to do badly with the Health Service. They cut the Health Service because they failed to manage the economy. Because of the economic success that we have enjoyed, we have been able to invest in the Health Service and bring waiting times down.

Mr. Eadie: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that my colleagues and I recently met the Lothian health board, who informed us that it had to make cuts of £6 million this year and that one method was not to reappoint staff? If one does not reappoint medical staff, how does the hon. Gentleman believe that one can deal with the patient waiting list?

Mr. Forsyth: I am somewhat surprised at the hon. Gentleman's account of the meeting with Lothian region. In common with the other Scottish health boards, Lothian has enjoyed growth in resources and is announcing a major investment programme in the hospital service at the moment. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be aware of that. It is certainly true that the region will have to reassess its priorities. That is partly because it is introducing new services and bringing in new hospitals —for example, the major building project in the constituency of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—and has had to change expenditure to reflect that.

Mr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that, only this morning, I was on the telephone to the Edinburgh royal infirmary about a constituent who was told in August that he would have to wait two or three months for a heart bypass operation, who was then told that he must wait an extra six or eight weeks and who was told last week that he will have to wait until February? When I spoke to the doctor this morning, he said that people are waiting 15 months for heart operations in Edinburgh. We are getting to the point at which the queue is self-limiting because people die before they can have the operation. Does the Minister accept that that is a tragic and scandalous state of affairs, and will he take action to see that something is done about it?

Mr. Forsyth: I am concerned to hear about that case. The hon. Member is right to draw attention to increasing waiting times for heart surgery, but, in fairness, he should also mention the substantial extra number of patients being given cardiac surgery and the substantial resources that we have made available for that. He knows from the statement that we made last week that we are looking into how we can expand cardiac surgery. We have provided the resources to achieve that. I remind the House of what my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) said —that industrial action in the Health Service makes the task of getting waiting lists down even harder.

Mr. Salmond: Can the Minister explain why he is so insecure in his stewardship of the Scottish Health Service that he has to arrange for planted dolly questions from English Tory Members to protect him from Scottish Members? Is not the Scottish Health Service exactly the type of subject which should prpperly be examined by a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? If the subject received such examination, does the Minister think that anyone in Scotland would regard the Health Service as safe in his hands?

Mr. Forsyth: I note the hon. Gentleman's appeal for a Scottish Affairs Select Committee. I served on the last Select Committee, which examined the hospital building programme and I am studying its findings. Members of the Scottish National party refused to serve on that Select Committee because they regarded it as a waste of time. The hon. Gentleman is in danger of being accused of having double standards. As for the accusation about planted questions, it is a sad testimony that the SNP is not interested in the progress being made to reduce waiting times for patients.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman is the only Scotsman on the Government side who has risen.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am obliged for your protection, Mr. Speaker. On matters of dress I take my orders from the Prince of Wales and give my orders to you. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get on with it.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's success in the reduction of waiting lists in Scotland is just another reflection of the success of their economic policies, which have increased expenditure on the Scottish National Health Service from £1 billion in 1979 to £3,000 million in 1989? Is it not marvellous that we spend £550 on every patient in Scotland while £450 is spent on every English patient? Should not Opposition Members be proud that we have made in Scotland the best health service in the world?

Mr. Forsyth: You will forgive me, Mr. Speaker, for observing that my hon. and learned Friend was being barracked while he spelled out the record of success in the Health Service. He is right to say that expenditure in cash terms has been trebled. Expenditure on the Health Service in Scotland now represents £550 per year for every man, woman and child in Scotland. That is an increase, over and above inflation, of more than one third. That is a record to be proud of and one which none of the Opposition parties came close to approaching when they were in office.

Mr. Dewar: As the Under-Secretary of State on occasion takes an embarrassingly close interest in broadcasting, may I congratulate him on the obvious care that he has taken to get the right camera angle today? I know that he is aware of reports that one in five heart operations at the sick children's hospital in Glasgow have had to be postponed, sometimes at very short notice, even at a few minutes' notice.

The Minister has expressed his concern about that serious matter, and said that he had asked for a report to be available at the end of last week. Does he intend to publish that report? Will he give an assurance that the situation that led the consultant surgeon at the sick children's hospital to complain about financial constraints and the shortage of intensive care beds will be tackled immediately? Does he agree that such a traumatic shortage gives the lie to the often complacent attitude of the Scottish Office towards the Health Service?

Mr. Forsyth: I have looked into the matter fairly carefully and I understand that the use of intensive care beds at the hospital averages about 76 per cent. There are peaks at particular times of the year and there have been problems with the management of the beds. It is a matter not of resources but of the management of resources. I have asked the Department to find out the detailed position and if additional resources are required to prevent operations on children being cancelled at short notice, we shall certainly seek to provide them. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that is not acceptable for something like one in nine operations to be cancelled at short notice and we shall certainly look into that. I do not think that it would be appropriate to publish a report setting out the position in detail. Most people are concerned that the children should get their operations when they need them.

Student Loans

11. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to shorten courses in the central institutions in Scotland to meet the impact of a student loans scheme.

Mr. Rifkind: Unemployment in Glasgow has fallen by 32 per cent. over the past three years and by over 14,000 in the last year alone——

Hon. Members: Wrong one!

Mr. Lang *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Lang.

Mr. Lang: I always defer to my right hon. and learned Friend.

The length of courses in the central institutions in Scotland is a matter for the institutions themselves, rather than for Ministers.

Mr. Watson: I congratulate the Secretary of State for Scotland on his performance in the first Scottish Question Time this Session. The Minister to whom my question is directed must be aware that all Scottish universities and central institutions which responded to the White Paper on student loans, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland outlined their opposition to the proposal because they realise the detrimental effect that it will have on the fourth year of study in Scotland. They are quite clear that it will have a detrimental effect on the Scottish system of education. Is the Minister really saying that they are all wrong and that, as usual, only the Government are right?

Mr. Lang: I see no evidence at all that the top-up loan system should be detrimental to the four-year degree course. Scottish students enjoying a four-year degree course are receiving grants and maintenance for four rather than three years, but not all Scottish degree courses are for four years and not all courses south of the border are shorter than four years. It is important to find the best method of financing students in higher education. I believe that top-up loans are a very useful adjunct to the fees and maintenance grants which are continuing to be paid.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that international comparisons suggest that access to higher education is rather better in countries with combined grant and loan systems than it is in Britain? Does he further agree that there is no evidence that top-up loans will be a disincentive to any Scottish four-year course? By definition, those who argue that it would be a disincentive are arguing that students themselves place a very low value on the fourth year of that course. If that were the case, it would raise a major question about why the taxpayer should continue to fund them.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have the most generous student funding arrangements of any industrialised country in the world. Most countries that have far more substantial student loan arrangements than we are contemplating also have higher student participation. In Scotland 20 per cent. of students come from south of the border. Clearly they do not regard a four-year degree course as a disadvantage.

Mr. Worthington: We should pause for a moment and condemn the Minister of State's announcement yesterday on student grants. Increasing the grant by only 5 per cent. was a further imposition of a cut in living standards for students in Scotland. That means that there has been a cut of nearly 25 per cent. in the value of the grant since 1979. If it had been maintained at its 1979 level, it would have been worth £1,600 more over a four-year degree course. We are particularly worried about the length— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the House is anxious that the shadow Minister should ask a question.

Mr. Worthington: Does the Minister agree that the cut will be particularly damaging to women, single parents and low wage earners who are considering a career change, because they will have to pick up the bill for a four-year Scottish degree course? Who will make such a change when it means debts of thousands of pounds?

Mr. Lang: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. In the United States, where loans play a far greater part, women students at university are in the majority. It is important to get the balance right. We must decide whether it is fair to ask taxpayers—most of whom earn less than students will once they have graduated—to continue to bear the huge burden of higher education. It is entirely fair to ask students to bear a burden of 7 to 10 per cent. of the total cost of their education.

Unemployment (Glasgow)

12. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will be taking to reduce unemployment in Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to answer the hon. Gentleman's question. Unemployment in Glasgow has fallen by more than 32 per cent. in the past three years and by more than 14,000 in the past year alone. The full range of employment and training services will continue to be available to combat unemployment in the area, and I look forward to the establishment there of a local enterprise company under our Scottish enterprise proposals.

Mr. Martin: The Minister must know that the unemployment rate in Springburn ranks about the fourth highest in the United Kingdom. He gave a complacent answer. He knows that 6,000 people are unemployed, 30 per cent. of whom have been unemployed for more than a year. Young people in almost every street in places such as Haghill, Jermison and Possil Park have not had a decent job since they left school. If the Minister will not do anything about that, he should resign.

Mr. Rifkind: Not only are we as concerned as the hon. Gentleman clearly is, but we are doing a great deal about it. More than 8,000 youngsters in Glasgow are benefiting from the youth training scheme, which will enable the majority of them to gain employment. The hon. Gentleman is normally fair, and I should have thought that he would welcome the fact that unemployment in Glasgow has fallen by more than 14,000 in the past 12 months. That includes several thousand people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. If he wishes to be balanced, he should give credit where it is due.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that setting up the student loans company in Glasgow will bring new job opportunities?

Mr. Rifkind: A number of initiatives have led to new employment in the Glasgow area in the public and private sectors. The fact that Glasgow is increasingly being regarded as an attractive location for work which was previously done in the south of England shows the growing effectiveness and attraction of the Scottish economy.

Mr. Sillars: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the close relationship between the Glasgow economy and that of Lanarkshire? Is he aware of the recently published Scottish Trade Union Congress document, which showed the potentially devastating domino effect down the Clyde of any loss of steel capacity in Lanarkshire? When the Secretary of State met the chairman of British Steel on 26 October, did the charman tell him that the company was purchasing a second-hand mill from Japan and storing it at Lackenby? If not, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that we cannot trust British Steel? Will he give an assurance on behalf of the Government and not just the Scottish Office that the Government will make an unequivocal demand that if there is to be a single plate mill strategy it will go to Dalziel and Motherwell and not to Lackenby?

Mr. Rifkind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the north of England and Scotland will be concerned to get future investment in the steel industry. I appreciate that as a member of the Scottish National party he has no interest in what happens in the rest of the United Kingdom. He will also appreciate that the visit by his party to steelworkers in the north of England was seen as a most inopportune initiative which did no good service to steelworkers in Scotland. Of course, we would welcome investment by British Steel in Scotland and, in particular, hope that it will give favourable consideration to the claims of Dalziel for a new strip mill.

Police Accommodation

13. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the financial effect on police officers in provided accommodation arising from the recommendations of the police arbitration tribunal.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The effect on police officers would vary according to the level of the relevant community charge, the amount of the proposed force housing allowance and the rent charged for the accommodation provided.

Mr. Shersby: Is my hon. Friend aware that the rent charged for police provided accommodation can be higher than the housing allowance payable? Is he further aware that officers in Scotland will have to pay rent, the community charge, income tax and an 11 per cent. contribution towards their pensions? Is he also aware that new entrants to the force will be substantially worse off than serving officers in post on 31 March 1990? What does he think that the effect of that will be on recruitment and on the maintenance of law and order in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend represents the Police Federation and I am aware of the

factors that he mentioned. The regulations will come into effect on 22 December. They will backdate the rent allowance for Scottish police officers, which will be popular with those concerned. My hon. Friend should be aware that we have today received the recommendations from the police negotiating board, but there is a difficulty with the police arbitration tribunal decision about officers occupying provided accommodation who would have to pay more rent than they would receive in housing allowance and that would be a less favourable position than at present. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will give urgent and careful consideration to the recommendations.

Mr. Harry Ewing: Is the Minister aware that that has been going on since April this year? I am asking my question in the interest of my constituents who are in the police force and not because I am being paid by the Police Federation. It is a simple matter to separate that part of the rent from that part of the rates given to police officers as their allowance. That would deal with the problems that have arisen for police officers who live in provided accommodation and which have been caused by the imposition of the poll tax in Scotland. I wrote to the Minister some months ago about this issue and he has had plenty of time to sort it out. It is an absolute disgrace that police officers are still suffering.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The regulations come into effect on 22 December. I am glad that Opposition Members have not prayed against them. The backdated sums will be paid out by many forces before the end of the year. Another problem about the police arbitration tribunal was that it recommended the right to buy for all police houses. In certain remote areas, such houses are not surplus to police requirements and we are duty bound to look into the implications of these matters.

New Towns

14. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the house waiting lists for each of the five Scottish new towns.

Mr. Lang: The numbers on house waiting lists in the five Scottish new towns are as follows:

	Number
Irvine	915
Glenrothes	1,364
Cumbernauld	1,213
East Kilbride	4,364
Livingston	746

Mr. Ingram: Is the Minister aware that those figures represent a doubling of the waiting lists in East Kilbride and Irvine, and a lengthening of the lists in the other new towns? Does he accept that the lengthening of the lists and the failure to build sufficient houses in the new towns are his responsibility and are a direct result of Government policy for the new towns? Will he tell the House what he proposes to do to shorten the lists and to provide sufficient houses within the new towns?

Mr. Lang: I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that the lists should shorten. There are 4,300 public and, more importantly, private sector houses being constructed in the new towns. The development corporations' funding programmes for the current year add up to some £40 million, the figure for East Kilbride being £17 million.

Self-governing Hospitals

15. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he has received any recent representations from the British Medical Association on self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I was interested to see that the British Medical Association in Scotland is now responding more positively to the proposed self-governing hospitals or NHS trusts and has offered to help us with monitoring their success.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a welcome change of heart on the part of the BMA, but is it not strange that the Labour party, which believes in devolution, does not believe in devolving powers down to the general hospitals from the health boards?

Mr. Forsyth: I think that my hon. Friend is being a little unfair. I think that the BMA is beginning to realise the opportunities that the White Paper offers for giving doctors more say in the management of hospitals and for expanding services to patients. The only consistency that my hon. Friend should look for among Labour Members is that of always being against what the Government do, whether or not it is in the interests of patients.

Steel Industry

17. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet Strathclyde regional council and district councils from Lanarkshire to discuss the implications for local government services of the future of the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I will shortly be meeting councillor McGarry of Strathclyde regional council and others concerned about the future of Ravenscraig.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Secretary of State accept that his replies to earlier questions about steel were widely at variance with the reply that I received on Thursday from his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who is sitting beside him now, when she made it clear that commercial considerations alone are what matter and that the golden share will not be used by the Government in defence of steel industry jobs? Does the Secretary of State accept that if he fails to persuade the Cabinet to fight for the future of the Scottish steel industry, he has a clear duty to offer his resignation?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is, uncharacteristically, totally confused. The golden share to which he referred is an opportunity for the Government to be involved only if there is an attempt, through a proposed takeover of British Steel, to increase a holding in the company to more than 15 per cent. The golden share does not give the Government any power to involve themselves in the operational matters of British Steel. With regard to the other aspect of the hon. Gentleman's question, the Government share the hon. Gentleman's view that British Steel should keep to its commitment to continue steel making in Scotland at least until the mid-1990s.

Panama

3.31 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the American activities in Panama and on the safety of British citizens.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We welcome the establishment of democratic government in Panama. We fully support the American action to remove General Noriega, which was undertaken with the agreement of the leaders who clearly won the elections held last May. Noriega's arbitrary rule was maintained by force. We and many others have repeatedly condemned Noriega and called for the election result in Panama to be respected. Every peaceful means of trying to see the results of the democratic elections respected had failed.

We have been in touch with the British chargé d'affaires in Panama. So far as he has been able to establish, there have been no British casualties. The embassy has advised British residents to remain in their homes until the situation becomes clearer.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Secretary of State be more forthcoming about the position of British subjects? Is the embassy in touch with them? Does it know where they are and can it guarantee their safety? Will they be given assistance to return home if that is what they want to do?

There is no doubt that General Noriega is a corrupt dictator and that Panama will be better off without him. Will the Secretary of State answer my following questions?

Under what provision of the canal treaty have United States forces intervened? If it is that relating to the smooth operation of the canal, can the Americans offer guarantees that the canal will continue to operate smoothly? Under what provision of the United Nations charter have the United States forces intervened? If the United States is citing section 51 of the charter, has it reported its action to the Security Council as a section 51 action? If the death of a United States service man triggered off the action, does the intervention qualify as self-defence under section 51? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kaufman: If so, does the Foreign Secretary believe that the deaths of 50 people, including nine American service men, justified the action—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members please to desist from private conversations.

Mr. Kaufman: Does the United States regard General Noriega's statement that a state of war existed between the United States and Panama as a declaration of war? Is this an action of war, a police action, or an action of self-defence?

We ask these questions because any action of this kind, if it is to be justified internationally, must stand up to international scrutiny. Noriega's crimes are to be condemned, but any action that is taken against Noriega must thoroughly justify itself. So far, no such justification has been provided.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman asks first about the British community. There are about 450 of them. Of course, the position on the ground is still obscure. There are no plans for evacuating them at present, but, obviously, our chargé d'affaires is keeping an eye on matters and will do his best to offer them such advice and protection as they may need.

In answer to the right hon. Gentleman's main point, the President of the United States has stated that he took action only as a last resort. He gave four reasons: to protect American lives; to defend democracy; to arrest an indicted drugs trafficker; and to defend the integrity of the Panama canal treaty. That is the President's statement.

The right hon. Gentleman is right: no one can possibly accurately describe General Noriega as a romantic victim of oppression or as a symbol of legality. There was an election. There is no doubt of the result of that election. That result was overturned. There has been a clear threat to United States lives, including the recent death of an American officer and a statement from Noriega that Panama was in a state of war with the United States. Those seem to Her Majesty's Government to be strong and sufficient reasons.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend understand that the people of Panama are very peace-loving and gentle and that, above everything else, they value their freedom? One thing that they have expressed to me time and again is their desire to be free from the military Government of their country. Above all, they look for freedom from American interference. The new Government will be yet another Government imposed upon the people of Panama by the American Government.

Will my right hon. Friend tell the Americans that the people of Panama, now that they have a Government who are free from the military dictatorship of General Noriega and the possibility of an election, also want freedom from American interference in Panama?

Mr. Hurd: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend has the background correct. President Endara and the two vice-presidents were not selected by the United States Administration; they were elected by the people of Panama last May. Also, 279 independent observers from 21 countries, including at least one Member of this House, after observing the elections in Panama last May, formally declared that the election was overwhelmingly won by the Opposition alliance headed by President Endara. From what President Bush has been saying to the American people today, it is clear that the Americans have their rights under the treaty, but they have no desire to impose a Government on Panama, nor have they done so in this case.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau, Gwent): When the President of the United States spoke to the Prime Minister this morning about this matter, which item of the United Nations charter did he cite as the authority under which he acted? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that for the United States President to act as judge and executioner in his own cause and in the cause of his country is a plain defiance of the United Nations charter? Do the British Government really intend that this shame should be repeated at the Security Council? Are we to stand up for the charter or to humiliate ourselves once again by supporting the United States' action?

Mr. Hurd: In his conversation with my right hon. Friend, the President expounded the action that is being taken on the same lines as he then made it public when speaking to the American people. The right hon. Gentleman is on the wrong side in this matter—he is on the wrong footing. It is not a question of the United States intervening to impose a Government. A Government were elected but that election was set aside—*[Interruption.]* I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman is listening, but these are the facts. Independent observers, of a type of which the right hon. Gentleman is always much in favour, observed the election and upheld the result. However, it was then set aside.

Constant efforts have been made—not just by the United States, but by many others also—to have the democratic results restored, but all those efforts have failed. More recently, an American officer has been murdered, threats and attacks have been made on others and General Noriega has declared that his country must be regarded as in a state of war with the United States. Having added up those considerations, they appear to us to be strong and sufficient.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Having led a delegation into the interior of Panama to supervise the recent election, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend will accept it from me that two statements are clear beyond peradventure? The first is that the opposition, led by Mr. Endara won an overwhelming victory, and the second is that, however much it may disappoint Opposition Members, far from sentiments of anti-Americanism, we received frequent expressions of sentiment that the United States must help the Panamanian people to secure the democracy that they so deeply wanted. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that we give Mr. Endara and his budding Government every support in the most difficult days that they are surely going to face?

Mr. Hurd: I had hoped that my hon. Friend would be in his place, because it was he who joined observers from other countries to observe the election. From his personal experience, he has corroborated the points that I was trying to make. Of course it is regrettable and tragic that there should be loss of life on such occasions, but many people have already died as a direct result of the brutal and arbitrary rule of General Noriega. I endorse what my hon. Friend has said. We wish President Endara and his democratically elected Government every success in steering Panama out of this tragic chapter in its history.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): We support the United States action, but do so under the terms of the United Nations charter that relate to self-defence. Whatever the provocation, is it not a vital principle, always worth upholding, that countries should invade others only under the terms of international law? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, having had a declaration by General Noriega of a state of war between the two countries and having had threats to the lives of American service men who had every right to be in Panama, it is under the terms of the charter that the Americans should now rest their case, not on the restoration of democracy, however desirable?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is right to stress the two latter points, on which, as I have said, we rest our belief that the reasons were strong and sufficient. However, one cannot get away from the political context, and I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman would want us to do so. We are not talking about a military ruler being imposed by the United States; we are talking about a military ruler being deposed and a democratically elected president being able to take up his position.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the situation in Panama at present is an absolute tragedy? When the rest of Latin America is returning to democracy, is it right that Panama should be left under a jumped-up thug financed by drug money? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that the United States should be congratulated if it were to succeed, as it did in Grenada, in restoring democracy, removing tyranny and then withdrawing?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly the United States' aim, which we entirely share, that democracy in Panama should be restored. Fortunately, there was an election with a clear result which was attested by international opinion, so it is not a matter of choosing somebody from a group of Panamanian politicians and having to ask, "Is he the right man, or is he not?" We are talking about a person who was elected along with his two vice presidents. It amazes me that it should be thought undemocratic to restore democracy.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What attitude would Conservative Members have taken if that action had been taken by the Soviet Union in a sovereign country? However the right hon. Gentleman dresses it up, the American invasion of Panama City is an act of naked aggression against the sovereignty of that country. He knows that that is true. Whatever he might think of General Noriega, to describe the Noriega regime as a reign of terror is grotesque in the light of what is happening in Romania, what happened in Tianamen square and the death squad activities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

When will the Government insist that the United States of America begins to act like a civilised nation upholding the United Nations treaty? When will the Government stop acting as apologists for every act of aggression perpetrated by the United States?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is well astray. In the long-distant past, under policies now abandoned, the Soviet Union did intervene in eastern Europe—not to uphold a democratically elected Government but to suppress it. Our condemnation of that action was clear and absolute, under different Governments at the time. Now, fortunately, that policy has changed. There is no parallel with the position of the United States.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): Does my right hon. Friend recall that our American allies were not exactly helpful when we faced a crisis over the Suez canal? May I say how glad I am that, with the future of a great international waterway at stake, we are better allies to them than they were to us?

Mr. Hurd: There is a great deal of history in a special relationship, and my right hon. Friend remembers most of it. We are faced now not with history or with reminding people of events long past, but simply with common-sense

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practicalities and, I think, the morality of the present position. The considerations that we weighed up brought us to the conclusion that the American action was justified.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The Foreign Secretary is propounding a strange doctrine —that if the cause is good, the action must be right. Does he recall that, at the time of the invasion of South Georgia, the Government relied heavily and properly on the rule of international law? Where is the principle of the rule of international law in this affair?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman, not for the first time, is at odds with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who drew attention to the rules of article 51 of the United Nations charter; reminded us that an American colonel had been murdered and that there had been threats against others; and pointed out that a few days ago General Noriega declared that his country should be considered to be in a state of war with the United States.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Does my right hon. Friend recall that during a recent speech, and while waving a machete, General Noriega declared war on the United States? Can my right hon. Friend explain how it could possibly be in the interests of this or any other country for Panama and its important waterway to remain in the hands of an utterly corrupt regime and a dictator who is a psychopath, a drug trafficker and a flouter of the democratic will of his own people?

How can the Labour party, in its hostility to the United States, find it possible to praise almost anybody, including Noriega, just to make its own point?

Mr. Hurd: The Labour party stance on these matters appears to become more and more eccentric. We are not concerned just with the strategic importance of Panama, although that is undoubted. For several years, efforts have been made by the United States, by democracies in central and southern America and by the international community to deal with the problem. Those efforts were made in good faith but have not been successful.

The moment clearly came, in the judgment of the President of the United States, when other action was required. It was justified by the election results and by the declaration of General Noriega to which my hon. Friend referred. We believe the action to be justified.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Listening to the hyperbole of Conservative Members, one could be forgiven for believing that they had bitterly condemned Noriega's Government during the past decade. Does the Secretary of State recognise that, until 1986, the United States awarded prizes to Noriega for his work against drugs and that, as recently as 1986, Interpol held conferences in Panama in recognition of the work done there against drugs? Does he recognise that what has happened today has nothing to do with drugs, little to do with the personality of General Noriega and everything to do with an American determination to renege on the Panama canal treaty? Does he recognise that to support military action aimed at creating the circumstances in which the treaty democratically arrived at by Torrijos and Carter can be reneged upon is a dangerous precedent for this country?

Mr. Hurd: It is not a question of reneging: the hon. Gentleman gives a phoney account of what occurred. By his own admission, for several years the true nature, character and villainy of General Noriega's regime have been apparent to everyone. Elections in Panama this year were not cooked. Noriega lost them and overturned the result. I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman makes excuses.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. We must move on to the statement on Hong Kong.

Hong Kong

3.51 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about our proposals to improve confidence in Hong Kong.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order after the statement.

Mr. Hurd: The confidence of the people of Hong Kong is at a low ebb. My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President told the House on 6 June about the traumatic effect in Hong Kong of what happened in Peking in June, and reported to the House on 5 July after he had paid a visit to the territory. Many hon. and right hon. Members have themselves visited Hong Kong since June, and the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs gave a lucid account of the problem in Hong Kong in its report of 28 June.

We must do all that we can to build a secure future for Hong Kong on the basis of the Sino-British joint declaration of 1984. We have a continuing responsibility which will involve us in many difficult decisions over the next eight years. In particular, we must provide for those whose services are necessary for the prosperity and effective administration of Hong Kong in the years up to 1997.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Ask President Bush.

Mr. Hurd: The problem of confidence is shown by increasing emigration from the territory, and increasing numbers of people who contemplate leaving—42,000 people have left Hong Kong this year, and 55,000 are expected to leave next year. *[Interruption.]* A growing proportion of these people are those whom Hong Kong can least afford to lose.

Mr. Skinner: Ask President Bush.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Foreign Secretary. We cannot have a running commentary. It interrupts our proceedings. I ask the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to desist.

Mr. Hurd: This haemorrhage of talent puts at risk the competitiveness of Hong Kong's economy, the efficiency of its public service, the effectiveness of its education system—in short, its future.

Many of those who are leaving Hong Kong would not do so if they could obtain the assurance of right of abode in the United Kingdom. As hon. Members know from statements by the Prime Minister and other right hon. Friends, we have been working on a scheme to give such assurances to a limited number of key people and their dependants in the public and private sectors. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee recommended such a scheme in its report in June, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President told the House on 5 July that we would provide one. I can now explain to the House the conclusions we have reached.

We aim to give such people the confidence to remain in Hong Kong so that they can continue to make their contribution to the success and prosperity of the territory. We have to weigh in the balance our ability to accept the individuals concerned for settlement in this country, should that ever be necessary. We have to set this reality against our desire to be as effective as possible in restoring confidence in Hong Kong.

If, as has often been suggested, we gave the right of abode to all British dependent territories citizens in Hong Kong, we could, if that right was exercised, create unacceptable strains here. If, on the other hand, we kept the scheme too narrow, it would fail in its purpose and, at the end of the day, we might be faced with a much more severe problem.

After careful, detailed consideration over several months, we have concluded that the assurance to be given should take the form of full British citizenship, which would be awarded to recipients without their having to leave Hong Kong. The scheme will cover a maximum number of 50,000 households.

Not all the assurances would be distributed initially; in order to spread the administrative load and to give opportunities for those who may move into key positions in Hong Kong in later years, we shall hold back a proportion of the allocations for later in the life of this scheme. The best current estimate of the total numbers of people, including dependants, who might receive British citizenship in this way is 225,000. The scheme would cease by 1997. It is thus strictly limited in scope and time.

Beneficiaries will be selected on the basis of a points system, which will embrace people from a wide range of walks of life in Hong Kong. It will cover professional and business people, people working in educational and health services, and those with particular technical and managerial skills, as well as those in the public and disciplined services. The decisive criteria will be the value of the individuals' service to Hong Kong and the extent to which people in that category of employment are emigrating.

Provision will also be made within the overall total for those who, by virtue of their position, may find themselves vulnerable in the years ahead. Long service with British institutions in Hong Kong will be taken into account, so will knowledge of the English language.

In addition to this scheme, but again within the total numbers I have given, the Government propose to introduce a special measure designed to help companies and institutions in Hong Kong to retain their key personnel. We intend to reduce substantially the period of residence in this country which employees of such organisations would have to fulfil in order to achieve settled status and later citizenship. For those accepted on the scheme, employment or service in Hong Kong together with a period of residence in the United Kingdom would, after a total period of five years, result in citizenship. The companies and institutions concerned would arrange secondments of key personnel for work or training in the United Kingdom for relatively short periods of time, thereby minimising any disruption to their work in Hong Kong.

We intend to introduce the necessary legislation at the earliest opportunity which will provide for the grant of citizenship to beneficiaries under the scheme in both the public and private sectors.

Although this is a British responsibility, and one which we do not shirk, Hong Kong is an international centre, with huge international investment. Its major trading partners have a strong interest in Hong Kong's continuing

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stability and prosperity. Some countries have already found ways to give Hong Kong people assurances without their having to leave Hong Kong. It is clearly for us to take the lead, and I have set out our specific commitments. We shall now be asking our partners and allies to follow this lead.

I emphasise two final points. First, our proposals will be restricted to Hong Kong and the unique problem which we face there. They will have no relevance to other people elsewhere, and the principles of the British Nationality Act 1981 will remain intact. Second, they are designed not to encourage immigration into this country, but to persuade to remain in Hong Kong those whom we need to retain there if our last substantial colony is to pass successfully through the final eight years of British rule.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that on 5 July I made absolutely clear the view of Her Majesty's Opposition about the right of abode here? I said in this House:

"The Opposition believe that it would not be right to offer any commitment to Hong Kong British dependent territory passport holders on the right of entry into the United Kingdom or the right of abode here."

I added:

"I state clearly that the Opposition are against the creation of special favoured categories based on status or affluence." —[*Official Report*, 5 July 1989; Vol. 156, c. 312-13.]

For six months no one can have been in any doubt about our position. This afternoon the Foreign Secretary cited in his support the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. However, that Committee did not recommend his scheme, but specifically stated, under the recommendation of its own scheme, that the British Nationality Act 1981 would not be amended. What is more, it recommended use of the Home Secretary's discretion under section 4(5) of the Act. In this House on 5 July I suggested that vulnerable Crown servants could be helped by the use of the Home Secretary's discretion under the Immigration Act 1971.

On the basis of the scheme which he has put forward today, the Foreign Secretary has come to the worst way of fulfilling what he regards as his commitment. He has not worked out what he believes are essential categories and then decided to legislate on them, but thought of a number, haggled about it with the Home Secretary and been beaten down. He now offers that number to the House and says that it will be filled on the basis of a points system.

Such a system is inherently unworkable, invidious and divisive. How are the points to be weighted? How are they to be allocated? Who will allocate them? Will all heads of households in Hong Kong be invited to be considered? If not, how are those to be considered to be selected? Are they to be interviewed individually? For the British language qualification, are there to be tests? Will they be written or oral? How will points be allocated on the basis of the value of an individual's service—a highly subjective criterion? How will points be allocated on the basis of propensity to emigrate and of vulnerability? How will points be allocated on length of service to British institutions—and which institutions?

All hon. Members whose local authorities operate a points system for the operation of dwellings know what bitterness and dissatisfaction such a system arouses. How much more bitterness and envy will be aroused by a points system which decides who will receive the most prized possession of all—a British passport?

Does the Foreign Secretary believe that it is proper for a British passport to be allocated, not on clearly established criteria which everybody can understand, but on the basis of the accumulation of a number of points allocated on a subjective basis to the arbitrarily chosen number of 50,000 people placed in a queue? How will the 50,001st person in that queue feel, and how will others feel? Far from improving confidence, as the Foreign Secretary claims that he wishes the system to do, it will arouse doubt and uncertainty because no one will be sure whether he or she qualifies until the laborious process has been completed.

If the scheme is embodied in an Act, a Labour Government, on coming to office, will examine how far it has gone and how it has worked—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kaufman: A Labour Government will not be bound to continue it, but first we shall seek to prevent such a scheme from becoming law. We shall oppose legislation which is not only elitist and discriminatory but which, in our view, is wrong in principle.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman began by saying that we could be in no doubt about the position of the Opposition. It is perfectly true that we are in no doubt about what they are against. As he said, the Opposition have made it clear that they are against the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who argued wrongly that everyone who had a United Kingdom dependent territories passport should be given the right of abode.

The right hon. Gentleman has said that he is against categories, but I am not sure what he is in favour of. He must know, because he has visited Hong Kong, the overwhelming feeling not only in the public service but in the private sector that unless there is a scheme of this sort —of course they would like the numbers to be bigger—the lifeblood will gradually drain out of Hong Kong.

People in key positions in Hong Kong—the right hon. Gentleman entirely neglected the private sector, which was absurd—are telling their employers that they want to stay. They say that their homes, positions and lives are in Hong Kong, but that they want some sense of assurance: if they belonged to a French company, the French would give them a French passport, but as they work for a British company they have no such assurance.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I have not been bashing out this difficult matter. It has been worked out between the main Departments for many months and it has involved different people. Some newspapers today said that I had won the argument; some said that I had lost it. The point is that we have eventually worked out what we believe to be the most sensible balance between our desire for good race relations and harmony in our cities—that leads us to reject the SLD proposal—and our strong feeling that the House and the Government have a continuing duty of responsibility to the people of Hong Kong.

The scheme involves a points system, and no one pretends that it will be easy to devise or administer it. The right hon. Gentleman will have plenty of opportunities as the Bill goes through the House to examine how the points system will operate, but basically assurances will be given

to no more than 50,000 heads of households. Some of those assurances will be held back, for the obvious reasons that I have explained.

The figures will be distributed by categories of employment in the private and public sectors, and then the points will be awarded and the passports allocated accordingly. The scheme will be operated through the governor, the legal responsibility being that of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

We are not amending the 1981 Act, which provides the correct basis for the nationality law of this country. We are faced with a temporary—but quite long-term—and unique problem in our last major colony. It is a problem that will not go away and that is most sensibly tackled on the lines that I have described.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he has made a responsible and sensible decision which will help the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong? Is not one of the main problems about the existing schemes run by countries such as Canada, Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom the fact that they require a period of residence in those countries before the acquisition of nationality, thus obliging people to leave Hong Kong and accentuating the Hong Kong brain drain? Is not one of the main advantages of my right hon. Friend's proposal the fact that people who qualify under these arrangements will be able to remain in Hong Kong and contribute to its prosperity?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, who knows Hong Kong well, but who also knows well this country and his constituents. He knows very well, but was too polite to say, that the scheme and the numbers will be regarded in Hong Kong as being considerably too small. However, I believe that they will also be accepted as being likely to bring about the result at which we are aiming —to enable the kind of people on whom the colony depends to remain making their contribution to that colony.

My right hon. Friend is perfectly right in thinking that we examined various options. We examined an option that, in purely parliamentary terms, would have been easier. No primary legislation guarantees, or declaration offers, a right of abode. My right hon. Friend pointed out the trouble about that. For the assurance to be turned into citizenship, which is what most of the people concerned want, would require those people actually to come here. Therefore, that would, as it were, maximise the incentive to come here.

The point about the citizenship scheme requiring primary legislation is that it will not do that. It will enable the key people I am talking about to receive the assurance in the form of United Kingdom passports without leaving Hong Kong and the jobs that it is very important that they should continue to do.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Can the Foreign Secretary tell the House how many of the 42,000 people who, according to the statement, have left Hong Kong this year came to settle in Britain? If I am right in thinking that it was a very small percentage of the total, does not that give the lie to the fear that has been put about —that 3·5 million people are sitting in Hong Kong desperate to come to Britain? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that that is not the case and that it is the responsibility of the British Government to create the conditions in which those 3·5 million people can continue to live in prosperity in Hong Kong itself—which is what they wish?

By that standard, does the Foreign Secretary accept that, in our judgment, his scheme will fail to provide that assurance and, unhappily, will also involve so many arbitrary points where X will be chosen instead of Y—inevitably, by the nature of the scheme, which is also very unacceptable? There will be deep dismay in Hong Kong, deepened only by the statement of the official Opposition.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is correct on his first point. I do not have the figures, but I believe that one would find from them that most of those who left Hong Kong went to countries such as Australia and Canada. That is not our purpose. Our purpose is that they should continue as headmasters, engineers or professional people in running the colony. Any selective scheme requires something like a points system. If the right hon. Gentleman is endorsing the proposition of the leader of his party for a total grant of the right of abode, he is being totally logical but perfectly unrealistic.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Does my right hon. Friend understand how much I regret having to say that I disagreed with almost everything that he said and agreed with almost everything that was said by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) from the Opposition Front Bench?

Can my right hon. Friend say whether or not the pledge that we have given for the last four general elections—that there will be no further large-scale immigration—still stands?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend knows that, over the past four years, as Home Secretary I spent a lot of time trying, with his full support, to plug loopholes and to keep our immigration control strict and fair. I earned a good deal of obloquy from Opposition Members for doing so. I do not need any education on the importance of strict immigration control for entry into this country.

The purpose of our scheme is to persuade those who are key to running Hong Kong to remain abiding by their professions in that country. I believe that our scheme is apt to succeed in that.

Supposing that my right hon. Friend is right in his fear, and supposing that considerable numbers——

Mr. Skinner: The Foreign Secretary should answer his right hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Hurd: I am answering his question.

Supposing that considerable numbers of people come here, what would be the nature of the penalty that we would be paying? We would be paying the penalty of a sizeable but limited number of professional people, selected for their talent and experience, coming from one of the most successful societies created in the 20th century.

I put one final point to my right hon. Friend. He was a very successful chairman of our party, and he knows its traditions. This is just about the last main chapter in the story of this country's empire. I am rather keen, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend is rather keen, that that last chapter should not end in a shabby way.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that no one in the House can beg the problem that will face Hong Kong in the next eight

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years? In the same spirit, let me add that it is an open secret that in the past three or four months there have, quite properly, been disagreements and arguments throughout the Government, and the Foreign Secretary should not be surprised when similar disagreements and arguments follow his announcement of the scheme to the House. The fact that hon. Members may disagree with any scheme proposed by the Government does not mean that they do not appreciate Hong Kong's problem.

I wish to ask the Foreign Secretary only one question: is this special measure necessary? Some of the other schemes that have been discussed—the Foreign Secretary mentioned one—would, in my view, constitute a better approach. It is all very well to describe this scheme as a special measure, and as primary legislation, but the Government cannot avoid affecting the British Nationality Act 1981. That is the weakness in the Government's approach, and in the coming months, as the legislation comes before the House and I attack it, I shall not be arguing that the problem does not exist; I shall argue that the Government have set about dealing with it in the wrong way. It would be interesting, incidentally, to know whether the Home Secretary or the Foreign Secretary will pilot the legislation through the House.

Mr. Hurd: Both Departments have been studying the problem, and they have sent a joint team of officials to Hong Kong. We have done our best collectively, as a Government, to reach what we believe to be the right balance between the considerations that are clearly in the right hon. Gentleman's mind. Parliament will wish to examine the scheme and then make its decision, which is entirely right. In a way, by choosing the citizenship route we have increased the amount of parliamentary scrutiny and debate that would otherwise have been necessary.

The right hon. Gentleman covered a point that I had already touched on. There is already provision—although it would mean a change in stated policy—to expand the discretion of the Home Secretary regarding public servants, but there is nothing comparable in the private sector. My main quarrel with the official Opposition is that they have entirely ignored the crucial importance of the private sector to the running of the life of Hong Kong. A scheme is necessary to deal with the problem, and we believe that the scheme most likely to serve its purpose of keeping people in Hong Kong and not encouraging them to come here is a citizenship scheme. We have therefore decided that the most straightforward approach is the presentation of a Bill to the House.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend reassure us that the sole, or central, aim of his proposals is to anchor people in Hong Kong for years ahead and not to encourage them to come here? Does he accept that if the success of this or a similar policy is undemined and confidence collapses in Hong Kong—as it may well do—this country may be faced with an immigration challenge, and with the arrival of refugees in numbers exceeding the worst fears of some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, for which they would have to take some of the blame?

Will my right hon. Friend tell us whether any thought has been given to the tiny number of non-ethnic Chinese, including the Hong Kong Indians—I believe that there are about 1,500 families in all—who will not be accepted as citizens after 1997? They once thought that they were citizens of the United Kingdom; unless we do something, they will become citizens of nowhere.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend's first point is correct. We are anxious—as, indeed, they are—that those people should continue to ply their professions in Hong Kong, and the main aim of our scheme is to enable them to do so.

My right hon. Friend's second point is also right. In answering my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), I acknowledged that, in my own experience, it was right that, for the sake of good relations between communities in this country, immigration control should be strict as well as fair. If, however, because of political difficulties, we fail to make the necessary decisions about Hong Kong, now and in the years ahead—and I warn the House that they will be several and difficult—we shall ultimately have a refugee problem on our hands. [HON. MEMBERS: "No".] That is a statement of fact. We shall have a refugee problem on our hands that will make the numbers that we are discussing today seem relatively insignificant.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The Secretary of State may not be aware of the close relationship that has developed between Northern Ireland and many families in Hong Kong in the past decade. Many thousands of Hong Kong citizens now live in Northern Ireland, and they have turned out to be first-class and welcome people in the Province. They provide employment in the catering industry and electronics, and many Hong Kong families now send their children to boarding schools in Northern Ireland and to the two universities.

For years the United Kingdom has been keen to stand by its relationship with Hong Kong, within the old British empire and now, in the Commonwealth. We face the sensitive problem of 1997, and it would be an outrage for the United Kingdom to shirk its responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong. Therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that, when the legislation is presented to the House, the Ulster Unionist parliamentary party will look upon it sympathetically.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Member.

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): My right hon. Friend's statement fills me with foreboding for the future of race relations in Britain. How will he explain to the ethnic minorities who already live in Britain, many of whom have lived here for a great number of years, that we have to maintain strict controls on the permissions granted to their relatives when, at the same time, we have amended the law to create preferential class treatment for the Hong Kong Chinese?

Mr. Hurd: I shall explain it on the grounds that I have already given to the House. My hon. Friend knows Hong Kong, and he knows the difficulties and the problems that we have to wrestle with. We are responsible to our constituents, but we are also responsible for supervising and monitoring what the United Kingdom Government and, to some extent, the Hong Kong Government do to steer the colony through the next eight years. We have tried to strike a balance for the reasons that my hon. Friend gave, and they are valid reasons.

We have turned down the suggestion that was put to us powerfully by people in Hong Kong and by some

Members of the House, to allow everybody in the colony the right of abode. We did that for the reasons that my hon. Friend has in mind. For the reasons that my hon. Friend gave, we do not feel entitled to say that we will take no action, and there will be no scheme or effort to give assurances to those people who are key to the running of the territory. That would be an irresponsible line to take, and in the long run—perhaps not too long—my hon. Friend and hon. Members who have worries, which I understand, would live to regret it.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that what he has announced today is one law for the rich and another for the poor in Hong Kong and he is prepared to bend and break the British Nationality Act 1981 to achieve that? Will he join me in condemning the words of his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), which do nothing to help race relations in Britain?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Member is wrong. If we were interested simply in extending privileges to the rich, we would have set about it in a different way. We are talking about the public sector. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made that accusation before he saw the scheme, but now that he has considered the proposals, and knows that it is not true, he did not raise that objection today. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has not had the advantage of looking at the proposals for a few minutes, and is therefore repeating the old parrot cries, which are wrong. We are talking about key people in the public service regardless of their capital and affluence—head teachers, civil servants, engineers. The test is their importance to Hong Kong, and the danger to the territory if large numbers of such people left, and not their affluence.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the purpose of the proposal today is to restore confidence in Hong Kong and to enable it to continue successfully and in prosperity through 1997? Therefore, is it not surprising that he has made no mention in his statement of what is probably the most important way to restore confidence in the colony and that is to allow the development of democracy in Hong Kong in the fastest possible way, to ignore the veto attempted by the Chinese Republic, and to ensure that its arrangements—that it dictates after 1997—converge with those that my right hon. Friend and the Hong Kong people may make before 1997? Does my right hon. Friend accept that that is the best way in which to restore confidence and that this divisive measure—it is divisive in Britain and in Hong Kong—will not achieve that objective?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend raises a different and important matter. Before long, we shall have to make clear, and inform the House of, our decision about the nature of the democratic content of elections in Hong Kong in 1991. It is clear from the way in which my hon. Friend phrased his question that he knows the difficulties there, the problems of the Basic Law, and our aim to produce continuity before and after 1997. I shall inform the House about our conclusions on that fairly soon, I hope. I think that my hon. Friend is being unrealistic if he supposes that we can continue the successful governance of Hong Kong without a scheme that tackles this nationality problem.

I apologise to the House. I failed to answer an important question about the non-Chinese minority asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). We have considered the matter carefully. They will of course qualify for inclusion in the scheme I have announced. They have assurances that were given to them by Lord Glenarthur in, I think, 1986. We do not think that it would be sensible to expand the number or the total scheme by making a special and different provision for them.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that this is a bad day for the Government, but a quite disgraceful day for the Labour party, which seems bereft of all moral principle and is in a position of shame, being linked to the point of view of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)?

Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that the House has absolute power over the 3·5 million people in Hong Kong we are talking about, but that some right hon. and hon. Members do not want to exercise any responsibility for them and are prepared to wash their hands of them so that they may be handed over to what is known to be a murderous regime in Peking? Is he aware that, if he is to have our support—to judge from the noises behind him it might be important this time—we shall need assurances that among the vulnerable group he talked about will be journalists and local politicians, who are vulnerable to retaliation from Peking? Will he take this opportunity to demolish the myth that has been going about that the Government and the British state have no unqualified objection to people entering the United Kingdom? Will he confirm that there is a commitment to 1 million people from South Africa under the nationality legislation and to unquantifiable millions from north America, all of them white?

Mr. Hurd: I accept the hon. Member's support without accepting his adjectives or most of his arguments. I have made it clear that we are talking about people who may be vulnerable because they have taken part in the democratic process in some way.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My right hon. Friend referred to the need for a statement on Hong Kong. Is it not a fact that the United Kingdom has a clear duty, as the governing power in Hong Kong and as co-signatory of the joint declaration, to maintain stability and prosperity there? Is it not also a fact that British and Chinese business quarters in the territory have made it clear that measures similar to these are just what they want to ensure that stability and prosperity?

Mr. Hurd: They would like more, of course; I acknowledge that. We will have to explain why we have pitched on a scheme and on a number which is considerably smaller than the upper end of the scale that was hoped for in Hong Kong. Otherwise, my hon. Friend is perfectly right. Of course the Government and the House have a duty. The House has a long tradition of looking after the interests of those who live under the Crown in different parts of the world. We are coming to the end of that story and, as I said before, I should like to make a reasonable end of it.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): How many entry clearance officers does the Foreign Secretary propose to send to Hong Kong? Will there be a primary purpose rule

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

in the legislation that he will introduce to the House? If there are to be entry clearance officers, will he send some of those from Islamabad, who in the past few years have kept wives from their husbands, children from their fathers, fiancees from their future husbands, and grandchildren from their grandparents and have prevented a host of people who have a right to be here from coming to Britain? Will there not be a new word in the English language—Hurdism, standing for privilege, elitism, professionalism and all those who have wealth and authority as opposed to all those who are poor and underprivileged?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman appears to be advocating the total admission of everybody. No other meaning can be drawn from his question. I wish that the Opposition would get their act together. The accusation that the hon. Gentleman made against me stands up for a second only if he is in favour of admitting everybody; otherwise, it makes no sense at all. Of course the scheme will have to be carefully administered. The dependants selected will be spouses and children under 18; therefore, the question of primary purpose does not arise.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): Will my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister accept congratulations on standing firm against more than a little pressure from Conservative Members and more than a little hypocrisy from the Opposition? Will my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary press on with the proposals, fulfil Britain's obligations to Hong Kong, and restore confidence in Hong Kong without forgetting that Britain wishes to play a part in what will be an outstanding success story in future?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. The anxieties which have been expressed by Conservative Members are perfectly natural. It would have been surprising had they not been expressed. Conservative Members realise far more clearly than Opposition Members that immigration control which works is essential to decent race relations in Britain. We do not need persuading of that. That is why we have not gone nearly as far as has been suggested by almost everyone in Hong Kong. We have struck the right balance.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Surely the answer to the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) is that after what has happened in Tiananmen square, long after the Conservative manifesto, honour demands that the House meets the obligation to do more to sustain the prosperity and security of Hong Kong. The scheme that the Foreign Secretary has advanced, which is selective and based on service, has a very good chance of retaining those skilled people beyond 1997, as our responsibilities go beyond that, and ensuring a successful transition to Communist China's control and a successful Hong Kong into the 21st century.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is right. By and large, our imperial story is overwhelmingly honourable and we should try to keep it that way. But in this case honour and self-interest coincide.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend has to choose between his perception—which I believe is mistaken—of the interests of the people of Hong Kong and the desires of the people of these overcrowded islands whose home he is, I believe, arrogantly, making available. He will understand that people here feel deep resentment after a generation of imposed immigration into Britain. I believe that they will feel that he has chosen the people of Hong Kong, and, although I have the deepest respect for my right hon. Friend, I believe that he will not be forgiven.

Mr. Hurd: It is not a question of the Government choosing the people of Hong Kong over my hon. Friend's constituents; that is not the issue at all. We have struck a balance which we believe is necessary to safeguard an interest of this country, of my hon. Friend's constituents and, in particular, of the Conservative party. I do not think that we would be forgiven—to borrow my hon. Friend's phrase—if we simply took the short-term easy way, pretended that the problem would go away when clearly it will not, and failed to take any action on the lines that I have described. That would not only be wrong but would come back and seriously hit us before too long.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Secretary of State accept—from one speaking as, in the words of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), an imposed immigrant and Member of Parliament—that no Opposition Member has suggested that Britain should play host to 5·5 million Hong Kong Chinese this week or next week? Many Opposition Members and many people outside the House have listened with mounting incredulity as elements on the Tory Back Benches have outbid each other on the subject with sub-Powellite rhetoric.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that many people outside the House know that we should not be hearing from the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) if the subject were white South Africans? Many people outside the House are concerned that hon. Members continue to treat the issue for what it is—a unique and difficult issue about how Britain withdraws from its last outpost of the empire with honour, and not in the shabby and shameful way that some Conservative Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but she must ask a question.

Ms. Abbott: The question is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady might be able to ask her question when we have a debate.

Ms. Abbott: Is this an issue of how we withdraw from Hong Kong with honour, or is it, as some Conservative Members would have us believe, an issue of an imminent yellow peril?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady mistakes the position. It is perfectly natural that my right hon. and hon. Friends should express concern and anxiety. I do not think that anyone can seriously criticise them for doing so. Anyone who has followed events in Hong Kong and what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President have been saying for months will know what the problem is and how we propose to tackle it. It is perfectly reasonable that people should express their anxieties and concerns. I have not had any complaints or objections of the kind that the hon.

Lady made. Now that we have agreed on a scheme, the Government must show, as I believe we clearly can, that it is better to go ahead with it, to implement it and to offer assurances to key people, as it proposes, rather than to sit back and say, "This is too difficult; we propose to do nothing," and allow our last substantial colony to decline and perhaps slide into chaos.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the subsequent business before the House. As the House well knows, it is a Back-Bench Members' day today, and we have a further statement before reaching that. I shall allow three more questions from each side, and then we must move on. It will be perfectly in order for hon. Members to raise this matter on the Christmas Adjournment motion if they are not called on the statement.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Does my right hon. Friend recall the spontaneous generosity with which British people accepted the sudden influx of Ugandan Asian passport holders in 1972 when they were confronted with the terrorism of Amin? Does he agree that his proposals for a new human line of credit, which may never be drawn on fully, to safeguard the future of the citizens of Hong Kong will be accepted by the same British public with the same generosity of spirit?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Of course these are difficult questions, and they stir feelings that have been quite accurately reflected in the House. Nevertheless, we must make decisions and take responsibility. I believe, as does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, that they will be much more clearly and sympathetically understood than is being assumed by some people.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Will the Minister accept that Opposition Members and others have constituents with relatives in Hong Kong? Will he say how he thinks confidence can be brought to a society by the creation of first and second-class citizens and apartheid by passport? Will he say what will happen to the rest of the community if the Chinese people's army moves in, because he has said that that is the only occasion on which the passports will be used? Is the majority of the community to be abandoned by the Tory party?

Mr. Hurd: The scheme is of course only part of the total policy but it is an essential part. We will not be able to keep Hong Kong in security and prosperity without a scheme of that kind. Our main effort must be to enable the colony to go forward on the basis of the joint declaration, with all that that means.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the true key to the future stability and prosperity of Hong Kong lies in Peking? Only if the Chinese Government are able to show enthusiastic confidence in the future of Hong Kong will proper stability be retained. Will he also accept that the scheme he announced today will go some little way to providing reassurance, pending the wider support that Peking must show for the future of Hong Kong?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right on his first point. We must not be passive but constantly active in seeking to show the People's Republic of China that it is in its interests, as well as those of the people of Hong Kong, that the joint declaration should be fully honoured in the spirit as well as the letter.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What reflections, thoughts or advice come from the place where the Secretary of State once worked—our embassy in Peking? Does he accept that what was said by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) was far too facile, and ought we not to recognise that the complex position that arose after Tiananmen square cannot just be described as a "murderous regime"? In those circumstances, ought we not to remember that the history of China is that China has stuck to its international promises and there is no reason to believe that it will not do so in future, whatever the internal difficulties, in relation to 1997?

Mr. Hurd: The House has expressed its views on what happened in Tiananmen square, and I do not think that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) would dissent from what was said. We must have important and continuous dealings with the People's Republic, for the reasons that I gave in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell).

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, until 1962, more than 1·5 million residents of Hong Kong enjoyed the right to a full British passport and to abode in this country, and that relatively few of them exercised that right? That supports strongly the belief expressed by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary that, unless things go badly wrong in Hong Kong, very few of the people under discussion will exercise the rights that he has announced. If things go badly wrong, we have a strong moral obligation to help.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am grateful for the way he expressed his view.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch) Why does not the Foreign Secretary admit that, although there are two tenable logical positions that the Government could have adopted, there is only one tenable principle position? The two tenable, logical positions are eiher that everyone should be given the right to come to Britain or that no one should. The one tenable principle position is that everyone should be given the right to come to Britain.

Mr. Hurd: That comment comes from below the Gangway. It was specifically repudiated above the Gangway a few weeks ago. This matter will now be opened up for further discussion. The Government's measures will be discussed, and so will the total lack of coherent Labour party policy.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I give an undertaking to the hon. Members I have not called that I will bear them in mind when the matter is next discussed, as I am sure it will be.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it after the statement.

Fisheries Council

4.43 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

Together with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I represented the United Kingdom at the recent Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels on 18 and 19 December.

The stocks in the waters most important to us are seriously depleted and there is no way in which a responsible Community or Government could seek to allow fishing on a scale which would further endanger the future. Therefore, no package could have been agreed which would provide all the fishing opportunities that fishermen would like. Our purpose was therefore to gain the best possible opportunities for British fishermen compatible with a responsible conservation policy.

To that end, our first aim was to maintain the principle of relative stability and thereby guarantee our fishermen their fair share of community fishing opportunities. The key test of that was the allocations under the second Greenland protocol. I am pleased to inform the House that these have been made fully in accordance with that fundamental principle, despite the strong opposition of certain member states.

Our second priority was to argue against the Commission's proposals which would have set the total allowable catches and therefore British quotas below the figures recommended by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas—the scientific body to which we all adhere. We succeeded in obtaining our aims fully in respect of haddock and largely in respect of cod, the two main edible species. In the case of whiting, we negotiated changes which gave us a much improved quota.

Our third priority was to ensure that the special arrangements that protect our most vulnerable fishing communities under the Hague preference would be continued.

From an isolated position, we again secured recognition of our Hague preference for North sea haddock, obtaining 87 per cent. of the community stock available. That is over 10 per cent. more than we would otherwise have got. As all that comes from allocations of fish which would otherwise have gone to other Community countries, the House will recognise what an important achievement this is.

During the debate last Thursday, we defined our fourth priority as securing a continuing arrangement to safeguard the important mackerel fishery to the north of Scotland. That proved extremely difficult, and most of the last session of the council was devoted to it. We were eventually successful in convincing other member states of the reasonableness of our case and secured the continued flexibility to catch a part of that stock in the North sea.

In total, 17 United Kingdom quotas, including Channel cod, Irish sea herring and west of Scotland and eastern Channel sole, were increased above the level proposed by the Commission. Moreover, we again made a number of useful swaps, bringing advantages, including increased North sea herring and sole as well as extra quantities of a number of stocks off the south-west.

The House made it perfectly clear that both sides were dissatisfied with the agreement initialled by the Commission and Norway, and I was particularly critical of it. It is therefore particularly satisfying that we secured a number of important changes which made possible the increases for our fishermen.

Conservation is the key to increasing opportunities for our fishing industry. Total allowable catches and quotas canot achieve that on their own. Last week, the Government undertook to press the Commission yet again to bring forward improved technical conservation measures. We were supported in that by almost every speaker in the debate last Thursday. I am therefore encouraged by the Commission's commitment to produce proposals on that by the end of July. Following the useful discussions we have had with our industry over recent months, we will also be putting our own ideas to the Commission in the near future.

These are urgent matters, and although we have ensured that the unacceptable proposals for community involvement in our quota management have been withdrawn, we have committed ourselves to take immediate steps to reduce our fishing effort against North sea haddock.

We will also be having an intensive dialogue with our industry to find ways of improving our fisheries management systems so that they encourage rational investment and exploitation.

It is clear that only by working with the industry and harnessing fishermen's own skills and judgment can we hope to secure the necessary improvements in how our fleet prosecutes its fishing opportunities. Centralised planning and subsidy are certainly not going to produce satisfactory results.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said in the House last week, a decommissioning scheme would not be a sensible use of the taxpayers' money. Moreover, subsidising the construction and modernisation of fishing vessels serves in general to distort rather than encourage sensible investment decisions. In future, subject to clearance with the Commission in accordance with article 92 of the treaty of Rome, we plan to continue to grant aid essential safety improvements for fishing vessels. Otherwise, we intend to restrict vessel grant aid to those cases where it is needed to back up Community grant aid.

We have shown our commitment to the industry by our determination at this week's Council to preserve the fundamental principles of relative stability and our Hague preference and to secure the best possible outcome for our industry consistent with conservation. That is what the House asked us to do. We have achieved it in almost every particular.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I am sure that the Minister will accept that the Opposition recognise the importance of conservation measures, and that quota figures must be based on scientific advice if fish stocks are to be protected and improved. To suggest otherwise—that advice and quotas should be ignored—would be totally irresponsible.

We welcome the fact that the agreed quotas are better in most cases than those that the Commissioner was seeking, although the figure for cod was less than was hoped for. We also welcome the deals on access to

Greenland waters, the mackeral quotas and the improvements on Channel cod quotas after the swaps are taken into account.

Overall, however, the deal still represents major problems and some notable failures which will cause severe difficulties for the fishing fleet. Why have we done so badly with the cod quota in north Norway? Does the Minister accept that that will severely hit what is left of our deep-water freezer fleet? Why did the Minister manage to get the maximum available quota—according to scientific advice—for haddock, but fail to get that for cod?

Will the Minister confirm that he agreed to allocate 500 tonnes from the United Kingdom cod allocation to the Danes? Is that right? Was that a trade-off as part of a deal to obtain Hague preference levels? Does the Minister accept that, with the industry in severe difficulties, a firm package of conservation measures is required to be drawn up by the Ministry to reduce the discard levels by increasing mesh size and type, to protect juvenile fish?

Does the Minister also accept that firm policing measures of agreed quota are vital? Can he confirm that expenditure on fishery protection in Scotland decreased from £6·14 million last year to £5·4 million this year, according to the provisional figures? Does he agree that that does not imply that there are adequate protection measures?

I am sure that the whole industry will be disappointed to hear the Minister rejecting central planning and the decommissioning scheme. It is not the industry's fault that it is at the mercy of Community planning and regulations. A free market approach to the industry struggling to survive this period would lead to bankruptcies, redundancies and the undermining of the whole fishing industry.

The industry needs a planned structure of support. Last year £21·8 million was spent in aid for building and modernising the fishing fleet, even though the Ministry knew that there was over-capacity in the fleet. Why cannot some of that money be switched to a proper decommissioning scheme, taking into account the problems of horsepower and all the other problems? I believe that the industry is playing its part in trying to adapt to these difficult times. The Government must accept that they also have a responsibility to assist and protect the industry on which so many jobs and communities depend.

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) for his rather grudging comments about our successes. The industry was rather more generous and said that we came away with the best possible deal. I heard that from the industry leaders themselves directly after they had heard details of the deal. We gave details to them as soon as they were complete. The hon. Gentleman must recall our debate last Thursday in which hon. Members did not believe that it would be possible to get the whole agreement with Norway reopened. In fact, we have had it substantially changed.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): We asked for it.

Mr. Gummer: Of course the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) asked me for it. However, if he looks back at what he said last Thursday, he will see that he asked for it as if he did not believe that we would have the determination to do it. He did not believe that it was possible. We did what he asked us to do. It is a bit hard for the hon. Member for South Shields now to appear to say that we did not get everything on every point that the United Kingdom, among 12 other nations, wanted. We got almost everything we sought, and that is a remarkable achievement.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Minister is the "nearly man".

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who speaks so often from a sedentary position, has not followed or understood the negotiations. That is obvious from that comment.

The United Kingdom has fought for a Common Market policing force. That force has been substantially supported and extended by the United Kingdom. We have spent a great deal more money in recent years on enforcement, but we have spent it more effectively. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has found a number of ways in recent years to improve enforcement, but at lower cost. That seems to be valuable. It is very odd that the Opposition measure expenditure and not efficacy. That is an element of their economic policy which has brought them to rack and ruin for so long.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said that the industry was at the mercy of European Community planning. It is not: it is at the mercy of reduced fish stocks. The point of the Community planning is to share out the fish equitably between countries. At a time when we have greater capacity than we can possibly use with the available opportunities, I do not believe that it is sensible to continue to grant-aid the modernisation of that capacity, which only increases it. Therefore, I believe that it is more sensible to do what we are doing.

I have considered the details of the decommissioning scheme, and I believe that the Public Accounts Committee was right. The scheme as it used to be caused exactly the opposite effect from what was intended. Opposition Members believe that we could have a different scheme, but I do not believe that any scheme is the proper way to deal with the problem. To deal with the problem we should have the conservation measures that we will put before the Commission and a more sensible way of dealing with our quota management, both of which factors will be changed considerably. I am sure that Opposition Members will be pleased with what results.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that there will be a debate later tonight on the future of the United Kingdom fishing industry. Perhaps detailed questions could be raised in that debate—although I accept that I am not an expert on fishing. If that were the case, perhaps we could reach that debate more rapidly.

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): Mr. Speaker, you will always be welcome in Scarborough.

During the negotiations, was it accepted either that the scientists were consistently wrong in fixing quotas or that the fishermen were wrong in not keeping to the quota system? As a result of that examination, did my right hon. Friend the Minister conclude that enforcement should be better in future? I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his tremendously successful period of negotiation. Anyone who has studied the problem must conclude that he has done a first-class job within the limits for our fishermen.

[Sir Michael Shaw]

We have a complete haddock quota. Now that that quota is for the country as a whole, will new enforceable arrangements be made to make sure that all our fishermen get their fair share of it?

Mr. Gummer: We shall seek to do the latter in the fairest possible way. On my hon. Friend's original question, we discussed the reasons for the continued decline in the stock. It is our view that there was considerable over-fishing, certainly in earlier years. That has been very much reduced, but there is still a great deal to be done in that direction and in the direction of discards. That is why we must have a real package of conservation measures. I shall hold hon. Members to their words in the previous debate. They said that they would support those conservation measures, even though they will be difficult.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I give credit where credit is due. In the negotiations, the Minister and his right hon. and hon. Friends succeeded in achieving success with regard to critical TACs and flexibility on the north of Scotland mackerel fishery, and obtained proposals on conservation measures to come forward next year. However, he will cause great dismay to the industry by effectively jettisoning any plans for decommissioning. He will ask the industry to accept a much reduced fishing effort. How does he propose to manage the reduction in capacity without decommissioning? What will be the effect of his proposals today on meeting the target set under the multi-annual guidance programme? With the exception of safety improvements, vessel grants will be allowed only when the European Community is also giving grant aid. Does that mean that he is handing the Commission responsibility for the future structure of the industry? Is that not an abdication of his responsibility?

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his first comments. Obviously, we would not want to exclude people from European Community grant, because there is no matching grant from the United Kingdom. That is the reason for that decision. On the rest of what the hon. Gentleman said, he will have to watch major changes both in conservation terms and in other proposals that will come forward. A decommissioning scheme would not achieve the ends that he desires. A whole series of different things will achieve those ends. As we discuss matters in the coming months, no doubt we will decide, first in prospect, who is right and then, in retrospect, who was right.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): May I be the second hon. Member to congratulate my right hon. Friend on a very worthwhile task? The figures that he has achieved were almost unbelievable only a few days ago. As my right hon. Friend knows, there are two other points to conservation. First, there are rumours from the South Coast Fishermen's Association that French trawlers are still using a boom trawl which scoops up almost any size fish. Secondly, my right hon. Friend's Ministry issues licences from South West Water for the dumping of sludge. That can have harmful effects not only on oyster beds in the Solent but on the coarse fishing around the island.

Mr. Gummer: I assure my hon. Friend that I will take up any information that he gives me about the illegal use of equipment, particularly as I want the Community to have further and tougher measures on these matters, and we must make sure that they are enforced. Sludge is 95 per cent. water. Wherever there is any danger of it having any kind of deleterious effect, my Ministry does not issue a licence. If my hon. Friend has any particular cases in mind, I shall be happy to look at them. I take a close personal interest in the matter and I am determined that fishing grounds shall not be invaded.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does the Minister accept that Opposition Members believe that he has done the best he could, given the very bad hand that he was dealt by the Commission at the outset? Does he accept also that that implies that he is still gambling with the industry? Is he aware that, instead of centralised planning and subsidy, he is offering the restructuring of the fleet by the attrition of bankruptcy, without any regard to the people whose livelihoods depend on the sea, whether on the catching side or on the processing side? Why does the right hon. Gentleman have such a principled objection to subsidy? He is quite prepared to pay farmers under the set-aside scheme, but he is unwilling to help fishermen, people on land and crews by introducing a decommissioning scheme that would take account of their fears and responsibilities?

Mr. Gummer: After his kind comments, I must promise the hon. Gentleman that I would be happy to spend the money if I thought that it was a good way of spending money. But I do not think that it will achieve that end. There are better ways of dealing with this matter. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, apart from this year, in every previous year, although fishing opportunities declined, fishermen have received significantly more from the sale of fish. Therefore, the actual return to fishermen has increased in real terms every year until the present, when the 11 per cent. cut in opportunity was matched by only a 9 per cent. increase in price.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): My right hon. Friend will realise that I ask my question with some reluctance. I congratulate him on what he has achieved this year. I congratulate the Government also on the £50 million of taxpayers' money that they have put into the fishing industry every year, regardless. On central planning, I congratulate my right hon. Friend also on beating off the European Community's insistence of the disturbance of relative stability. That is the most important factor. Does he agree that we must keep relative stability?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. I also pay tribute to the Fisheries Ministers in Scotland and England, who, over the past few months, have been preparing for this negotiation. It is only through their work that we have achieved what we did.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): It would be churlish not to congratulate the Secretary of State on the general success of the talks in Brussels. He said that there were four members in the United Kingdom ministerial team. Which Minister represented the interests of the Northern Ireland fishing industry in the discussions?

The matter of decommissioning is for another day, but I should like answers to one or two questions relating to the Irish sea. The Minister said that the herring quota has been increased. Is that an increase over the Commission's

proposal or an increase over last year's quota? On whiting in the Irish sea, there was a Commission proposal for a reduction of more than 58 per cent., to 8,300 tonnes. Will the Minister assure us that that has been overcome? He said that there has been an increase in whiting, but does that increase apply to the Irish sea? Until we are provided with actual figures, we will be discussing the matter in the dark. When will we have the actual figures that were decided at the Council meeting?

Mr. Gummer: The actual figures will not be available from the Commission for a couple of weeks. Therefore, I will place in the Library in the next 24 hours, I hope, the figures that will be the provisional figures which we ourselves have worked out in detail in a form that is acceptable to the House. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Commission proposal on whiting in the Irish sea was for a total allowable catch of only 8,300 tonnes as against 18,170 tonnes last year. We got that proposal of 8,000 tonnes increased to 15,000 tonnes. It is not as good as last year's, but it is within scientific advice, and that seemed to us to be the right answer. I am sure that it will help the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

I represented the whole of the United Kingdom in the discussions, and, on every occasion on television and radio, I mentioned the importance to Northern Irish fishermen of this matter.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I add my congratulations to all members of the ministerial team on putting up a tremendous and successful fight on behalf of fishermen in all parts of the United Kingdom. Will my right hon. Friend say something about the impact of the deal on the south-west? Am I right in thinking that, although there has been an increase in the channel cod quota, which we welcome, there has been a minuscule reduction in the sole quota in western waters and that there has been or could be a decrease in the plaice quota? How could that possibly be offset?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. I am using figures that include the swaps that have taken place as a adjunct to these discussions, as they always do. Out of the 24 United Kingdom quotas in the south and south-west for 1990, four have been increased, 13 have been retained at the same level, and seven have been reduced. That is a better outcome than we had feared.

In addition, there has been some increase in Channel cod and sole has been subject to some swaps. I shall give my hon. Friend some details so that he can see exactly how it affects his constituents. The Channel cod TAC is particularly important because we have about 2 per cent. more in the quota although there is a lower TAC. I am sure that that will be a relief to my hon. Friend's fishermen.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Does the Minister recall what was said in last week's debate about the knock-on effects of the quota cuts on the other fishing fleets in other parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom that are not directly involved? Bearing that in mind, will he consider directing a serious research effort into the prawn stocks in the Minch to make absolutely sure that in a couple of years we shall not be discussing quota cuts to deal with those stocks in the way that we are discussing cod and haddock today?

On his statement about the diminishing grant for the construction of new vessels, was the right hon. Gentleman speaking for his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland? If so, will he remember that some of the fleets are not over-capacity but under-capacity and deal with stocks that could bear some more fishing, which means that it would not be wise universally to end all grants for new vessels?

Mr. Gummer: Yes, I am speaking for my right hon. and learned Friend, who is present and will have heard the hon. Gentleman's point. I shall certainly look into his point about prawns. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will help me in saying to many other fishermen that any improvement that benefits, for example, the Scottish fisheries is important for English fishermen also because it relieves some of the pressure that would otherwise have arisen on the stocks that have not changed.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Following the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether he made any progress on the subjective regulations that were proposed on the judgment of oyster meat quality, which many south coast fishermen believe to be unenforceable? Did my right hon. Friend take up my point about the disparity between the French regulations for the taking of bass and the nursery stocks that he has proposed for the larger size of bass which the south coast fishermen are required to fish? Will he bear in mind the fact that the French are still plundering the nursery stocks in the Channel?

Mr. Gummer: I did not believe that it was the right moment to take up those issues, which might have divided me from putative friends when I was in the business of trying to gather together as much support as possible for the British position. I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that the French have suggested that they are prepared to take up on bass parallel rules which would be similar to our own. We are seeking to press the Commission to ensure that its package will bring into line a whole series of conservation measures so that our fishermen realise that, when they are asked to take tough measures, they are taking them in common with other fishermen and that other fishermen will not be allowed to have an advantage.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Minister accept that the deal that he has struck will cause enormous difficulties for the fishing industry? On the specific question of haddock, which is almost exclusively a United Kingdom stock and largely a Scottish stock, will the Minister explain why we have to wait another six months for the possibility of conservation measures designed to allow the young fish to escape, which might work, and why we are pursuing the policy of low quotas, which has failed before and will fail again? Why was action on industrial fishing not included on the agenda? Is he aware that his dismissive attitude towards providing assistance for the industry in this its hour of need will not be forgotten by the fishing communities?

Mr. Gummer: I am surprised that, having listened to a statement in which a Minister has brought back all the things that the hon. Gentleman said we would not be tough enough to fight for, he has not had the courtesy to give thanks for those things that have arrived. The industry will notice that, once again, the Scottish National party is carping about such matters, that it never ever gives

[Mr. Gummer]

credit where credit is due, and that it always proposes a simple answer in which there is no pain. That is why the fishing industry takes no notice of what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Having known my right hon. Friend for about 20 years, I am not surprised that he has once again proved to be a doughty fighter on behalf of our fishermen. I should like to ask him a specific question that concerns fishermen in Wales and the south-west and especially my fishermen in Milford Haven whom my right hon. Friend came to see last year. I refer to the European Court ruling of 13 December, which overturned parts of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. Did the negotiations take into account the fact that that would have a serious effect on our quota? Did we get more as a result of the hearing?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments, but I do not believe that the European Court hearing should concern us overmuch. We should have liked to win on every count, but we won on the majority of counts and we can use that hearing to do a great deal to exclude from our quotas those people who have no business to be fishing them. Therefore, I hope that we shall be able to do what my hon. Friend wants, but in relation to those things that are found to be legal. I hope that the fishermen in my hon. Friend's constituency will recognise that the size of the British fleet should be measured with British boats, and that it should not include those who have nothing to do with Britain. I shall not go firm on any figures about the British fleet until I have managed to remove from the list those who should have never been on it.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Minister consider giving a friendly and efficacious answer to a friendly and efficacious question? On the July marine conservation measures, will the Minister consider sending some of his most experienced inspectors, who on no account should live near the north of Scotland and should preferably come from the south of England, to find out what is really happening in the area of Ullapool, Aultbea and Wester Ross in relation to two things—first, the sand eels which provide so much food for fish, and, secondly, what some fish farmers are doing in letting out effluent, taking cheap corner cuts and sometimes opening the gates when the prices are not right and letting loose fish farm salmon with heaven knows what genetic effect on the Atlantic stocks? Does he accept that this is a serious question and agree that it is something that MAFF should find out about?

Mr. Gummer: I take seriously what the hon. Gentleman has said. If there were truth in either of the points that he has made—I have to say "if", because I have not done the research to which he draws my attention—it would be a serious matter and something on which we should take immediate action. I promise the hon. Gentleman that I shall look into the matter to see how best to attest what he has put to me.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations, not only on the outcome of the negotiations but on the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), which will be extremely welcome to my fishermen in Swanage, Weymouth and Portland, when he said that the French will follow our lead on physical conservation measures? Can he say more about how he will press the rest of our partners in the EEC to take such conservation measures as setting up nursery areas, increasing mesh sizes and reducing the size of the fish that are landed? Has my right hon. Friend had any success with other nations during this round of talks?

Mr. Gummer: The French have already agreed to take action in relation to the Channel, and we are working closely with them? One thing that is noticeable as a result of the agreement is the degree to which Fisheries Ministers throughout Europe have come to be able to work closely together. Therefore, I believe that the common conservation measures that will be proposed will cover most of the things that my hon. Friend wants to cover and that they will receive support throughout the Community. I also hope that they will receive real support in the House from hon. Members of all parties, because they will not be easy measures. It is no good proposing conservation measures as if they were a simple answer that would cause no hurt. They will mean real changes in fishing practice.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does the Minister accept that the great majority of Scottish Members recognise that the settlement had to be within the terms of the scientific recommendations, and that to urge otherwise in the interests of local populism is irresponsible and would repeat the errors of the past that have cost us dear down to the present time? Will he reconsider his comments in last week's debate about the knock-on effects to which my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) referred, when he said that the effects on other areas of over-fishing by one section of the fleet were not a matter on which the European lead should be accepted, and recognised that there was a need to do something about that? Will he now look closely at the case for establishing regional managemet schemes around the coast? Will the Minister say something about the need to increase mesh sizes and nets? Should that not be at the top of the conservation priority list, not least because I have a net manufacturing interest in my constituency?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right. Conservation measures, mesh sizes and gear and the problems of discards are absolutely top priority. I think that the Commission will reach that conclusion in the urgent report that is to be made by a high level group. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments about keeping to the scientific advice. It is not that we need to discard the TACs and quotas, but that we need to underpin them with conservation measures.

It is a serious matter that there are still one or two hon. Members—although only one or two—who propose conservation as an easy alternative to TACs and quotas, when both are very difficult and need to be held together. The hon. Gentleman has a good record of not being populist in these matters.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about regional management of quotas, I have already said that we must entirely reconsider the way in which we manage them. I am not satisfied with the present system, and we must find better ways to do it. Anybody who cares about the

industry would agree with that. I have no doubt that there will be a large number of arguments about how best to do it.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister has repeatedly referred to the scientific advice, but I am sure that he will understand that fishermen in my part of the world, and no doubt in other parts, sometimes wonder about the quality of that advice. Will he be exploring any measures to increase the advice available and the work that goes into forming that advice?

My fishermen feel strongly about the question of regional quotas. Can he tell us about the direction in which he thinks matters may move?

Mr. Gummer: I do not want to elaborate, as I should not like to give credence to the unfortunate view of some fishermen that, if there is any alternative, it means that they will get more fish. The only way for some fishermen to get more fish is for others to catch less. That is the nature of the present shortage of stock. I do not want to give any credence to the belief that some rearrangements will mean that vast stocks of untapped fish will be provided—if that is not mixing about five metaphors.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the problems faced by his area. I hope that he will accept my invitation to visit Lowestoft, when he will appreciate that the resources necessary for the purpose are provided. Britain plays a very important part in the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas. If there are any specific areas where he thinks we are not doing these things as we should, I am happy to consider them and to judge whether we should be adding to the resources.

Points of Order

5.23 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter concerning the Education (Student Loans) Bill. Earlier this afternoon, it was announced that all the clearing banks were to withdraw from the operation of the Government's deeply unpopular Education (Student Loans) Bill. As the participation of the banks has been absolutely central to the administration of the Government's loans scheme, the withdrawal leaves the scheme in total ruin. In the light of the announcement, the Bill must be abandoned. In view of the gravity of today's announcement, Mr. Speaker, do you agree that there must be an immediate oral statement by the Secretary of State?

Mr. Speaker: It is not a matter for me.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman grossly exaggerates the position. The Bill is not affected one little bit in any respect. Neither the principles, the framework nor the objectives of the scheme are affected, and they will continue as before. The only change is that one area of the mechanics of the scheme we intended to operate cannot now go ahead. That means that we will lose something that was to the benefit of the students—access to branch networks. I regret that.

I thought it right to inform the House immediately I was informed of the decision of the banks. I would have been happy to make an oral statement, but that was not possible because of the congested nature of today's business. However, I am happy to consider, through the usual channels, what else might be done.

Mr. Straw: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The question whether the abandonment of the Government by the banks is central to the administration of the scheme, as we believe could be argued if there was an oral statement. If there cannot be one this afternoon, for reasons that I understand, will the right hon. Gentleman or the Leader of the House, who is in his place, give a clear undertaking to make an oral statement at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall be happy to consider that request through the usual channels.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 19 JANUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:
Mr. Ian Gow
Mr. James Couchman
Mr. Roy Beggs

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I fully understand your difficulties in choosing hon. Members to speak on statements. I also understand the privileges afforded to Privy Councillors and, indeed, the practices of the House. On the last three occasions that we have discussed Hong Kong and the Vietnamese refugees and migrants, very much the same list of personnel have been called. While I recognise that there is an element of precedence, I wonder whether just once, for an experiment, you could start at the bottom of the heap—with me?

Mr. Speaker: What the hon. Gentleman has said is not entirely accurate. If he were to see some of the letters and visits that I receive from Privy Councillors and other distinguished Members after statements, alleging that they are the world's greatest experts and should have been called, I think that the hon. Gentleman would accept that they are not always called.

I say sincerely to the whole House that I do my best to ensure that the limited time of the House is spread as fairly as possible. It is not easy.

BILLS PRESENTED

Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions)

Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported by Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Lilley, Mr. Richard Ryder, Mr. Michael Forsyth, Mr. Roger Freeman and Mr. Alan Howarth, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to certain public service pension schemes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

Employment

Mr. Secretary Fowler, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Waddington, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Newton, Mr. Secretary Brooke, Mr. Tim Eggar and Mr. Patrick Nicholls, presented a Bill to make it unlawful to refuse employment, or any service of an employment agency, on grounds related to trade union membership; to amend the law relating to industrial action; to make further provision with respect to the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members; to confer a power to revise or revoke Codes of Practice; to provide for the merger of the Redundancy Fund with the National Insurance Fund; to amend the Education (Work Experience) Act 1973; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 15.]

Environmental Protection

Mr. Secretary Patten, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Parkinson, Mr. Secretary Brooke, Mr. John Selwyn Gummer, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. David Trippier and Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory, presented a Bill to make provision for the improved control of pollution arising from certain industrial and other processes; to re-enact the provisions of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 relating to waste on land with modifications as respects the functions of the regulatory and other authorities concerned in the collection and disposal of waste and to make further provision in relation to such waste; to restate the law defining statutory nuisances and improve the summary procedures for dealing with them, to provide for the termination of the existing controls over offensive trades or businesses and to provide for the extension of the Clean Air Acts to prescribed gases; to amend the law relating to litter and make further provision imposing duties to keep public places clear of litter and clean; to amend the Radioactive Substances Act 1960; to make provision for the control of genetically modified organisms; to make provision for the abolition of the Nature Conservancy Council and for the creation of councils to replace it and discharge the functions of that Council and, as respects Wales, of the Countryside Commission; to make further provision for the control of the importation, exportation, use, supply or storage of prescribed substances and articles and the importation or exportation of prescribed descriptions of waste; to amend the provisions of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 as regards the dumping of waste at sea; to make provision in relation to financial or other assistance for purposes connected with the environment; to make provision as respects superannuation of employees of the Groundwork Foundation and for remunerating the chairman of the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council; and for purposes connected with those purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 14.]

Consumer Guarantees

Mr. Martyn Jones, supported by Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. David Porter, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. Robert N. Wareing, Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Paddy Ashdown, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Richard Alexander and Mr. Douglas French, presented a Bill to provide for consumer guarantees; to amend the law relating to the sale and supply of goods; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 26 January and to be printed. [Bill 16.]

Interest on Debts

Mr. Michael Mates, supported by Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Neil Hamilton, Mr. Michael Latham, Sir David Mitchell, Mr. Anthony Nelson, Mr. Bowen Wells and Sir George Young, presented a Bill to amend the law by making provision for certain debts to carry interest; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 February and to be printed. [Bill 17.]

Computer Misuse

Mr. Michael Colvin, supported by Sir Geoffrey Pattie, Mr. John Butcher, Mr. Kenneth Warren, Mr. Michael Grylls, Miss Emma Nicholson, Mr. William Powell, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Norman Hogg, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Doug Hoyle and Mr. Matthew Taylor, presented a Bill to make provision for securing computer material against unauthorised access or modification; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 February and to be printed. [Bill 18.]

Sexual Offences

Sir William Shelton, supported by Dame Janet Fookes, Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Mr. Graham Bright, Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. Tom Cox, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman, Mr. Charles Irving, Mr. Robert Parry and Mr. Hugo Summerson, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the soliciting of women for the purpose of prostitution and to abolish the presumption that a boy under the age of fourteen is incapable of sexual intercourse: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 16 February and to be printed. [Bill 19.]

Rights of Way (Agricultural Land)

Mr. Edward Leigh, supported by Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Mr. Denis Howell, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr. Andrew

Mitchell, Mr. David Nicholson, Dr. Mike Woodcock and Miss Ann Widdecombe, presented a Bill to amend the law concerning rights of way, relating to the disturbance and restoration of the surface of footpaths and bridleways for the cultivation of agricultural land; to keep the line of rights of way clear of crops; to enable local authorities to act in connection therewith; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 23 February and to be printed. [Bill 20.]

Planning Permission (Demolition of Houses)

Mr. John Wilkinson, supported by Mr. Hugh Dykes, Sir Rhodes Boyson, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. John Gorst, Mr. Jeremy Hanley, Mr. Cyril Townsend and Mr. Robert Adley, presented a Bill to make it obligatory to apply for planning permission before demolishing a dwelling-house: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 March and to be printed. [Bill 21.]

Entertainments (Increased Penalties)

Mr. Graham Bright, supported by Mr. Steve Norris, Dr. John Marek, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. David Madel, Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. David Atkinson, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Mr. Kenneth Hind, Mr. Eric Illsley and Mr. James Cran, presented a Bill to increase the penalties for certain offences under enactments relating to the licensing of premises or places used for dancing, music or other entertainments of a like kind: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 22.]

Radiation Exposed Crown Employees (Benefits)

Mr. Bob Clay, supported by Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. John Hannam, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms. Joan Ruddock and Mr. Gavin Strang, presented a Bill to provide a presumption of service connection to any person who, whilst in Crown service, participated in the British nuclear weapons testing programme and who suffers from certain diseases that may be attributable to exposure to ionising radiation; to make provision for benefits payable from the National Insurance Fund to such persons and their dependants; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 March and to be printed. [Bill 23.]

Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions)

Mr. Martin Brandon-Bravo, supported by Mr. Richard Alexander, presented a Bill to make new provision in place of sections 14 and 15 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 February and to be printed. [Bill 24.]

Abolition of Warrant Sales (Scotland)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing, supported by Mr. Alex Salmond, Mr. Jim Sillars, Mr. Andrew Welsh, Mr. Dennis Canavan, and Mr. Dick Douglas, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to poinding and warrant sales: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 February and to be printed. [Bill 25.]

Representation of the People

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark, supported by Mr. Kenneth Warren, Mr. Barry Porter and Mr. Roger King, presented a Bill to provide for a person no longer resident at his qualifying address or at any other address in the same area to be eligible for an absent vote for an indefinite period at Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom and local government elections in Great Britain: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 27.]

Access to Health Records

Mr. Doug Henderson, supported by Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Steve Norris, Miss Emma Nicholson, Mr. Jeff Rooker, Ms. Joan Ruddock, Sir Giles Shaw, Mr. Chris Smith and Mr. Kenneth Warren, presented a Bill to establish a right of access, subject to certain exemptions, by individuals to health records relating to themselves and, in certain circumstances, to their children; to allow applications for access to be made by representatives or dependants; to allow individuals to obtain copies of, and require amendments to, such records; to make provision in respect of right of access and certain contractual obligations; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 23 February and to be printed. [Bill 28.]

Entitlement to Employment and Training

Mr. Giles Radice, supported by Mr. Ted Garrett, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Doug Henderson, Mr. Calum Macdonald, Mr. George Robertson, Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Mr. Jack Thompson, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and Mr. David Clelland, presented a Bill to make provision for employment and training for persons unemployed for a period of time; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 29.]

Car Telephones (Safety)

Mr. Douglas French, supported by Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. Jacques Arnold, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. James Cran, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Malcolm Moss, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. David Porter and Miss Ann Widdecombe, presented a Bill to prescribe standards for car telephones intended for use by drivers; to make it an offence to use equipment which does not conform to these standards while driving a motor vehicle; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 March and to be printed. [Bill 30.]

Licensing (Low Alcohol Drinks)

Sir Peter Emery, supported by Mr. Merlyn Rees, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. John Wheeler, Sir Bernard Braine, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Mr. A. E. P. Duffy, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mr. Bill Walker, Sir Fergus Montgomery, Mr. Michael J. Martin and Mr. Richard Page, presented a Bill to amend the definition of 'intoxicating liquor' in the Licensing Act 1964 and 'alcoholic liquor' in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 with respect to alcohol in low alcohol drinks: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 26 January and to be printed. [Bill 31.]

MISUSE OF DRUGS

Mr. Menzies Campbell presented a Bill to extend the coverage of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to include certain drugs which have been misused for the purpose of improving performance in sport: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 March and to be printed. [Bill 32.]

AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Alex Carlile, supported by Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Geraint Howells, Mr. Nicholas Winterton, Mr. Calum Macdonald, Mr. Richard Livsey, Mr. Richard Alexander, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Robert Hicks, Mr. Alan Amos and Mr. John Greenway, presented a Bill to amend Schedule 3 to the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 so as to remove the right to serve an incontestable notice to quit for non-agricultural uses except where planning permission has been given or is not required by reason of Crown immunity: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 16 February and to be printed. [Bill 33.]

MARRIAGE (REGISTRATION OF BUILDINGS)

Mr. George Walden presented a Bill to allow a building to be registered for the solemnization of marriage under Section 41 of the Marriage Act 1949 notwithstanding that it forms part of another building: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 34.]

NORTHERN IRELAND ACT 1974 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. William Ross, supported by Mr. James Molyneaux, Mr. Cecil Walker, Mr. Roy Beggs, Rev. Martin Smyth, Mr. John D. Taylor, Mr. Harold McCusker, Mr. Clifford Forsythe and Mr. Ken Maginnis, presented a Bill to amend the Northern Ireland Act 1974 so as to provide that laws for Northern Ireland may not be made by Order in Council but by Bill introduced into the Parliament of the United Kingdom: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 March and to be printed. [Bill 35.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Ordered,

That the draft Health and Personal Social Services (Special Agencies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of the Future Economy and Environment of North Wales, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Adjournment (Christmas)

Motion made and Question proposed,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 21st December do adjourn until Monday 8th January.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

5.32 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I am pleased that you have called me first, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the House should not adjourn for Christmas until it has dealt with the extremely important issue of the imprisonment in Iraq of my constituent Mr. Ian Richter.

This case first came to the notice of the British public when in the *Financial Times* of 24 July 1986, an article appeared headed

"British businessman detained in Iraq."

It stated:

"A British businessman has been arrested in Iraq in connection with alleged corruption. Mr. Ian Richter, local manager of the British water engineers Paterson Candy International was detained as he was leaving Baghdad airport."

No one who knew Ian Richter could believe that he could be the subject of such accusations. He is an honourable and kind man with a loving family. He was serving not only the interests of his company and of his country in Iraq but, over a long period, had tried to improve conditions for the Iraqis. He was involved in trying to create a new water system on the south bank of the River Tigris as it passes through Baghdad.

As soon as Mr. Richter was arrested, on 17 June 1986, the Foreign Office was informed and diplomats in Baghdad speculated that there was a connection with the dismissal from office on 22 June of that year of the mayor of Baghdad, Mr. Al-Mufti, for, in the words of a presidential decree,

"unfaithfulness in his responsibility in preserving the Government's money."

After Mr. Richter was arrested, Foreign Office officials were allowed to see him on only one occasion. There was a five-minute meeting on 7 July 1986 and even at that meeting Ian Richter was not allowed to speak to the ambassador.

By 24 September 1986 the issue had become so worrying—because of Ian Richter's almost certain innocence and the paucity of evidence brought against him—that the then Foreign Secretary, my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, met Mr. Tariq Aziz at the United Nations General Assembly. Happily, that meeting enabled Ian Richter to receive certain consular access. There was no doubt that the access previously granted to him was against the terms of the Vienna convention on consular relations. The Foreign Office consistently tried to improve conditions for Ian Richter and at that stage sought permission on humanitarian grounds for Mrs. Shirley Richter to rejoin her children in the United Kingdom.

I am pleased that throughout that time the Foreign Office had constant contact with both the Baghdad office and certain Iraqi officials. The Minister of State, Home Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), saw members of Ian Richter's family on 14 August 1986. From that time onwards serious accusations were made about the Iraqis' handling of the case.

By November 1986 access to Mr. Richter, which started after Mr. Aziz intervened at one visit per week, was reduced to one visit per fortnight and later to one per month. As Mr. Richter was technically on remand, the

conditions in which he was held were disgraceful by any international standard. In November 1986 my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), the former Minister for Trade, met Mrs. Shirley Richter and then went to Iraq. Throughout the following months regular discussions were held on Ian Richter and hardly any evidence was produced against him.

When Mr. Richter was brought to trial in Baghdad on 7 February 1987, the court case lasted less than one hour and what little evidence was presented was in Arabic. During the build-up to the trial, Mr. Richter was asked to sign statements in Arabic which contained no translation. Unfortunately, during his trial he was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment under the articles of the Iraqi penal code relating to bribery and the forging of official documents.

As I have stated, many believe that this case had little to do with Ian Richter and more to do with internal politics in Iraq. The mayor of Baghdad was subsequently tried and executed. In the years since Ian was sentenced, the Foreign Office has tried as hard as it could to secure his release. It is difficult for Ian's many friends to believe that the Foreign Office is doing anything at all because Ian is still in prison in Baghdad and there has been little press comment on his case other than the article in the *Financial Times* at the beginning of this episode and another in the *London Daily News*—which exists no more—on 25 February 1987.

There was little press comment because it was felt that the Iraqis would not respond to the sort of pressure that the press might bring to bear and that it might be counter-productive. It is clear from the various meetings between British Foreign Office officials and Iraqi officials that trying to do things the decent way has not worked.

Ian has now been in prison for three and a half years on a charge that we do not believe. I cannot pay enough tribute to successive Ministers and officials at the Foreign Office for what they have tried to do. I have spoken to them many times and they have always been extremely helpful in keeping me briefed.

In September 1987 my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House met Mr. Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Foreign Secretary, yet again. His successor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), met the Iraqi Foreign Minister in September 1989. The Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), travelled to Iraq on 13 February 1989 and spoke to officials. Whenever the British Government have dealt with Iraqi officials, Ian Richter has been at the top of the agenda.

From time to time I have been in contact with Julian Sheffield, the chairman of Portals Holdings plc, the holding company of Ian's company. Portals Holdings has continued to pay Ian the full overseas rate and it has provided certain assistance to his family. I believe that the company might have exerted more commercial pressure in Iraq, but I thank it for what it has done, as does Ian.

On 23 November 1987 I received a letter from Ian, set out in typically courageous terms. He thanked everyone for their interest, assistance and "refreshing attitude". He said:

"It means an awful lot to me living somewhat afar, but close to you all in spirit. My family have been quite magnificent through the ordeal and consequently it is my duty to be equally strong and buoyant here."

Everyone who has met or been in contact with Ian believes him to be a most honourable man and a victim of power politics. Earlier this year my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) visited Iraq and my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield was able to speak to Ian.

I am also extremely pleased that, as a result of a suggestion from the Foreign Office, King Hussein raised the issue with the Iraqis. I feel that he also believes that this is a matter of humanitarian need and that the case is not based on genuine forgery or fraud.

What is extremely disturbing, however, is the fact that Ian is now the only long-term prisoner in Iraq. Increasingly, I believe that this case is simply one where Ian was arrested as an excuse to try to secure the imprisonment of the mayor of Baghdad, who was a political inconvenience to the then leadership. I believe that Ian is a hostage. Perhaps he is a hostage because of our Government's courageous decision not to sell Iraq Hawk aircraft for fear that they might be abused by the Iraqi air force.

It is more likely, however, that he is being held because of the imprisonment of Salim Hassan who was convicted in 1979 in the United Kingdom for murdering a former Iraqi prime minister. He is now serving a life term in prison. As the Iraqis told my hon. Friends in September, they are explicitly making this link with Ian's imprisonment. Although the Foreign Office assumed that that was the real reason behind Ian's continued imprisonment, the Iraqis, until recently, had never said so. Now they openly say that if we release an assassin, they will release an innocent man.

The purpose of calling the attention of the House to this case before we adjourn is that Ian will be spending another Christmas in prison. His courageous wife, Shirley, is in Iraq now. The Iraqis try to pretend that they are a civilised people, that they are turning westwards and that they want to trade with and receive aid from us. It is with unacceptable, however, that they should use such uncivilised and barbaric practices to hold on to Ian Richter.

Another purpose of the debate is to thank the Foreign Office publicly for the work that it has done over many months. I believe that it could not have done more. The overriding reason for this debate, however, is to pay tribute to Shirley Richter, her children and particularly her husband. I believe that he is serving the nation's cause —although not deliberately according to our wishes—as I know that he would not want to be released if the price for his release was the release of a convicted assassin.

On humanitarian grounds and at this time of Christmas I call, once more, on the Iraqi Government to release an innocent man.

5.45 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Christmas this year may not see any spending records in the shops, but, assuredly, there will be one new record. My activities as a trustee of Crisis at Christmas, an admirable and most deserving charity, tell me that there will be a record number of homeless people in Britain this Christmas. They dwell not only on the streets of London, but on those of Manchester, Glasgow and other cities

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

across this country. That there will be room for many of them indoors at Christmas 1989 owes everything to charitable endeavour, not to the Government's efforts.

The Leader of the House advised his ministerial colleagues to do more listening. I hope that there will soon be more evidence that they have heeded his sound advice. Since 1979, homelessness has doubled and the number still grows apace as more and more psychiatric patients are dumped on the streets in the name of community care. The number of homes repossessed by building societies in the first half of 1989 was two and a half times greater than for the whole of 1979. That is a striking figure.

Some 120,000 households will have presented themselves as homeless to local authorities this year. What is also extremely worrying is the record number of children living in poverty this Christmas. Of all Britain's poor, about one third are children.

Happily, however, another record will be broken this Christmas—a record number of young people will be working to provide food and Christmas shelter for Britain's homeless. Amidst all the inhumanity of official attitudes to homelessness, their example at least is one of man's humanity to man. Should there not be a ministerial statement on the record number of homeless people before the House rises for the Christmas recess?

For about the 40th time since the Government came to power, we are debating the motion for a parliamentary recess while still awaiting the fulfilment of the Government's 1979 election promise to create a coherent system of benefits for people with disabilities. Is there anything that the Leader of the House can tell us today about the Government's intentions? Will there be any announcement before the recess? In November, a small package of reforms was announced at the time of the uprating. Welcome as each individual reform may be, their timing was more an attempt to camouflage the Government's repeated failure to uprate child benefit than a move towards a coherent structure of benefits for the disabled. The Government have consistently refused to involve voluntary organisations and outside experts in the so-called review process. Therefore, the major statement that is rumoured for the new year does not fill them with much hope.

Notwithstanding the minor adjustments since then, there are still too many casualties among chronically sick and disabled people of the April 1988 cuts whom Ministers dismiss with pristine Thatcherite contempt. Last July, I raised repeatedly with social security Ministers the fact that some people with AIDS were entitled to £30 more under the old supplementary benefits scheme to meet the costs of their special diets than many of them now receive under income support. That is a cruel cut in benefits for people, many of whom are terminally ill.

Last week I finally received a reply, which was five months overdue from the Minister with responsibility for the disabled. It included the fine sentiment that nothing could be done because

"income support is a non-contributory benefit which is financed by the taxes paid by the working population, many of whom are low paid themselves."

However, the people he conscripts to his aid, without consulting them, do not have a life-threatening disease which is exacerbated by poor diet and poor living conditions. What makes it even more absurd is that the cost of drugs for someone with AIDS is estimated at more than £100 a week and it is possible that those costs will soon be extended to non-symptomatic people with HIV.

The stubborn refusal of Ministers to undo the damage they wreaked in 1988 is not only heartless, but blatantly poor economics. However, I was encouraged by one reply from the Minister, in which he told me that his officials had been in recent consultation with the Department of Health about the financial needs of people with AIDS. Since the split-up of the Department of Health and Social Security last year, it had seemed doubtful whether there was any liaison in Richmond house at all. Before House rises for the Recess, we need to know the outcome of the consultation between the two Departments.

On 10 July, the Minister with responsibility for the disabled told his hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) that he was still in detailed discussions with the local authority associations about section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. That reply is recorded in vol. 156, c. 381 of *Hansard*. Only two days later, the Secretary of State for Health declared that section 7 had fallen out of favour. On 24 July, the Minister for Health revealed that no meeting had been held since March and no further meeting had yet been arranged. That was reported in vol. 157, c. 541 of *Hansard*.

The confusion over the fate of the 1986 Act has continued into the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. On 27 November, during the debate on the Loyal Address, I spoke about the muddle that appears to have been created. I received no reply, and neither did my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) when he spoke during the Second Reading debate. Despite the fact that there were four ministerial speeches on the Bill, references to community care were scant and superficial.

As the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said on 12 December, the community care proposals have simply been tagged on to a National Health Service Bill. This was recorded in vol. 163, c. 846. It did not please the Government but it was undoubtedly true.

After waiting 18 months for a response to the Griffiths report, the White Paper was published only a week before the Bill. It appears that Ministers understand little and care less about the issues involved, which are of the utmost importance to millions of disabled and elderly people, and their carers and families. These issues are also deeply important to the young people who will give so freely of their time this Christmas to help provide food and shelter for many of the worst victims of the crisis in community care whom we now see them sleeping rough, night by night, on the streets of our great cities.

5.56 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): For years I have been extolling the benefits and virtues of Manchester international airport, as has the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). I do so because it happens to be the largest single employer in my constituency and is also an enormous asset for the north-west region of England.

As you, Madam Deputy Speaker, may know, Manchester is making a bid for the Olympic games in 1996. If we were lucky enough to win that, it would be the most enormous boost that the north-west of England has

had for a long time. The campaign has been spearheaded by a man called Bob Scott, who has done an enormous amount of work on the project.

At a recent Question Time, the Prime Minister gave her support to the idea of Manchester hosting the Olympic games in 1996. During the campaign, enormous play has been made of the fact that there are excellent communications in the Manchester area. We have good rail links and an excellent motorway system. We have particularly emphasised how important Manchester international airport would be.

Apart from the possibility of hosting the Olympic games, we are also anxious to have more international flights in and out of Manchester airport. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) who, until recently, was Secretary of State for Transport, for the enormous support that he gave us during his time as Secretary of State. I also pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Transport, who has also been particularly helpful.

Dr. Dafyd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The hon. Gentleman also has the support of all of us in North Wales in his campaign to increase the numbers of international flights to Manchester, which is an extremely important airport for business and tourist purposes in North Wales.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The airport is important not just to the north-west but to the north and also, as he rightly said, to Wales and particularly North Wales.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Having been a member of Manchester airport committee, I cannot let a debate on Manchester airport go by without mentioning Liverpool airport, as I now represent a Merseyside seat. That is also an important gateway and should be more effectively linked with Manchester so that they can be used jointly. The future of Liverpool airport should be linked with the successful Manchester airport, with which I was proud to be associated.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's words will be noted. Now I shall return to the speech that I have prepared.

Negotiations have been continuing for some time with American Airlines, which wants new services in and out of Manchester airport. Delta Airlines wants to fly daily flights from Atlanta to Manchester. North West Airlines wants to fly daily flights from Boston to Manchester. American Airlines wants an additional daily service from Chicago to Manchester. I emphasise the word "additional" because it already has a daily flight between Manchester and Chicago and, due to its success, now wants two flights per day. If we could obtain the new flights, it is estimated that this would create 3,500 new jobs in the area.

Talks with the Americans are due to recommence early in the new year. There is a great sense of urgency because it is necessary for the airlines to know as quickly as possible. If they are to obtain these flights they must start arranging them for their summer schedule. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made a direct personal approach to his American counterpart, Mr. Skinner—not the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), but the Secretary for Transportation in the American Administration. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will stress to his Cabinet colleagues how vital these negotiations are.

I am afraid that there is one cloud on the horizon. There is a strike of baggage handlers at Manchester airport, which is causing a great deal of unhappiness in the area. Last week Manchester airport was closed for five and a half days because firemen refused to cross the picket line, thereby compromising the safety regulations. That cost the airport about £150,000 per day in landing fees. The strike is basically about the creation of 94 new jobs and the consequent reduction in excessive overtime. I suggest that it is sad that a union can bring men out on strike because new jobs are being created. The management at the airport have had volunteers doing the baggage handlers' work and they have been fully supported by the board of directors at the airport, which consists of councillors from the 10 district councils which make up the Greater Manchester area.

The Government have given enormous support to Manchester airport in the past 10 years and we have also enjoyed cross-party support in the House. Now all those efforts are being impeded by an unnecessary strike. If the people concerned care about the future of Manchester airport and its effect on the economy of the north-west, I hope that they will get their men back to work at the earliest possible opportunity.

My second point concerns Barlow Clowes. I felt rather like a jack-in-the-box yesterday while the statement on the affair was being made, because I desperately wanted to ask a question about it. Quite a number of my constituents were caught up in the Barlow Clowes crash, most of them elderly people who had invested their money in the company because they had been advised by people whom they thought were properly qualified advisers that they were investing in Government securities with a company licensed by the Department of Trade and Industry.

I cannot help feeling that Lord Young, when Secretary of State, did not handle the problem quite as sympathetically as he might have done. Incidentally, it was fascinating to see the rift among the Opposition yesterday. The Opposition Front Bench spokesman welcomed the compensation, albeit grudgingly. Then the hon. Member for East Ham——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Newham North-West.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I knew that the hon. Gentleman was one of the hams. In any case, I noticed how angry he was about the fact that compensation was being paid. He sat in his place fuming and grumbling about the way in which taxpayers' money was being handed out, as he said, to stuff the pockets of the rich.

Mr. Banks *indicated assent.*

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I assure the hon. Gentleman that many of the people in my constituency who were involved are not rich. They are elderly people who had invested their savings or redundancy payments in an attempt to get a little extra income——

Mr. Banks: Speculation.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Perhaps there is a lesson to be learnt from this——

Mr. Banks: Do not speculate.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: As it is Christmas time, I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman might have cared a little more about people who have suffered a great deal of anxiety over the past 18 months. The hon. Gentlman's views were, in any event, not shared by the Opposition Front Bench spokesman.

Mr. Banks: I am on the Back Benches.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: No doubt that is why.

I also want to point out to my right hon. and learned Friend that the Secretary of State did an extremely good job yesterday and many people are happier as a result of his statement. He made it as quickly as he could because he especially wanted to deliver it before Christmas, but 42 minutes was not enough time to devote to the issue. This also proves that, no matter how hard one tries, one cannot please everyone.

The Government have made a generous and fair decision but in today's *Daily Mail* a man called Leslie Mullard, whose £64,000 nest egg disappeared, gives the deal only a lukewarm welcome because, he says, investors should have had a total return on their capital and the income that would have accrued on it. Perhaps the hon. member for Newham, North-West and I do not differ in believing that the lesson of this sorry affair is that people must realise that high-return investments often carry high risks.

Mr. Banks: I agree.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: It was in recognition of that fact that the ombudsman recommended an abatement of 10 per cent. of investments of up to £50,000. It is the old story—nothing in the world can be acquired for nothing. High-risk investments may bring high returns, but they also involve high risks.

Finally, I want briefly to mention the problems of the National Health Service in my constituency. Recently, the two health authorities that cover my area put out consultation documents. Trafford health authority feared an overspend of £1·1 million next year, so it advanced some of the options on which it believes it may have to embark. One option is to close the accident and emergency services at Altrincham general hospital; the second is to close the geriatric unit at St. Anne's hospital; and the third is to cease general family planning services.

All these options have been bitterly opposed by local people. I happen to believe that my constituency has been badly served in the provision of hospitals. We were promised a new district hospital years ago—then, suddenly, the option disappeared, not by decision of the Department of Health but by decision of the North Western regional health authority. No one has ever quite explained to me why the hospital disappeared when it did.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that many of his constituents go to the accident and emergency department of Wythenshawe hospital. How concerned is he about the current proposals affecting that department?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: If the right hon. Gentleman had only allowed me to continue, I was coming to that. It is of great consequence to my constituency.

Trafford general hospital, the general hospital for Trafford health authority, is difficult to get to from my constituency; Wythenshawe hospital in the South Manchester health authority area is much more convenient. However, the consultation document put out by South Manchester health authority proposes some rationalisation between Wythenshawe hospital and Withington hospital. Option A, the preferred option, would make Wythenshawe no longer a major accident centre, and it would lose many of its services.

Comments on the documents must be in by 6 January. I have had a long talk with the chairman of the South Manchester health authority, who has assured me that no decisions will be made until all comments have been studied. Suffice it to say that these proposals have caused a furore in my constituency. I have been bombarded letters from concerned people who are worried about the future. The problem has also allowed mischief makers to have a field day and to claim that everything has already been decided. Perhaps something could be done to avoid the period of uncertainty that always seems to occur at this time of year.

I realise that we are spending more on the Health Service. I realise that there are more doctors and nurses and that more patients are being treated, but people's expectations have also risen enormously. My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and I went to see the Secretary of State for Health recently, and were told that more money would be forthcoming in the Chancellor's statement.

Then, last week, I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who said:

"The announcement of an extra £77·8 million for North Western RHA includes a cash increase on its general allocation of 6·34 per cent., or a real terms increase of 1·28 per cent. This compares well with the resource assumptions issued to the RHA in August, when we asked the Region to plan for an increase in real terms within the range −0·3 per cent. to +0·2 per cent. In addition, there have been increases to a number of specific allocations for identified programmes, as shown in the table attached to the press statement.

As a result of these increases, there is of course no reason for unplanned service reductions, and we expect NHS services in the North West to continue in the pattern of improvement which has been set in recent years."

That sounds very nice and it gives me a great deal of hope, but there is still a nasty suspicion lurking in the back of my mind that the new money is not quite so adequate as we had at first expected. I believe that the health authorities in the north-west do not know the amount of their allocation, and they will not know it until some time early in the new year, but they believe that they will have to find at least 1·6 per cent. to cover potential pay awards and price increases, over and above the 5 per cent. allocated for inflation by the Secretary of State. Any underfunding of review body pay awards to doctors, dentists and nurses would make the situation considerably worse.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House will convey to our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health my request for reassurances on the three issues that I raised before the House rises for the Christmas recess.

6.10 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): It is appropriate that my speech should deal with the problems of getting patients to hospital. It appears that the Secretary of State for Health is allowing the problems currently confronting Britain's ambulance service to escalate, to the point where he will be able to exercise less control than he

traditionally does. It is wrong for the House to adjourn for the Christmas recess without debating the problems besetting the ambulance service. Unless the Secretary of State can offer new advice, the dispute will get worse and worse.

My experience is that, once Christmas is over, people look forward to their holidays. Therefore, there is no reason for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to imagine that he willl be able to starve the ambulance men back to work or use his economic powers to force them back to work on what are clearly unacceptable financial terms.

I appreciate that the Secretary of State does not want the dispute to spread to other sectors of the Health Service. However, that argument does not wash, because problems already exist in those other sections. Right hon. and hon. Members have heard both from the midwifery service and the speech therapy service that they are discontented. Messages and warnings are also being received from the nursing service. That dissatisfaction also should not be allowed to develop to the point where it is even more difficult to overcome.

The Secretary of State for Health has remarked that arbitration is a figment of the 1970s, but that is the wrong way of looking at a service that has served us well in the past. All my working life, I have believed that every trade union/employer agreement should make provision for a dispute procedure. When I worked in the mining industry, I was involved in the concept of its different collieries working together to reach different agreements on working conditions, both by consultation and through conciliation, and coal agreements. That could be achieved only through a binding acceptance by both sides to follow a conciliation procedure and to refer any disputes to an arbitration tribunal.

It is as well to refer some disputes to a third party, who can stand back and view matters in a different light from that of the two combatants. It is wrong of the Secretary of State for Health to suggest that the arbitration service would simply cut the award by half. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is so right in the views that he expresses, and if he is so certain of the fairness of his offer, what does he have to fear from the arbitration service, which would take into account awards that have already been granted?

Many years ago, when I was a member of the Labour Staffs Association, the National Union of Mineworkers and NACODS accepted an offer, whereas our association declined to do so and took the matter to arbitration. The panel openly declared that, because the two other organisations had accepted the employers' offer, and even though our members deserved more, a higher award to them would upset the equilibrium. That is the way in which arbitration works, and there is nothing wrong in using it.

The Secretary of State for Health should not feel that he is backing down by going to arbitration. His refusal to do so has more to do with bolstering his own ego. No doubt he has made promises to the Prime Minister and to others of his right hon. and hon. Friends who are Ministers, that he will not personally intervene in the dispute. That is not the right way for a Secretary of State to conduct himself, and neither is his attitude a responsible one.

Today, we do not have an ambulance service that the public can rely on. The House should have debated the dispute before the Christmas Recess, because the majority of the public are of the opinion that the Secretary of State is wrong. We are here to represent the public and to express their views in this House, and the House itself ought to decide whether or not the dispute should go to arbitration.

Once the ambulance service dispute goes to arbitration, the problem will be over. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House appreciate that the need for a reliable ambulance service will increase over Christmas, and it is wrong to put the public at risk. About a week ago, one of my constituents collapsed and died at a local football match. Although it would be wrong to claim that he died only because the ambulance service was unavailable and because it took about half an hour for an Army ambulance to arrive, the individual who tried to revive him is an ambulance service worker. There is an ambulance depot only two minutes away from that football ground, and it is not hard to believe that, had it been operating properly, that constituent would be alive today.

At the ambulance station about half a mile from where I live, workers are turning up for duty, willing to answer all emergency calls. However, when they arrive for work, the station's chief superintendent asks, "Are you willing to work as normal?" When they answer no, the ambulances' ignition keys are removed. The ambulance men and ambulances are available, but because of the way that the dispute has been handled, they cannot respond properly to emergency calls.

If the Secretary of State for Health is so worried about the problems of the ambulance sector spreading to other parts of the National Health Service, why does he not remove it from the control of his Department and place it under that of the Home Office, together with the police and fire services? That would be to return to the former situation, under which it developed from a combined fire and ambulance service.

Before the House rises, there should be an understanding from the Secretary of State for Health that he will refer the ambulance dispute to arbitration, so that our ambulance men can return to work.

6.18 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The House should not adjourn for the Recess until it has debated two important matters. The first involves my constituency. On 11 December, 230 of my constituents were informed that their employer—a subsidiary of Norcros named Temperature Ltd.—is to close, with substantial job losses and effects on the island's economy, and that a small number of jobs will be transferred to Portsmouth. The factory concerned is located behind Sandown lake, in an area that suffers the highest seasonal rate of unemployment in the whole of the United Kingdom. Any job loss that erodes our industrial base on the island deals a serious blow to us. I am sure that I have the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House when I say that we feel for the 230-plus employees who have been given notice so soon before Christmas.

The Isle of Wight development board has tried very hard to find a way of assisting in the difficulties, and I am pleased to say that a number of large employers on the island—such as Westland Aerospace and Plessey—have already expressed an interest in taking on skilled

[Mr. Barry Field]

employees. In an economy such as ours, skilled men are always in demand; it is the unskilled who are difficult to employ.

The problem came about because of a lack of orders from British Rail for rolling stock containing air conditioning. The position is rather complicated; British Rail had originally secured a tranche of units for the 158 express from British Rail Engineering Ltd, and, following the prompt and successful completion of the contract, established a reputation for its reliable, high-specification and thoroughly serviceable air-conditioning unit. BREL, however, is now a privatised organisation.

I went to see the vice-chairman of British Rail to find out what could be done to assist the factory. Temperature was alarmed that it had been taken off—or, rather, had not been able to get on—the tender list of the major rolling-stock suppliers: it had had to join up with a French company manufacturing railway air conditioning to get on to the tender list in this country.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport recently announced record investment in new rolling stock, and for train sets to go via the Channel tunnel. We hear a good deal nowadays about the level playing field of the EEC. British taxpayers' money is being invested—quite rightly—in rolling stock to meet the needs of the Channel tunnel in the 1990s, and the increasing demands for air-conditioned trains to improve the comfort of passengers. Yet, for reasons that I have been unable to ascertain, a British company providing a first-class product has been excluded from the tender list. That raises a serious issue of principle.

I received a letter from Mr. David Kirby, British Rail's vice-chairman, on 1 December, and sent it on to the company. In the letter, Mr. Kirby told me that the opportunity of further orders for the company was likely to arise next year—which, as hon. Members will appreciate, will be far too late.

I have involved myself in the possibility of the privatisation of British Rail's assets on the Isle of Wight. The island's modest railway network does not, in my view, fit into the overall jigsaw of Network SouthEast. Unfortunately, the negotiations were blown somewhat out of proportion during my absence on holiday. I was unable to comment in the local press, and was attacked vehemently by a number of political opponents. I had, however, contacted my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport in June or July, in the hope that he would visit the island to consider the possibility of separating the local service from British Rail. I also hoped that he would pay a non-ministerial visit to the Temperature factory nearby to see the manufacture of air-conditioning units for himself.

Unhappily, because the saga had been blown out of proportion in my absence, the Minister probably—and rightly—took a step backwards from involvement in the political melée that followed: British Rail certainly did. I fear that no good was done to Temperature's employment prospects, and that, had we made more orderly progress, the position might be very different today.

Last week, I wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, informing him that considerable investment in new rolling stock and air conditioning was likely to go overseas—perhaps to EEC countries, but not to parts of the United Kingdom and certainly not to my constituency. I hope that, now that the problem is on the record, I shall obtain a positive response from my right hon. Friend, and that we may yet find out why we have been prevented from participating in that investment and thereby maintaining a significant part of our manufacturing base on the Isle of Wight.

My second reason for suggesting that the House should not be adjourned prematurely relates to the awful happenings in Romania. I find it extraordinary that the Opposition should have chosen to submit a private notice question on Panama, given that the loss of lives there is —fortunately—small in comparison with that in Romania.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I know that the hon. Gentleman came into the House only in the most recent general election, and he may not know that Mr. Speaker has said repeatedly that private notice applications should not be referred to on the Floor of the House. Does he accept, however, that only the procedures of the House prevent me from correcting what he has just said?

Mr. Field: I can help the hon. Gentleman. I myself submitted an application for a private notice question about Romania. It is obvious that one application was agreed to, because we discussed it earlier in relation to Panama; it is equally obvious that others were not, as there has been no discussion of them until now.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Field: That is all that I shall say about that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hope so.

Mr. Field: The position in Romania is extremely serious. I believe that we should consider the plight of the poor people in that wretched country—if not tonight, at least before the House adjourns for Christmas—especially in view of our considerable volume of trade with it. We receive an imbalance of manufactured goods from Romania, which is one of the only COMECON countries with a balance-of-payments surplus—indeed, I think it is the only one. It is obvious that an evil regime is being propped up by the considerable foreign exchange balances that have been built up.

Her Majesty's Government really ought to agree to meet companies that are importing Romanian goods and to discuss an urgent switch of production away from the regime, with the aim of bringing it down—and the sooner the better. In Britain, we are fortunate because we can elect and dismiss Governments without the intervention of a bayonet or a bullet.

I hope that, as right hon. and hon. Members go home to their families, as they put their arms around their children and make their once-yearly visit to church for midnight mass on Christmas Eve, they will remember the awful events that have taken place in Romania in the past few days. Thousands have been injured and maimed in the streets because they wished to enjoy the freedom that we have in the House—freedom of speech.

The events in Romania show that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right to stand alone on the world stage and, once again, refuse to bow to the Chamberlainesque breeze that is blowing through Europe. We have seen reductions in American forces and President

Mitterrand swooning over the reunification of Germany that Chancellor Kohl is in helter-skelter pursuit of. Therefore, I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is standing alone and saying that we must not be dazzled by the events in eastern Europe. The horrible events in Romania in the past few days have driven that lesson home.

6.31 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): We should not adjourn for the Christmas Recess until we have discussed the situation in Panama. I am glad that the Leader of the House, who has a distinguished record as a former Foreign Secretary, is here to reply to the debate. If I am not in the Chamber to hear his reply, it will not be because I am not interested, but because I think I am getting the 'flu—that is just about right for Christmas—and I shall read what he says with great interest.

I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary will say what he really believes, rather than the line that the Government are currently pushing. The Government's current line is craven, it is not based on principle, and it is not, I believe, one that he would wish in his heart to defend.

The United States has given three reasons for its invasion of Panama city. The first reason was to restore democracy. There was much talk in the earlier private notice question about the fact that the election was called off, and that the current regime in Panama is therefore not legitimate. I remind the House that the United States Administration did their best to interfere in the outcome of that election by putting in at least $10 million, and by supporting the Christian Democrats party. That degree of interference was bound to destabilise the democratic processes, undeveloped as they undoubtedly are, during the elections in Panama.

The long-running sanctions against Panama have had an impact on public opinion. Not least among the reasons is the revenue from the Panama Canal, which has been held illegally by the United States Government, and none of which has been given to the Panamanian authorities. Frankly, I think that it was despicable and unwise of the Government to come immediately to the aid of the United States. I count myself as a friend of the United States, but one has to say to one's friends in the United States Administration that the interests of democracy cannot be served by acting as an aggressor, and that is precisely how the United States has behaved today. It has been guilty of using double standards.

The second reason that the United States gave was that its troops went in to protect United States lives. I understand that one United States service man who was hanging around the headquarters of the Panamanian defence forces for some reason was killed. Perhaps he was being more provocative than he should have been. Now dozens of United States troops are dead in the streets of Panama City, because of the action that has been taken. I know that that is true, because I have just spoken to the Panamanian ambassador and he has been in touch with events in Panama. He told me that 114 civilians had been killed and 300 wounded.

I have visited Panama on a number of occasions. I know exactly where the headquarters of the Panamanian defence forces is located. It is in a working-class residential area. Anyone who sets out to bombard the headquarters is bound to cause numerous civilian casualties, and that is precisely what has happened.

The ambassador also told me that hospitals in Panama City cannot manage. The United States can take the dead away quickly because it has the facilities. The Panamanians cannot. There is an embargo on medical supplies coming to Panama from the United States. The ambassador told me that pharmaceutical companies which supply hospitals in Panama are refusing to give them plasma, on the instructions of the United States Government, as part of the embargo that they have been imposing for some days. So much for saving lives—it seems strange that the United States wants to save lives by killing people. Many of the civilians killed were entirely innocent. For what purpose? It was supposed to be a bloodless coup. Meanwhile, General Noriega is alive and well and living in Panama—he was not in the headquarters.

I noticed pictures in the newspapers yesterday of fully armed Panamanian defence force soldiers and I wondered why. I could see no reason at all. It is clear that all this has been bubbling away for some time. The Panamanian defence forces, of which General Noriega used to be the head, are all American-trained and probably as good as the United States troops—indeed, judging by today's results, they are considerably better.

Instead of a bloodless coup, the streets of Panama City have blood and dead United States service men on them. What will that do to public opinion in America, when United States soldiers go back in coffins?

The third reason that the United States has given is that it had to move in to stop General Noriega's reign of terror. That is grotesque. I do not stand here and defend Noriega but, as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) pointed out, one cannot begin to compare him and what has been going on in Panama with Romania and Ceausescu. What about the events in Tiananmen square? How can one talk about a reign of terror in Panama when one compares events there with those in Romania and Tiananmen square? What about the death squad activities in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras? No death squads have been operating on the streets of Panama City. There have been casualties, but they have not begun to compare with what has been going on for years in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, with the knowledge and connivance of United States Governments both past and present.

We do not need any lectures on morality, democracy or terror from the United States, which is scarcely innocent and hardly comes to the discussion with clean hands. What about the support that the United States has given the Contra terrorists in Nicaragua? It is amazing that anyone can accept that the Americans can argue on foreign policy from a position of morality. Let us remember President Roosevelt's dictum in the days of Somosa's dictatorship, which the United States supported up to the hilt. He said:

"He might be a son-of-a-bitch but he's our son-of-a-bitch."

That has been the philosophy behind American foreign policy.

The United States' action is blatant aggression, it is wholly wrong, and it is an infringement of Panamanian sovereignty. I must tell the deputy Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary that the United States Government have been acting no better than a bunch of

[Mr. Tony Banks]

international terrorists in the way they are conducting themselves on the streets of Panama City. They have infringed the terms of the Panama canal treaty and the United Nations charter, and we all know that that is so.

Another argument that the United States has used is that General Noriega is a drug runner. If that is true, the United States has known about it for a long time, so how come there was a time when General Noriega was flavour of the month? It was, of course, because the United States felt that he was someone whom the United States could manipulate in the interests of American foreign policy in Central America, but that has not worked. He suddenly stopped being flavour of the month and became public enemy number one. One cannot be convinced by United States arguments of that type.

We know exactly what all this is about. It is about the United States trying to maintain its influence in the canal zone. Even I admit that it cannot renege on the Carter-Torrijos treaty of 1977, which Reaganites bitterly opposed. The US wants to install a puppet Government in Panama so that the Americans can stay in the Panama canal zone after 1999, by the end of which, under the 1977 treaty, they are due to quit. The Leader of House knows that the Panama canal zone is not just a depot for the US —it is part of the integrated command structure of US forces and the headquarters of southern command. I am not anti-US——

Mr. Barry Field: No?

Mr. Banks: I am no more anti-US because I bitterly criticise President Bush's aggressive actions than I am anti-British because I bitterly criticise the Government's domestic and foreign policies. I resent any imputation that I am anti-American.

I am most upset and angry at the Government's craven stance. Once again, they are acting as apologists for US agression. We used to have an independent foreign policy, but now we rush to defend US policy for the price of a presidential telephone call. There has been no prior consideration of what is going on in Panama. The Americans are being dragged into a war and we have supported them. There has been no consultation with our European Community partners. Once again, we have acted like a spineless jelly. This is a shameful day for the United States and for the British Government.

6.41 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Much as I would like to pursue the crucial and urgent subject which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) introduced, he will realise that the framework of the debate does not allow me to do that and raise another matter which I think should be considered before the House rises for the Christmas recess.

The subject that I wish to mention could scarcely be further away from that raised by the hon. Gentleman. I refer to the special problem of women who have been widowed and who are contemplating remarriage, or women who have remarried and, by remarrying, have sacrificed the pension from their first husband's employer.

When a woman remarries, she is deemed to be the wife of her second husband and the pension from her first husband is effectively forfeited. I submit my case in the context of widows of service men because they have a special case.

Until the second world war, officers in particular were discouraged from marrying until they were 30. No marriage allowance or accommodation was provided for them if they married before that age. That condition prevailed until 1960, when an officer was discouraged from marrying until he was 25, and was penalised if he did so. If the widow—I shall make up a hypothetical example—of a squadron leader decided to remarry, let us say, a retired naval commander, she would have to face the fact that she would forfeit her pension as the widow of a squadron leader. That is not particularly unusual because of the rather unusual pattern of marriage to which I have referred. Moreover, many service men retire rather younger than people in civilian life.

If a woman marries a retired service man, she knows that, on the death of her second husband, which is not too unusual because second husbands are often considerably older than their wives, she can apply for her first pension, which has lapsed, to be reinstated. Until 1988, the rule was that the pension that she was eligible to receive from the first husband

"may be restored at the discretion of the Defence Council if there are compassionate grounds for doing so or if the second marriage comes to an end, or she ceases to live with the man as his wife."

Until 1988, women had to undergo a means, or needs, test.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), who was then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, for establishing a more helpful form of words. In a letter to me last week, my noble Friend the Earl of Arran set out the current form of words concerning the restoration of the first pension when a woman is widowed for a second time. The words now used are:

"There is however discretion to restore the Service widows' pension previously received when a subsequent marriage comes to an end. This discretion is exercised where a widow is financially worse off on second widowhood without the pension of her former Service husband than she was on first widowhood with that pension."

A woman who is contemplating a second marriage still has to step into the dark knowing that, should she be bereaved again, the restoration of her first pension will be subject to a means test. She would of course receive no pension from her second husband's employer if she married a man who was already retired.

Although these arrangements are better than those before 1988, they are still unsatisfactory. If a woman contemplates remarriage, she still does not know what will happen if she is left a widow again. That causes deep anxiety and prevents many women from remarrying. I know for a fact from constituency work that many women are deterred from remarrying because they do not know what will happen if they are widowed a second time.

The Officers Pension Society, which advises many widows in such circumstances, has to tell them, because of the uncertainty, that they can get round the problem by living with the men they would like to marry. I know of one case, which I hasten to add is not a constituency case, of an extremely respectable and elderly couple who went away for a weekend and came back telling their friends that they had remarried. They had done nothing of the

sort, but were trying to maintain a veneer of respectability. In fact, they were living together as man and wife but were unmarried.

The arrangements that I have described cause great distress to the people involved. The House should recognise that it is a sensitive issue. I ask that the widow of a service man who marries a second time and is then bereaved again should have the first pension restored automatically as of right. There is no other way in which to eliminate the means test or to avoid the present situation which prevents her from marrying a second time.

Perhaps I may be permitted to speak from personal experience. I believe that such a change is in the public interest and something with which the House should be concerned. Widows should be encouraged to remarry. My mother, having been widowed for many years, remarried at the age of 74, and the last five years of her life were as happy as any. We should shape rules that encourage remarriage.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House to assure me that he will ask the Government to reconsider this matter to see whether the rules can be shaped to encourage remarriage and to eliminate the fears that are experienced under the present arrangements.

6.48 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I should like to refer to two matters on the international scene which I believe should receive the House's attention before the motion is agreed to.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has referred to United States' action in Panama. The Leader of the House is a former Foreign Secretary. I do not know whether, like me, he had hoped that we had come to the end of the time when the super-powers intervened in the affairs of other countries using arms.

Only a few weeks ago, the Soviet Union apologised for what it did in Czechoslovakia in August 1968. I welcome that. Indeed, I took part in the debate in the House on that invasion, in late August 1968. The United States' action in Panama takes us back to such action. It believes that it has the right to intervene using armed force. I take the opposite point of view. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West, I do not think that there is any justification in international law for what the United States did. I would be the last person to defend or justify the regime in Panama. Of course it was rotten to the core and the dictator was an outright gangster, but the same applies unfortunately in many countries in the world. No one, I imagine, would argue that the Soviet Union should intervene in Romania.

The Unied States could have taken the matter to the United Nations Security Council. If we believe in international law and the principles of the United Nations, that is what the United States should have done. But of course it refused to do so. I find it difficult to believe that the United States Administration cannot live with the idea that there is a dictator in Panama. What about the bloody tyranny which existed in Chile after the 1973 coup? Far from helping the democratic forces, the United States gave Pinochet and his colleagues every encouragement. What about El Salvador, where only a few weeks ago six priests and two others were murdered by death squads that were undoubtedly linked to the pro-United States authorities?

I find it alarming, and I believe that Britain finds it humiliating, that once again the Prime Minister has supported the United States. We are told that President Bush telephoned her after the invasion. No doubt President Bush knew full well that the Prime Minister would give her approval. He expected it and he received it. How much better it would be if the United Kingdom Government could be relied upon to take a different view and condemn international aggression.

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) in the exchanges this afternoon said that the United States had been wrong about Suez. I believe that the United States was absolutely right then and is very wrong now. I do not know what will happen in Panama. I do not know whether there will be renewed fighting, but one thing is absolutely certain. The Opposition totally condemn what has occurred, just as we condemned and would condemn again military intervention in neighbouring countries by the Soviet Union.

I am also concerned about the present situation in Romania. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), who is not in his place, mentioned it, but I believe that Opposition Members have more right to discuss Romania because we are against the abuse of human rights in all countries. I am not aware that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight made any protest against the murder of the six priests in El Salvador or against abuses of human rights in western countries. I am deeply concerned by what is happening in Rromania. Undoubtedly, the reports of what has occurred are genuine and hundreds of people have been executed as a result of the demonstrations there.

On the motion for the spring Adjournment on 22 May, I referred to the massive demonstrations that were taking place in China. I praised the Chinese students who were demanding more civil liberties in that country. Like everyone else, I deeply regret what tragically happened the following month.

I believe that we should give a warning to those in Romania who are responsible for ordering the bloodshed and carrying out those criminal orders. Shooting down men, women and children is a crime against humanity, and those responsible should be told that they will be held to account by the Romanian people.

People in Romania can probably see on their television screens the welcome changes that are taking place in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. Understandably, they ask why they should have to live under an odious tyranny, and why they should not have the same rights as those in other Communist countries. I understand and sympathise with the people of Romania. I am not surprised by the way in which the regime has reacted. Clearly, the dictator of Romania is a psychopath and most of his close family are involved in the regime. Nevertheless, we should make it perfectly clear that those who are carrying out those crimes will be held to account.

However bloodstained the tyranny in Romania, no one has suggested that the Soviet Union—which is rather different from the Soviet Union of 1968—should intervene in Romania. If the Soviet Union rightly does not intervene in Romania because it has no right to do so, why should the United States intervene in Panama?

My final point relates to problems at home. I am sure that a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends will agree that it will be a bleak Christmas for millions of our fellow citizens who are on or near the poverty line. It will not be

[Mr. David Winnick]

a very pleasant Christmas for those on income support and pensioners in the west midlands and elsewhere who cannot afford to heat their homes because they do not have sufficient cash. I urge the Leader of the House to make inquiries about the cold weather payment—a payment to those on income support only when the temperature falls below freezing point for five successive days. It is quite wrong that it should have to reach that level before the poorest pensioners in our community receive any help. So many people on low wages and benefits will not be looking forward to Christmas. So much of their poverty and hardship arises directly out of Tory Government policy.

6.56 pm

Mr. John Ward (Poole): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) will forgive me if I do not follow his line of reasoning, as I wish to refer to the fishing industry —a subject we discussed earlier today.

The House has heard the statement by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the unrealistic quotas set by the EC for fish catches. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the increase in quotas for the United Kingdom that he has been able to negotiate in Brussels.

While the EC has decided to use the quota system to protect fish stocks, I still have reservations about it. I doubt whether it is an effective way to protect stocks because, when a fish is netted and landed, it inevitably dies and our fishermen are throwing back the fish that they are trying to preserve for future generations.

My right hon. Friend has done a very good job in Brussels for the United Kingdom fishing industry, but there will be a knock-on effect on inshore fishing. Before we depart for Christmas, the House should consider what can be done to help our coastal fishing industry.

There are three reasons why I believe that the sea fisheries districts' area of control should be extended from the present three miles to six miles for three reasons. First, inshore fishing stocks could be more effectively managed. Secondly, modern inshore fishing vessels are faster and more seaworthy than they were, and the inshore fishery is effectively extended to six miles already. Thirdly, sea fisheries committees could effectively police the area with their present resources, as they already act as MAFF's agents. I consider that to be a sensible move, which should be in place before the common fisheries policy review in 1992, yet the Ministry seems reluctant to tell us why that extension cannot be made.

Another area of great concern to inshore fishermen is the spread of aggregate dredging. That is happening particularly around the Isle of Wight, and it directly affects some of my constituents. With greater resistence to onshore recovery of aggregate for environmental reasons, the pressure for further licences for aggregate dredging is increasing. It has been suggested to me that urgent action is needed on three issues.

First, consultation with the fishing industry should take place at the earliest opportunity and not after the dredging companies have spent large sums of money on surveys and exploration, at which stage they are probably less willing to reach a compromise. Secondly, agreement must be reached in advance between the fishing and aggregate industries on an equitable division of the sea bed. Thirdly, a full survey of fishery resources should automatically be carried out before any extraction licence is granted, to ensure that valuable breeding and spawning grounds are not destroyed or important commercial fisheries disrupted. Such surveys should be paid for by the dredging industry. It may also be necessary to restrict aggregate recovery to certain times of the year, so as to avoid interfering with spawning fish and nursery stocks.

Sewage and pollution are becoming of increasing concern to sea fisheries committees around the coast, particularly with the introduction of the European Community's molluscan and shellfish regulations. I understand that each application to discharge is considered in isolation, and it is doubtful whether any authority has a true picture of the total discharge in a given area. If that is so, I hope that the National Rivers Authority will remedy it with all speed.

Contamination of shellfish by sewage discharge can be caused by bacteria, heavy metals or changes to the water quality and sea bed. Of those, bacterial contamination is the most likely source of infection. It can be dealt with by a variety of means, which all add to the cost of the product. At present, that cost falls directly on the fishing industry and not on those who cause the pollution. The principle of the polluter paying could be applied.

By reducing the discharge of untreated or semi-treated sewage into the sea, we should bring into production other areas where at present contamination is too high to be treated. I have long believed that all discharges of raw or semi-treated sewage around our coasts should be banned, and although much has been said about the use of long outfalls and the improvement to our beaches that they bring, fishermen regard that as simply shifting the problem to another site. We need much care and consultation to ensure that the outfall does not discharge into a valuable fishing area, particularly where shellfish beds are in the vicinity.

In the southern sea fisheries area, which includes my constituency of Poole, some 80 per cent. of shellfish are exported, and with the introduction of the new EC regulations, it is essential that water quality in designated harvest areas is maintained. This requirement should be placed on the new water authorities.

I hope that responsibility for monitoring the molluscan and shellfish regulations will be placed on one Department; shared responsibility is rarely effective, and it should not be assumed that local environmental health officers, who do a very good job, will be able to carry out that new work. They are already asked to do too much with the resources they have, and they have neither the staff nor the equipment to take on that large additional task.

We hear much in the House about the deep-sea fishing industry. It is right that the Government should do all they can to ensure its long-term future, but it is equally important that the inshore fishing industry, which is a vital source of income to many of my constituents, is given the continuing support it needs to maintain its valuable contribution to the economy.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House will pass on my comments about the inshore fishing industry to our friends at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, because they are matters that should certainly be considered before the Christmas recess.

7.3 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I echo what hon Members have said about the international position, particularly in Romania. I am certain that the former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who will reply to the debate, will be able to tell us about the position of the United Kingdom Government and any joint European Community action that may be contemplated or taken. Clearly, it is a subject on which the common foreign policy approach could be adopted.

I echo what hon. Members have said about the Health Service, and particularly the industrial dispute in the ambulance service. It is a matter of great concern to hon. Members that it is continuing. Although some health authorities have passed resolutions asking for the dispute to be referred to arbitration—I refer especially to Clwyd health authority, which borders and provides a service to my constituency—the Government are still not prepared to allow it to be resolved through the normal channels. As that point has been made by other hon. Members, I hope that the Leader of the House will respond to it when he replies to the debate.

I look forward to returning to my home areas of Snowdonia national park, and I wish to reflect on the community that I represent, particularly its economic base, and on the crisis facing upland farming.

This year, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of national parks, and recently the Secretary of State for the Environment addressed a major conference on the topic. The boundaries of Snowdonia national park and my constituency are more or less conterminous. The Leader of the House has visited the area a number of times and we should like to see him again soon. The objective of the national park is the maintenance of the environment of the area and the encouragement of access to it. We welcome many people, including many hon. Members, who enjoy their recreation in the national park.

It is increasingly being emphasised that we must consider the economic well-being of the population of the national park because of their distinctive contribution to the structure of the landscape and the community. The national parks in Wales and England—there are none in Scotland yet—are not wilderness areas or natural parks such as those in the United States and other European countries. They have an indigenous population, not just flora and fauna. A cultural ecology is just as important as an environmental ecology for the future of the parks.

I refer specifically to the income of hill farmers in the national parks, particularly in Snowdonia. Hill livestock compensatory allowances are currently being considered by the Government. As a result of an agreement reached at the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 21 November, a limit has been placed on the European Community's contribution to HLCAs.

Hon. Members familiar with agriculture will know that the European Community pays 25 per cent. of the total cost and the member state Government pays the remainder. From 1991, the full EC contribution will be limited to the first 6,060 ecu, which is about £4,200 per farm. The next tranche will halve the contribution of the EC to HLCAs above the equivalent of £8,500 per farm.

That agreement is better than the original proposals, but it will still have a damaging effect on the income of many hill farmers. A farmer who has 50 suckler cows and 2,000 ewes will lose £2,500. As I shall emphasise, the income of many hill farmers is marginal, to say the least.

Under those proposals, a total of 2,200 farms in Wales will lose, and the rural economy will lose about £2·5 million. We are therefore talking about a loss of income for an industry that maintains the community structure and landscape of our national parks.

The farming unions that are active in Wales—the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales—have put strong cases to Ministers with responsibilities for agriculture at the Welsh Office and to those at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I know that my Scottish colleagues in the Scottish National party and in other parties would want me to say that they have made strong representations to Ministers at the Scottish Office.

The hill livestock compensatory allowances rates are being reviewed. It is essential that there is an early announcement on those rates because they have not been changed since 1986 and have consequently fallen badly behind the rate of inflation. Breeding ewe prices in the markets in Wales have recently been an average of 30 per cent. lower than in autumn 1988. For those reasons it is important that the Government look to their economic contribution to the well-being of agriculture.

The Government have been saying—it was mentioned in the Autumn Statement—that they are making substantial savings on the common agricultural policy. Those savings average £155 million a year. Set against that saving, what is the £5 million that we are asking to be injected into hill farming? That figure is for hill farmers throughout the United Kingdom, so I am not being parochial or nationalistic. However, it is particularly important in Wales because 80 per cent. of agricultural land is in less-favoured areas. We are talking about some 14,500 farmers who received hill livestock compensatory allowances last year and who depend on them as part of their income.

Within the present maximum allowable payment per hectare of £71, there is scope to increase HLCA payments, but so far the Government have not seen fit to do so. I hope that the Leader of the House will convey my views to the Secretary of State for Wales—who is familiar with the issues—and to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

We are not talking about rich farmers. The myth that often circulates among the urban yuppie class is that farmers—whether they own their own farms or are tenants—have substantial assets. But their assets are useless to them unless they dispose of them. A recent study of the incomes of hill farmers by the agricultural economics department at University college, Aberystwyth, which I was pleased to visit recently, showed that in Wales 15,000 small family farms under 200 acres were surviving on virtual subsistence returns.

The dairy farmers involved had a net income of £389 a year and hill and upland farmers had an income of £108 a year in each of the two years covered by the survey. Half the farms recorded negative net farm incomes. That is not just clever accountancy by the farmers concerned but a realistic assessment by the agricultural economics department of the state of the industry and the level of incomes.

The farmers' crisis has been made worse by high interest rates, as a result of Government policy, and because of the relative decline in the value of sterling which has meant

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that the green pound has been significantly overvalued. For sheepmeat, the green pound rate is some 90 per cent. above the market exchange rate. That again undermines farmers.

The importance of agriculture is that it provides a framework for community life in the countryside. I am a tenant—not a tenant farmer—of half a house on an old hill-farming estate that has maintained the pattern of life in the village and countryside. The National Trust is a major landowner in the upland areas of my constituency. It has established conservation and agricultural policies that are designed to maintain the landscape and community life.

For us in the countryside, agriculture is the backbone of the community. In the Welsh language—the language of most of those communities—the description of the countryside is "cefn gwlad", which means the backbone of the country. For those reasons I put the case for hill livestock compensatory allowances to be increased and for the Government to take their responsibility towards hill farming seriously. After all, the farming community is taking its responsibility seriously. On conservation, the farming community is increasingly making its contribution to the distinctive landscape of the park, to reinvesting and maintaining the structure of the farming industry and farm buildings and to maintaining the shape of the landscape.

That can be secured for the future by adequate return of income, whether from the lower output now being demanded or a transfer away from the emphasis on production, maintaining income by conservation grants, by practices benevolent to the countryside or more organic farming. Farmers are adaptable and subtle people and they welcome those changes, but they expect to be assured that they can attain a decent level of income. They look to the Government, the Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and to the Leader of the House to listen to their message.

7.14 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Several hon. Members on both sides of the House have rightly referred to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Because of the speed at which foreign affairs have been moving in the past few months, weeks and days, it is important to ask the Leader of the House to assure us that the continuing movement in foreign affairs is monitored and, where appropriate, action taken. If necessary the House should be recalled if the security of the nation or the European Community appears to be at risk.

Several hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to Romania. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is not in his place, but I should preface my remarks by saying that Conservative Members also raise matters of human rights wherever they may be and in whatever country, whether West, East, Communist or capitalist, and they will continue to do so. It is wrong for the hon. Gentleman to cast aspersions on Conservative Members by saying that they would not do so if it were a capitalist country. I was in Sri Lanka recently and raised matters of human rights with the President and I will continue to do so wherever I go in the world.

Therefore, it is permissible for Conservative Members such as myself to refer to the horrors of recent events in Romania. It is one of the most tragic episodes in post-war European history, certainly in my lifetime, to see a European country engaged in the slaughter of its own people. Not so many years ago, that country was seen as a gateway to the West for Communist eastern and central Europe. Now, under the same leader, it has gone downhill helter-skelter into tyranny. It is sad to see President Ceausescu standing for ever in the patheon of tyrants alongside Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot.

It is also ironic that, around the world, mass slaughter and terror are often carried out not by the tsars and shahs of the past, but by those who claim to be the people's representatives and the people's Governments. We see that in Romania, China, and Cambodia. However, even in this their blackest hour there is still hope for the people of Romania. That hope is based on the realities of what we have seen throughout our continent in recent months. However long it takes, ultimately tyranny cannot and will not last.

In my lifetime I have seen tyrannies in eastern and central Europe rise and then begin to crumble and fall. As a schoolboy I remember visiting the Czech-Austrian border and being impressed by the stark watchtowers and barbed wire. I came back and wrote poems about them in my English lessons. I heard on the radio about the Soviet invasion of Hungary and about the tanks rolling into Budapest. I also remember the Prague spring and the hopes that were raised and then dashed in the Dubcek period. However, one now sees, in those same countries, people's rights having their way and people's hopes coming to fruition, perhaps led by what has been achieved in Poland through Solidarity. I declare an interest as I have the headquarters of Solidarity with Solidarity in my constituency. I have seen that brave nation overcoming Communism with the help of its Church. We now see Poland's need for food and know-how. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House will also bear in mind the need to help with political organisation. Ultimately, a democracy cannot rest on trade union power alone; it must have many parties, and Poland requires assistance to allow the emerging parties to develop.

East Germany is also moving towards democracy and progress. A year ago I was with some hon. Members in Leipzig and East Berlin. It is incredible to consider how we looked at that psychological and physical wall and wondered how it could ever be destroyed. After only a year, that wall is no more.

A year ago Mr. Honecker, the late not much lamented leader of East Germany, went to Moscow trying to get the line right. Half the leadership of East Germany that he left behind tried to tell us that Moscow was catching up with East Germany and that Honecker had gone to Moscow to tell the Russians how East Germany had done it. The other half of the leadership, much more realistically, said that there had to be changes but that they would take time. They said that the economy needed time to develop. They believed that, if the wall was opened quickly, business men and professionals would leave. They said that we should be patient. But the East Germans found the courage to allow people to leave first through the back door and then through the front door and they have found that walls can be torn down without the country collapsing.

When we consider the events in East Germany, the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia, we must be

careful. It is all very well for changes to occur within countries and it is fine for regimes to fall and for new democracies to be created. However, if borders are threatened, there may be instability which could lead to danger. I hope very much that the Baltic states will one day be free. As we encourage them towards that freedom, we must play it slow and careful. The same applies when we consider the German borders and those further south. In Romania, Romanians are destroying Romanians, but they are also destroying the Hungarian minority, so there are pressures on Hungary to become involved and border problems may become apparent.

Yugoslavia is user-friendly to people in this country. British people go there on holiday because they feel safe and comfortable. As Communism begins to collapse in Yugoslavia, however, the country is beginning to fragment and there are potential dangers in that. Within Yugoslavia, the Serbs comprise 40 per cent. of the population. The Serbs are a fine people but they must be reminded that they must encourage other minorities in Yugoslavia to their rights and freedom too.

The Slovenes are considering seceding from Yugoslavia. The Croatians are worried about Serbian demonstrations and the Bosnians are worried about the activities of the Serbian secret police. The Macedonians are worried about Serbian settlers. That is all happening against a background of inflation running at between 1,200 per cent. and 1,600 per cent. per year. Indeed, about 5,000 homes in Zagreb do not have electricity, not because of a power strike or because people have been cut off but because they cannot pay their bills. That situation breeds instability.

Alongside this I refer to Kosovo and to the Albanian people within that part of Yugoslavia. I raise this issue particularly on behalf of constituents of Albanian extraction who are concerned about the fate of their fellow Albanians in Yugoslavia and within Kosovo in particular. Incidentally, I am sure that all hon. Members will be aware that Mother Theresa is a famous Yugoslav Albanian. The fate of nearly 1·7 million Albanians in Yugoslavia is uncertain because there are Serbian troops, aircraft and helicopters throughout Kosovo. People are being arrested for minor infringements of the constitution. If someone says that Kosovo should secede, that is considered an anti-revolutionary act and the person could go to prison for 12 years or more. That is an example of tyranny within a user-friendly Communist state and we must be aware of it. We must also beware of the dangers of Yugoslavia breaking up. If it breaks up into small states, there will be instability in that part of Europe. We must persuade the Serbian leaders in Yugoslavia to find peaceful solutions to their problems.

have been describing the decline and collapse of Communism in Europe. That was inevitable and it is right and good. As Will Rogers said:

"Communism is like prohibition—it's a good idea, but it won't work."

As we move into a new decade, there is great hope and optimism for the future of Europe as east, west, north, and south are all coming together. At the same time, we must be vigilant. There is hope, but there is also sorrow. The sorrow is evident in Romania. The hope is in Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and, perhaps most importantly, in the Soviet Union.

During the Christmas recess I urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House to urge his right hon. and hon. Friends at the Foreign Office who are dealing with our foreign policy, and also our European counterparts, to bring pressure to bear on the developing democracies in east and central Europe to ensure that there is real justice for all the people and that border issues are played carefully and slowly.

7.26 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and I wholeheartedly agree with the majority of his comments. It is right that during such a Christmas Adjournment debate we should consider events in other parts of the world. The pace of those events is very pressing. They are important and have a wide-ranging effect on our relationships with the new emerging democracies in Europe and elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman's speech was well-argued and wide-ranging.

I want to bring the House back briefly to a more domestic, but none the less important issue—the changes in the employment benefit rules as they particularly affect part-time workers. I make no apologies for referring to such a technical change in the regulations because, although the change may appear insignificant, it has a dramatic financial effect on a great number of people. The House should not adjourn for Christmas until more consideration has been given to the effect of those changes in the next few weeks.

The changes in the unemployment rules to which I will refer specifically were introduced in the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 1989. The House may be aware that those regulations were laid before the house on 17 November and took effect on 10 December, under the Social Security Act 1989. They were debated in Standing Committee under the negative procedure on 13 December and were criticised by the Committee at some length.

The regulations introduce several changes. Regulation 2(a) prevents people from receiving unemployment benefit in any week in which they earn more than the lower earnings limit, which is currently £43. Before those changes, as the House will be aware, people could claim unemployment benefit for any day in which their earnings did not exceed £2. That meant that people could earn some money—considerable money in some cases—a few days of the week and then claim benefit for the remaining days in which earnings were less than £2.

Regulation 2(a) is a small bureaucratic change, and it did not sound as though it would make too much of a difference for too many people, but it is a fundamental change in the way in which national insurance contributory benefits, which include unemployment benefit, will operate in the future. The fundamental change really means that, in future, unemployment benefit will be means-tested. We all know that there is a contributions test for eligibility for unemployment benefit and that one must be available for work, but, when the regulations come into effect, there will be a third additional requirement. If a part-time worker now earns more than £43 in any given week, he or she will be denied unemployment benefit. That is a far-reaching change to the principle of unemployment benefit as Beveridge saw it

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and as it has operated in the past 40 years. It is a serious erosion of people's entitlement to benefit and it has extensive implications.

The Department of Social Security estimates that 30,000 people will be affected by the changes in any given week and that perhaps as many as 500,000 people could lose one or more week's benefit in any given year as a result of the changes.

I want to register the strongest possible complaint about the method by which the changes are made. These far-reaching changes were visited on employers and employees alike, out of the blue and over a short time. I accept that the Government had signalled their intention to make changes in that respect when the Social Security Bill was considered in Committee in February, but there was no indication of exactly how they would be given effect. We were given two or three weeks in which to respond before the regulations were implemented.

It is unreasonable to make such changes in such a short time, without extensive consultation with employers and employees' organisations. The Government's justification is that anyone earning £43 a week pays national insurance. In their bureaucratic, simple-minded way, they argue that it is wrong to treat people earning £43 a week as employed for national insurance contribution purposes and consider them to be unemployed for unemployment benefit eligibility purposes in the same week.

The Social Security Advisory Committee, the Government's own adviser in these matters, was not at all impressed by that argument. It took the view, with which I wholeheartedly agree, that £43 a week is far too low a sum on which to base the threshold for the new eligibility for unemployment benefit. The committee agreed that there was some merit in using the principle. I accept that there is an argument for establishing such a principle, but the level is scandalously low. It is a substantial deterrent to part-time work, and the Confederation of British Industry has made lengthy representations to the Government to that effect. The Government's policy is that they are seeking to encourage people to go back into part-time work, often as a step on the ladder back to full-time employment for those who have been unemployed for many months or years. It is a retrograde step to produce an additional disincentive to part-time work.

The Low Pay Unit said that someone who turns down a part-time job because of the new changes may not only lose one week's benefit in the future but may be judged to be rendering himself voluntarily unemployed. In that case, he would stand to lose up to six months' unemployment benefit. That is a serious new problem to arise out of the changes.

I hope that the Leader of the House will listen carefully to the urgent plea from not only me but other Members, and the SSAC, for a full-scale review of unemployment benefit. The Government, in their note on the SSAC report, said that they were making the changes on a transitional basis. I hope that that transitional process does not last too long after the Christmas recess. The effects are dramatic. Taken together with the other changes being made in the actively seeking work test that is now being applied to unemployment benefit, the measures are being undertaken far too fast with very little thought being given to their long-term effects on people.

Cynics will argue that this is the 30th change to the method of calculating the number of those who are actively seeking work and claiming benefit—the 30th administrative change in the method of counting the unemployed in a way that will substantially reduce the headline monthly totals of jobless people.

I refer to two constituency cases to demonstrate the effects of the changes. The change in the £43 weekly earnings rule will have a serious effect on the textile industry in towns such as Hawick, Jedburgh and Kelso. Knitwear manufacturers have entered into an agreement with trade unions whereby workers work an eight-day fortnight. They do that deliberately so that part-time workers—casual workers who work four days one week and four days the next—can claim benefit totalling about £11·57 a fortnight. Summarily and out of the blue, the regulations will deprive part-time workers who are already suffering financial hardships.

The knitwear industry is going through a difficult period in any case. The combination of fashion changes, increases in the price of raw materials, and fluctuations in interest rates have led to short-time working being the norm in hosiery mills in my constituency. In a town such as Hawick, for example, where there are about 3,000 part-timers, principally women, almost three quarters of workers will be caught.

At a stroke, more than 2,000 part-time workers—women—in my constituency will lose nearly £12 a week as a result of the change. The employers can do nothing about that.

The effect on inshore fishermen in Scotland and in other parts of the United Kingdom will be dramatic. If a vessel is laid up through bad weather or technical failure for the whole of the benefit week except for one day, and on that day the skipper decides to go out to sea, he risks prejudicing unemployment claims for all the days on which his vessel was laid up. That could amount to about £56·10 a week for a married share fisherman.

All these changes have come out of the blue, and the effect on the fishing industry will be severe. The Leader of the House knows that quotas and total allowable catches are restricting fishing opportunities for the inshore fleet and are causing great problems. Using the two examples of share fishermen in ports such as Eyemouth and textile workers in towns such as Hawick, it can clearly be seen that the regulations should be withdrawn pending a review. They are mean-minded, cruelly timed and wholly unjustified. Many part-time workers already experience hardship.

In the past, unemployment benefits have played an important part in supplementing meagre wages for part-time workers. These changes are a disincentive to work and a further unjustified attack on the living standards of the low-paid. Scrooge is certainly alive and well this Christmas, and living in the Department of Social Security.

7.39 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I hope that everyone enjoys the Christmas festivities, although this has been a gloomy debate so far, but before the House rises for the Christmas recess I hope that the House will consider the three brief points that I wish to raise.

My first point relates to hospital radio. I have the honour of being the unpaid spokesman for the National

Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations which represents 310 radio stations, serving 700 hospitals throughout the country. We have 11,000 volunteers, making us the largest voluntary organisation in the country without any paid officers. Hospital radio does a magnificent job. Fund raising is always difficult, but, as all hon. Members will agree, the therapeutic benefits of hospital radio are proven.

On Valentine's day, we launched the "I Love Hospital Radio" campaign. We hoped to persuade the Treasury to zero-rate VAT on hospital radio broadcasting equipment. Unfortunately, I am advised by Treasury Ministers that we cannot be treated exactly the same as Talking Books for the Handicapped and that apparently we come under European jurisdiction which makes it difficult to zero-rate the VAT on hospital radio broadcasting equipment. However, many members of NAHBO are concerned that, with the advent of liberalisation, the substantial increase in listener choice will result in patients relying on their own portable radio receivers. Without low-powered radio frequency transmitter facilities, hospital radio will be unable to compete with other services.

I hope that each and every hon. Member will start to become active in lobbying the Home Office to allow hospital radio to have its own frequency. During the summer we had a fruitful meeting with my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), who is now the Chief Whip but who then had Home Office responsibilities, and went on to meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. If we are to achieve our own frequency for hospital radio, it is essential that all hon. Members, who no doubt visit their hospital radio stations from time to time, lobby the Home Office and the IBA so that we are granted our own frequency.

My second point relates to national lotteries. Premium bonds were introduced in November 1956. They are no longer the great attraction that they used to be. Perhaps the change in spending patterns means that the prizes are no longer the great attraction that they used to be. I very much support the idea of a national lottery. I was delighted that this summer the Home Office announced that from 1 September 1989 the limits on maximum prizes would be increased by 100 per cent. However, the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 makes no provision for a national lottery. I do not understand why we seem tardy in legislating for a national lottery because, however the funds were distributed, a national lottery would have great benefits for the arts, for the environment and for sporting facilities throughout the country.

We estimate that a national lottery would give an income of £1·08 billion per year. All our EC partners have national lotteries and total EC sales are now £11·6 billion. I fear that several of the most powerful European lotteries are at this moment gleefully anticipating the opportunity to fill Britain's unique void in the European lottery market. In addition, 116 countries on every continent generate $56·3 billion of revenue, contributing to various good causes for the benefit of their people.

I have no doubt that a national lottery would be a tremendous success in this country. I am sure that it is not beyond the design of the media to hold the draws on television. No doubt we could interrupt "Neighbours" or "Coronation Street" and a celebrity could draw the prize in the national lottery——

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): My hon. Friend could do it himself.

Mr. Amess: My hon. Friend has given us a further suggestion. I have no doubt that a national lottery would be an enormous success.

My final point relates to the televising of our proceedings. I voted against the televising of our proceedings, and everything that has happened since has made me even more adamant in the view that I originally held. First, we were told that the lights in the Chamber would be unobtrusive. I advise those who cannot see the lights in the Chamber that they appear to be covered by a cross between mosquito nets and old-fashioned bloomers. That is the first promise that has not been kept.

Secondly, we were told that the television cameras would not be noticeable. As far as I am concerned, they certainly are noticeable. The third and perhaps the most pathetic promise that was made was that the television cameras would bring hon. Members back into the Chamber. I have not seen any examples of hon. Members rushing back into the Chamber, in spite of the televising of our proceedings——

Mr. Winnick: Only for the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Amess: I repeat that the Chamber is not a television set. Television gives only a certain image of the House. I admit that I noticed about three weeks ago when we were debating a one-and-a-half hour order—a Welsh measure that normally would not have been well attended—there were about 50 Welsh Members on the Opposition Benches, including the Leader of the Opposition. That was certainly geared to whatever was to be shown on Welsh television.

I very much regret the televising of our proceedings and note that the television companies have certainly not stuck to the guidelines on showing only head-and-shoulder shots. I shall continue to use the television cameras for all they are worth in the hope that eventually I will be offered my own chat show programme, but in the interim I hope that when we have the opportunity through the Leader of the House to vote on the experiment the House will reject it and that we shall enter the next decade camera-free.

7.47 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I shall follow the comments of the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) in only one respect. I think that televising Parliament has been a great success. "Neil Kinnock and the Labour party" has come across very well and I am not surprised that Conservative Members are still objecting.

I had been dreaming of a green Christmas. We were going to have a green Bill. The so-called green Bill was published today as the Environmental Protection Bill. This morning the Labour party published its alternative entitled "Blue or Green?" We challenged the Government's Bill with a check list. Having looked through our check list and read most of the Bill, I can confirm that it is a blue Bill, not a green Bill, so I shall not have the green Christmas that I had expected.

The Government's legislation will continue to allow sea dumping. The Government are to privatise waste disposal, including that of toxic and chemical wastes. They are to put concern for that fundamental issue into the market place so that profit—not concern for the environment—will determine who deals with our toxic and chemical

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waste. The British people will oppose the privatisation and commercialisation of the problems of toxic waste, just as they opposed water privatisation.

The so-called "green Bill" does not mention any scheme to deal with the problems of dogs, although they are a major problem everywhere. Entering some of the estates in my constituency is like entering a safari park. I went into a supermarket the other day and a dog came in and had a wee on the South African oranges. One of my constituents said, "What are you going to do about that, Mr. Roberts?" I said, "Buy Australian." The problem of dogs is serious, yet the Government refuse to act on it. They will not introduce a comprehensive dog registration scheme.

Still included in the Bill is an attack on the Nature Conservancy Council—it will still be decimated. There are additional responsibilities for local authorities, without the additional resources to enable them to do the job. Of course, there is not even a mention of the major environmental issue facing not only this country but the world—the greenhouse gases and global warming effect. There will be a 26 per cent. increase in carbon dioxide emissions in Britain by the year 2005. It is not surprising that the Government refuse to mention carbon dioxide emissions, greenhouse gases and global warming; they have refused to set targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions because, under their policies for transport and energy, projections are that carbon dioxide emissions will increase, not reduce.

The Bill does say that we will help the Third world to deal with the problem of deforestation, which would contribute to reducing the greenhouse effect. However, that is not where the major problem lies. Only 8 per cent. of carbon dioxide emissions come from the developing world; 90-plus per cent. comes from the developed world. Some 50 per cent. of all carbon dioxide comes from Russia, the United States of America, Japan and Britain —the four major polluters. Britain refuses to do anything about that.

Only yesterday, the Secretary of State for Transport announced that the Government were to cut subsidis to British Rail and therefore to the public transport system. People will not be encouraged to leave their cars at home. About 6,000 new cars a day come on to our roads, half being company cars that receive Government subsidies. How hypocritical of the Government to claim that they are concerned about global warming and carbon dioxide emissions when they are pursuing such transport policies. They should set targets, start reductions, alter their transport and energy policies and spend money on alternative, benign energy research and development.

I had hoped for a green Christmas on Merseyside. I had hoped that the Bill would relieve some of the environmental problems in my constituency, which is fast becoming an environmental disaster area. The port of Liverpool, which I represent, has shifted from traditional cargos to bulk cargoes and it is now importing coal and coal dust. It is like living in a coal mining area. The coal dust comes in; there are mountains of it—a new skyline for Merseyside. It gets in the cornflakes and in the sugar; it is everywhere. Because the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board has special development order status, it can do all that without permission. The legislation prevents effective action from being taken because it is not sufficiently strong on the issue of nuisance. We can only take the board and the stevedore companies to the magistrates court, where they receive paltry fines for the pollution that they cause.

Another major problem in my constituency is scrap metal. There are mountains of it in the port. I have a nice house overlooking the marina in Crosby. It overlooks the beach, which would be lovely were it not for the sewage on it. I can see across the Irish bay and, on a nice day, I can see the Welsh mountains. However, if I look to the left I can see the scrap shredder, which is built next to a nature reserve. Planning permission was not required, so it is there and it causes terrific problems.

The so-called green Bill makes no mention of smells. The Control of Pollution Act does not cover smells. The seed crusher and oil processor in docklands stinks out the whole constituency. There is nothing that anyone can do about it. I admit that the companies are beginning research and hope to take some action, but there is no way that the local authority can take action because there is no legislation to cover that.

The River Mersey is a major problem. The Government claim that they are cleaning it. In fact, they are taking the raw sewage out of the Mersey—they are spending £3·5 billion on this—and bringing it to a dock in my constituency, where they turn it into sewage sludge, full of heavy metal, put it on boats that take it back into the river estuary ready to dump it in the sea, where it would have been in the first place if they had left it to float down the River Mersey. The only difference is that it has been turned into sludge—but it is only primary treatment.

The Government are not dealing with any of the other pollution problems in the River Mersey, such as heavy metals, PCBs, mercury, cadmium and lead. There are 27 deemed consents for discharges into the River Mersey by factories and chemical factories. They are polluting the river. There were 23 prosecutions in 1987. The average fine for companies such as Shell and ICI was £680. It is not surprising that the PCBs are still there, as are the heavy metals and the chemicals. The Government are simply taking out the raw sewage and then dumping it back as sewage sludge. It is an absolute sham. The Government have no plans to stop the dumping of poisonous sewage sludge into the sea.

Following the remarks of the hon. Member for Basildon, I want to end on a Christmas note and mention a vegetarian pantomime. There is currently an environmental pantomime in London at the Etcetera theatre, above the Oxford Arms in Camden. The baddies are Lord Hailam and Flora Cardham. The Ugly Sisters are Sox and Knox. It is called "Dick Withington and His Amazing Catalytic Converter". Anyone going to see the pantomime would get the message that the Government should be getting. Indeed, if Ministers had been to see the pantomime before they produced the so-called green Bill it might have been a green Bill rather than a blue one.

7.56 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Time is short and I am conscious that there is another Opposition Member hoping to speak. I shall confine my remarks to three related subjects which I believe should be discussed before the House adjourns. They are conductive education, the Peto Institute in Budapest, Hungary—which is the home

of conductive education—and my constituent Dawn Rogers, who has been at the Peto Institute for 27 months and is having great difficulty obtaining public funding.

Conductive education—it is not yet sufficiently well known in this country—is a method of educating children, and also some adults, with motor disorders, which are disorders of the central nervous system. That educational system is based on what I believe is known as a "whole person approach". Its aim is to enable children with a motor disability to participate fully in mainstream education. The professional input comes from one person, the conductor, who incorporates the skills of many different groups including those of physiotherapist, occupational therapist, teacher and nurse.

The treatment is intensive and relies upon considerable parental involvement. The children are taught more or less from the time they wake up until they go to bed. The aims are to provide education in a structured and rigorous way so that children can have greater control over their bodies and join in everyday life without artificial aids and appliances.

In a moving article in *The Sunday Times* written almost two years ago, Rose Shepherd described her visit to the Peto clinic and how the British contingent used to arrive there with what she called all the paraphernalia of handicap. It is a great contrast with the Hungarian approach, which is to get the children on to their own feet and up and about as soon as possible.

Conductive education was developed and devised by Dr. Andreas Peto. His philosophy was very simple—that a motor disorder need not be a sentence of immobility for life, but a learning difficulty that can be overcome by skilled teaching. In other words, skills that are automatic to a normal little child can be taught and acquired. There are no miracle cures, but the Peto Institute can claim a 70 per cent. success rate—defined as "autofunction", or the capability to attend school and eventually live an independent life without the need for special help and equipment.

Such treatment is not generally available in Britain. Anxieties among educationists perhaps prevented an advance until relatively recently, when those anxieties were in part laid to rest. The Government have provided Birmingham university with £326,000 to carry out research into conductive education, and the Departments of Education and Science and of Social Security are jointly funding a survey by the Spastics Society.

The Government's announcement last week of a £5 million grant to the Peto Institute over the next four years is extremely welcome. The grant will go towards the capital costs of the new international Peto Institute in Budapest, a commitment that will make available spaces at the institute commensurate with the number of British children able to go there. At present, 11 British people are being trained on a four-year course to be conductors. About 600 children have attended the institute and the United Kingdom makes more use of it than any other country. I welcome the Government's announcement of that additional funding during the Hungarian Prime Minister's visit here this week.

In addition, as part of a programme of exchanges between the Peto Institute and the Birmingham foundation, a small number of British children receive training in Birmingham from Hungarian conductors and United Kingdom trainees.

Such exchanges beg the question why we cannot move a little faster towards securing the availability of conductive education in Britain. I accept that conductive education already influences professionals involved in educating handicapped children. I also accept that the introduction into the United Kingdom of the Hungarian model of conductive education on any significant scale will have to await the availability of a group of British conductors trained and taught at the Peto Institute. I applaud the Government's support for the Peto Institute and for conductive education. I urge Ministers to speed up as much as possible the provision of such education in the United Kingdom.

Children who attend the Peto Institute receive funding from several sources. There are no central figures, but I am informed that there are approximately eight long-term students at the Peto Institute, of whom six or seven receive support from their local education authorities. There are no more long-term places available. In the past there has been some uncertainty about whether local education authorities could fund students attending the Peto Institute. That has been cleared up by an amendment to the Children Act 1989. I understand that several education authorities, including Coventry, Devon, Birmingham and Fife have helped such students and there may be others who have done so. Alas, my constituent is one of perhaps only two who are as yet unfunded.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, and his officials, whom I met earlier this year to discuss whether any additional means of support could be made available to my constituent. I am also grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security, who has taken a considerable interest in the subject as a whole and in my constituent. My right hon. Friend made clear to me in a recent letter that the Government believe that it is right for parents who consider that the Peto Institute offers services to their disabled children which are not available in Britain to seek support from public funds.

The structure of education in Britain inevitably means that parents must appeal to local education authorities for funding. The remaining budget of the Department of Education and Science is tiny, as funds are funnelled through LEAs. Therefore, my constituents must seek support from Nottinghamshire education authority. So far, we have been unable to persuade the authority to assist. I appreciate how difficult it is for the authority to consider such cases and to grant funds, and I understand that such decisions are not easy. Nevertheless, I appeal to it to reconsider, because this is a one-off case.

My constituent's family have remortgaged their home, sold their business, their caravan and many personal assets and taken out bank loans to be in Budapest with my young constituent. Their reward has been to witness the outstanding progress of their nine-year-old daughter. The local community, too, has been extremely generous. I pay tribute to several organisations in my constituency which have sought to help.

I hope that, in reconsidering, Nottinghamshire education authority will bear in mind the following points. I make them in the spirit of this time of year in the hope that it will seriously consider helping. My constituent has already been at the Peto Institute for two years and three months, so no new decision need be made about where she should be educated. At most, she has an estimated 18

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

months to go at the institute. If the local education authority were to assist, it would not open the floodgates. Alas, no new long-term places are available at the Peto Institute. Miss Rogers is one of the lucky ones who has made it there in time.

Since the local authority first considered the case, the Government have changed the law in the way that I outlined earlier. Much else has changed, too, including a greater acceptance of the methods of conductive education. The Government have given their explicit approval, as evidenced by their support for the Peto Institute announced in the past week.

I intend no reflection on the quality of Aspley Wood and Fountaindale in Nottinghamshire and the professionalism of the teachers and staff there. My constituent has attended the Peto Institute for the past two and a quarter years and the length of her stay there is finite. Her family have demonstrated their absolute determination to help their daughter. I believe that the authority should assist. Its education committee must be moved by the examples of dedication and self-help which her family display.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House will remember the case of Sebastion Clarke in Birmingham, his fight for funding and his eventual success. My constituents can look to that example with hope. I hope that the LEA will consider what it can do to assist my constituent during her last 18 months at the Peto Institute.

8.5 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copelands): Inevitably, we have had a wide-ranging debate. I am only sorry that the patience of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has not been rewarded and that he has not been able to make his speech.

The debate ranged from events in Panama to Romania and general events in eastern Europe. It touched not only on political changes but on educational programmes in eastern Europe—the Peto Institute has just been mentioned. We heard about the problems of service widows, the poor and the homeless. We have heard, rightly, from my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) that the House will begin the Christmas recess without any resolution in sight of the long-running ambulance workers' dispute. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) made a speech which was perhaps as close to my constituency interests as any other made today. He spoke of the problems in national parks and those faced by hill farmers. A large part of my constituency is in the Lake District national park, and I agree with the views that the hon. Gentleman expressed.

Above all, we have heard about the problems of people on low incomes, young people and unemployed people, particularly from the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). Several hon. Members who have spoken believe, as I do, that at the end of this decade we face problems in social policy, industrial and economic policy which are a scandal in a country such as Britain. At a time when Europe is undergoing momentous changes, Britain should look forward to playing an influential and dynamic role in those changes. We are poised on the brink of a challenging new decade. After 10 years of a Conservative Government we have not solved the problems of the 1980s.

We participate in this adjournment debate facing many problems for the second or, in some cases, the third time under this Government. They include the problems of economic recession, critically high interest rates, high and rising inflation, homelessness and unemployment. The Conservative Governments of the 1980s will be remembered for their narrow view of individuals' interests, the dogmatic attitude to the market system, their authoritarianism and centralism, the favouritism that they have shown to the well-off and their neglect of the majority of people. We are witnessing the prodigious waste of British people, particularly the unemployed, and of the nation's resources.

We have no choice about whether or not we respond to the changes which will take place in the 1990s. Those changes will happen, and they are happening all around us. However, we have a choice about the manner in which we respond and how we deal with those changes. The question is whether we allow, as we have done in the 1980s, too many of our fellow citizens to be victims of change —poor people, people on low incomes, those who lose their jobs or their homes, people who are left behind—or whether we manage the coming changes in such a way as to involve all our people, with the costs and the benefits being shared evenly, fairly and realistically throughout the community.

The most moving speech today was that which commenced the debate, in which the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) described the plight of his constituent, Ian Richter. The circumstances in which Mr. Richter and his family find themselves can only be described as appalling. I am sure that everyone present will share the thoughts expressed by the hon. Gentleman towards the family of his constituent. We also share the hope that, somehow, Mr. Richter can be released so that he can regain his freedom and return to the safety and care of his family.

Since the state opening, we have heard much from Ministers about how well the Government have done and how well the economy has been managed. From time to time we have also heard about the so-called economic miracle, but less so since the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) resigned so dramatically. We leave this decade, however, with inflation, interest rates and unemployment levels higher than those of our competitors and European neighbours, and with the largest trade deficit in our history—the highest of the industrial world in relative terms.

We do not leave the 1980s in good shape to face the 1990s. Despite the claims about good management and good economic policies, too many of our people have been treated unfairly in the 1980s. That is true of national insurance pensioners and of those families who rely on benefits such as child benefit. That benefit is another casualty of the decade; it has been kept down by successive Chancellors and for the past three years it has been frozen. It is time for a change of policy and we believe that it is time for a new Government. It is certainly time for our country and our people to be given the hope and encouragement to believe that we shall see polices in the 1990s which will fit them to face the changes and challenges ahead. Nowhere are those changes so essential and so important as in education and training.

It is true that welcome political attention has been paid to education and training in recent years. I also welcome the growth of business interest in such training. We are still shockingly and disgracefully far behind other countries in this respect. That those in business are taking a greater interest in education and training is welcome, if somewhat overdue, but in too many cases it remains a rather narrow self-interest.

Reduced secondary school rolls have become reduced numbers of young workers, and employers are experiencing recruitment difficulties. In effect, training is being privatised: the current development of training and enterprise councils gives private sector employers major responsibility for managing Government funds for young people and adult trainees. It is no wonder that such employers are showing keen concern at recent proposals from the Confederation of British Industry for a skills revolution. It is interesting to reflect that the claim for a need for revolution seems to have crossed the political divide. Revolution used to be construed a threatening word. Now, however, it is more widely recognised than ever before that, if our country is to be fit to compete and to win in the 1990s, a revolution is exactly what we need. Private sector spending on training is low, however, and with certain notable exceptions, the track record is generally poor.

Clearly the pressure must be kept up on the private sector not only to contribute time and expertise to education and training, but to expand in-service education and training opportunities for employees. All that said, however, there can be no escape for Government in the 1990s from undertaking their proper functions. If education and training are the bedrock of the human resources on which a sound and growing economy depends, the Government must ultimately be responsible and take on board, ungrudgingly and unhesitatingly, the expensive business of investing in the people.

At present, a miserable 15 per cent. of our 18-year-olds go on to higher education—the proportion sinks to as low as 4 per cent. in some inner-London areas—compared with 35 per cent. in France and 30 per cent. in Germany. Only about half our 16-year-old school leavers go on to further education, compared with more than 90 per cent. in the United States and more than 70 per cent. in France. According to a recent survey, just over half our work force received no formal in-work training in 1987, rising to two thirds of the work force in manufacturing.

In the early 1980s, we frequently heard from Conservative Members that problems could not be solved by throwing money at them. I am pleased to say that we have not heard that argument even once today. Time and again this decade, a great deal of money has been thrown at a large number of high-income earners. In the coming decade, we want to see more fairness. The people want to see a new social as well as a new economic agenda for Britain. A number of hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), have rightly said that our people want to see a new international agenda in the 1990s. Above all, they want to see more fairness in our society.

The shadow Leader of the House should note——

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): The Leader of the House.

Dr. Cunningham: I beg the right hon. and learned Gentleman's pardon—he has suffered enough already. I wonder whether he has received his Christmas card from the Prime Minister yet, if she caught up with his change of address.

On behalf of my hon. Friends, and on behalf of the House, I wish the right hon. and learned Gentleman a merry Christmas and a happy, prosperous and peaceful new year. It will not be very peaceful for people on low incomes facing the poll tax in 1990 and it will not be peaceful or prosperous for too many of our fellow citizens who are still looking for an opportunity to get their first job. Above all, the new year will not be peaceful for the ambulance workers of Britain who are entering the Christmas period in a long-running and unnecessary dispute. The Government should seek to solve that dispute before the House rises for the Christmas recess.

8.18 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I reciprocate the Christmas good wishes of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), coupled with my confident expectation that he will long remain a shadow. We would like to keep him like that.

I should like to raise the slightly dismal tone that the hon. Gentleman managed to convey in his speech by reminding the House that, compared with the situation that we faced 10 years ago when our economic performance was lamentable and almost everything was to be deplored in comparison with our international competitors, our gross domestic product is at its highest ever level, having risen by more than 4 per cent. in the past two years. We have had eight years of successive growth averaging more than 3 per cent.—a strong economic performance not matched since the war. It is that which enables us to address a number of social issues with confidence, and I shall try to do that when I take up a number of points made by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I join the hon. Member for Copeland in expressing deep concern at the plight of Ian Richter, so eloquently brought to our attention by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). We admire the courage of Ian Richter and his family. We shall continue to press at every opportunity for his release on the strongest possible humanitarian grounds. We accept no linkage between Ian Richter's case and that of Salim Hassan, the murderer to whom my hon. Friend referred. I have frequently raised the matter with the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, and I take this opportunity to renew that candid and useful dialogue and urge him to secure the release of Ian Richter as soon as possible.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) rightly drew attention to some of the social problems to which we should pay attention at this and every other time. The Government share his concern for the homeless, but the thrust of our housing policies is aimed at helping those in greatest need by extending the role of housing associations, by expanding the private rented sector and, most recently, by targeting resources —£250 million in London and the south-east—to that issue during the next two years. I share his admiration for the role of voluntary organisations in preventing and relieving homelessness. That is why funding is to be increased in 1990-91 from £680,000 to £2 million.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe asked about the likely outcome of our disability review. We intend soon to announce our proposals on the reconsideration of the balance and structure of benefits for the disabled. During the 10 years that this Government have been in office, the total of resources for the benefit of disabled people has increased in real terms by 90 per cent. Even in the difficult days of my early Budgets, the improvement of prospects for the disabled was a subject to which we never failed to pay attention.

A number of detailed points were raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I shall not try to deal with them in detail now. My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) raised the problem of women who had been widowed, remarried and risked sacrificing the pension they received from their first husband. I shall ensure that he receives a letter from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security about that.

In a characteristically wide-ranging contribution, even in this short debate, the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred to the problem of the trigger for cold weather benefit payments. We must have a trigger of some kind for those benefits. If necessary, the Department of Social Security will do all it can to ensure that those entitled to payment know when they have to make their claims.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who has the honour of representing my Scottish grandfather's birthplace at Newcastleton, drew attention, in technical detail, to the impact of changes in unemployment benefit. I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It has never been our intention that unemployment benefit should provide support for those in part-time work. I appreciate the role of part-time workers in the two industries of which he spoke, but the rules have always provided that only small amounts may be earned while unemployment benefit is being received. The idea is to introduce a more objective test to reinforce that principle.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) raised three different topics. The first was the state of the Health Service in his part of the country and I shall bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Secondly, he commented on the difficult balance arrived at in the Government's judgment on the Barlow Clowes case and evoked some sympathy from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). He reminded me of a quotation from, I think, Spenser that I often drew on when I was the Minister with responsibility for consumer affairs. This makes the point that, if we set out to protect everyone from the consequences of his or her own folly, we shall end up with a world peopled entirely by fools. It is difficult to make the right judgment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale also referred to the long-running baggage handlers' strike at Manchester airport. I join him in his admiration of the importance of Manchester airport. I was also struck by the contribution of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). Speaking from my recollection of my representation of a Merseyside constituency, I wonder why we often have two regional airports in different places when one in the middle would have been much better. I think of Tyneside and Teesside, and even Glasgow and Edinburgh. The airports at Liverpool and Manchester provide another example. The continuation of the strike at Manchester is regrettable, particularly as it arises from the reasons given by my hon. Friend. We hope that negotiations will lead to a return to work as soon as possible.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) was one of a number of hon. Members who spoke about the ambulance dispute. There will be a chance to discuss that in the Adjournment debate some time after midnight tonight, at the suit of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) raised more than one topic. The one to which he quite rightly attached most importance was an eloquent plea for those constituents who suffered job losses as a result of the closure to which he referred. I should remind the House that overall unemployment has fallen for 40 consecutive months and is at its lowest level for nine years. My hon. Friend drew attention to the fact that some of his constituents have already found work in other enterprises on the Isle of Wight. I shall certainly bring to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport the exclusion of the company to which my hon. Friend referred from the tender list for British Rail orders.

A number of hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, in conjunction with his hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North, were critical about what has happened in Panama. I find profoundly disagreeable the contemptuous relish with which both those hon. Members spoke of the actions of a country which they claim to regard as a friend. We welcome, without qualification, the establishment of democratic government in Panama. Action to remove General Noriega has been undertaken with the agreement of those who won the elections held last May. General Noriega has been adjudged by the world to have stolen an election from the people of his country. That is the right basis on which to approach the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) drew our attention to an aspect of the fishing industry which has received less attention than others during the past week or so. We had a debate on it last week and a statement on it this afternoon, and will have another debate during the night. My hon. Friend drew attention to the case for the extension of the limit from two to six miles, the spread of aggregate dredging, and the impact of sewage pollution. There will be a debate on that tonight, led by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). The debate may not cover as much as my hon. Friend would like the problems of the inshore fishing industry, so he was right to draw them to our attention.

The hon. Member for Meironnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) reminded me of my youthful, and sometimes not so youthful, associations with Snowdonia national park. I am always glad to be reminded of that admirable park in the Principality. He drew attention to the need to retain the balance between the amenities of the national park and the livelihood of those who live there. I remember a conversation that I had not long ago with the French Prime Minister, Mr. Rocard, in which I tested even his fluent knowledge of the English language by referring to the role of sheep in upland, touristic areas as four-legged lawn mowers. That concept did not easily translate into

the French language. That illustrates the role of agricultural activity as part of the means of preserving the rural amenity.

Dr. Cunningham: Perhaps it is like being savaged by a four-legged dead lawn mower.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The changes in the hill livestock compensation scheme agreed at the Agriculture Council will not take effect until 1991, so decisions on the consequential effects on national arrangements have yet to be taken. I hope that there will be an announcement early next year on that scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) raised three topics, including hospital radio. On that I hope that he will be content with a benediction from the Government and me. We hope that the negotiations will bring a satisfactory outcome. His plea for a change in the law to allow major lotteries, while being kept under review, has not yet led to plans for legislation. My hon. Friend was advocating two progressive ideas, and I suppose that it was only appropriate that, to maintain the balance of his personality, he closed on a profoundly reactionary note about the impact of television on the House. It is an experiment; I take a less jaundiced view than he does.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), in an eloquent plea, described the importance and impact of the Peto Institute and the work that has been done by it in Hungary. My wife and I, since our visits, have taken a close interest in the institute, and, by good fortune, one of my former private secretaries recently came back from a stint as ambassador there. The institute is not often absent from our minds. I had the opportunity to talk to the Hungarian Prime Minister about it last week and to give him an advance intimation of the substantial amount of money that has been made available and to which my hon. Friend referred. We regard it as an important institute, and we regard its impact in this country as of great value.

I noticed my hon. Friend's particularly eloquent plea for his constituent Miss Rogers. We certainly admire the way in which her family have done what they have to keep her at the institute. I shall certainly do what I can to draw my hon. Friend's plea to the attention of the Nottinghamshire education authority, but I cannot give an undertaking beyond that.

It was encouraging that my hon. Friend's speech should have been the last that we heard on the events in eastern Europe, because it was made on a hopeful note. It was striking that many hon. Members spoke about the entire sequence of events taking place in eastern Europe, and I was grateful to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire for the tribute he paid to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who, in a speech of the utmost bevity, dealt with all the key points about eastern Europe. We share his delight at the historic developments taking place there. We want to see the countries of eastern Europe joining the democratic mainstream. We applaud the courage of the new Polish Government in tackling radical economic reform. We are delighted that the longer process of reform in Hungary has culminated in the first free election in eastern Europe for more than 40 years.

We agree with my hon. Friend that progress in the future needs to be gradual and step by step. We welcome the first signs of liberalisation in Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria, and we are keen to help in whatever ways we can to build up democratic societies and market place economies in those countries.

This is what makes so much the more tragic what has been happening in Romania. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight, the hon. Members for Walsall, North and for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy and my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea all expressed their views about that. We condemn in the strongest terms the attitude of a regime which, turning its back on all the commitments concerning human rights to which it subscribed under the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe framework, is apparently capable of repressing only by force the legitimate aspirations to freedom of the Romanian people. That view was also expressed on Monday in the European Community in Brussels, and we shall hear it echoed in the debate later tonight in which I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Minister of State, will have a chance to take part.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 21st December do adjourn until Monday 8th January.

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54(1) (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Sir Geoffrey Howe.]*

Rights of the Child

8.34 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I heard of a school the other day in which 75 per cent. of the children were having school dinners and in which some of the children were having to be weighed every month to see that they were not losing weight, because those dinners were the only real meals that they had. The school was not in some foreign country; it was a short distance from this House, here in bustling, thriving London.

If we in this country, part of the affluent western world, do not look after our children, we can imagine how much worse it is for children in poorer countries. Who will care for them? Who will provide for and look after the children of some of the world's other great cities and countries? Children are forced to sleep on the streets, forced to beg, driven to crime and prostitution, exploited and degraded. Who will accept responsibility for the 100 million under-fives who, on present trends, will die in the 1990s? Where is the food for the starving children of the world? Where is the medicine for the sick? Who will accept responsibility for providing it? Who will see that laws are strengthened and implemented to prevent the beating, torture and sexual abuse of children?

We in this House must all have the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the hearts to feel and the will to change the indescribable suffering of many helpless and dependent children. That is why we must give total support to the United Nations charter on the rights of the child. That charter, which took 10 long years to produce, clearly establishes children's rights in all areas and across all national boundaries, and gives the responsibilities to all of us. Let us hope that, if Governments of all nations also give the charter their support, it will be the beginning of freedom for all children—freedom from pain, fear and want.

What good is freedom if there is no justice? For too long in this country children have been denied the right to give evidence in our courts. I have many letters from distraught parents telling me of the most disgusting and depraved sexual abuse of children by so-called men—men who have been safe in the knowledge that the younger the child, the less chance there is of it being allowed to give evidence against him. Because of the procedure of English and Welsh courts, children under the age of eight are rarely heard and under the age of five, never; although in Scotland children as young as four are frequently allowed to testify in courts. Even when children have been called to give evidence they have frequently broken down in the witness box because of the distress caused by having to describe in detail the terrible things that have been done to them, and cases have often been dismissed.

When I was first elected to the House, the Whips in their great wisdom decided that I should serve on the 1986 Criminal Justice Bill Standing Committee, probably because I had absolutely no knowledge of the law. That was when I first realised the lack of justice in our country for children, and I decided then and there to work hard to change the law in their favour.

I was told at great length by many people that the legal profession would never accept change, that politicians would never vote for it and that I would never be able to change the law in the way that I wanted. I was told again, when serving on the 1987 Criminal Justice Bill Standing Committee, that the amendments that I tabled would never be carried. I was told that I would never bring in video links and video recordings, or change the law on corroboration and competence, or get hearsay evidence accepted. I was told that all these things would never come about.

Those who told me this did not, however, count on the army of people outside Parliament who were crying out for changes in the law to allow children justice and to allow them to give evidence in court. They did not count on the number of organisations and of mothers and fathers who would write letters to put pressure on politicians. They did not count on so many people seeing what we and the legal profession could not see: that the law needed to be changed to give justice to our young people.

After the general election of 1987 I served on the Committee considering the second part of the Criminal Justice Bill of 1987-88, and that Bill brought in some of these changes. It introduced visual links and changes to the law on corroboration. It gave heart to all the people who were crying out for further change.

Today, the report has been published of the advisory group on visual evidence, established by the Home Office as a result of public pressure. That group is chaired by that just and caring man, Judge Thomas Pigot, and its recommendations will change the law and bring justice to children. Everything contained in the report is geared to the stress and strain suffered by children. It advocates that the courts should listen to evidence given by children. How can they receive justice if they cannot be heard?

I hope that, when the House considers that report, right hon. and hon. Members will acknowledge that the time has come when this country, as part of its contribution to the rights of the child, should accept the recommendations in that report, allow children to have their voices heard and to receive justice. I trust that the Home Secretary, too, will say that the House should endorse Judge Thomas Pigot's recommendations.

8.40 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): What better time of the year than Christmas to introduce a debate on the rights of the child, as has been done so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding)? What country could ignore my hon. Friend's eloquent plea for those who should be our particular concern? Section 16 of the convention on the rights of the child should be of most

concern to right hon. and hon. Members. It states, in effect, that every child has the right not only to protection against abuse but to respect—an objective to which the House can make a valuable contribution.

Over the past few months, I have asked the Home Office several questions on child abuse because of my concern about the provision of proper assistance. I was worried by some of the answers that I received, even though they may have been extremely well meant. I asked the Prime Minister whether she was prepared to establish a special unit at No. 10 Downing street to deal specifically with the problem of child abuse because it touches on so many different Departments, and because I consider it essential that the subject should be the responsibility of a central co-ordinating body, but the right hon. Lady was not prepared to do that.

Child abuse is as old as mankind—both himself and herself—and it is a condemnation of the House that changes in the law are still being demanded. Last year, the Childline serving my area of north Staffordshire and south Cheshire received 7,000 calls from young people—7,000 frightened and damaged children needing assistance. Two further hotlines were established and it became clear that many of the adults who wanted to help had no clear idea where they could obtain assistance or report any evidence of child abuse.

The Minister of State, Home Office, who is to respond to the debate, has given the matter deep thought, but even he turned down my request for a publicity campaign specifically aimed at instructing children how to protect themselves.

The Minister replied in a written answer that such advice

"is best communicated to children through their parents or other responsible adults. It is for this reason that the Home Office crime prevention handbook reproduces advice for parents to give to their children prepared by the Kidscape organisation."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *266*.]

The problem with that approach is, if the parent himself or herself is the abuser, how is the child to know to whom he or she can turn for assistance?

The figures of child abuse are growing more and more horrifying. In the Survey of Young Persons Register 1988, younger children were more likely to be included than older children. Its figures also show more girls than boys on the register, with the former numbering 20,500 compared with 18,799 boys.

Boys and girls below the age of five were equally likely to be on the register, but boys and girls older than that began to differ in the likelihood of their being registered. More boys tended to be registered under the category of physical abuse, accounting for 35 per cent. compared with 25 per cent. of girls, whereas 22 per cent. of girls were registered under the category of sexual abuse compared with only 8 per cent. of boys. The percentage in that category increased with age. Only 9 per cent. of the cases of sexual abuse affected girls aged between one and four years, whereas 51 per cent. of girls aged 16 to 18 were the subject of sexual abuse.

There is some evidence of discrimination against girls over the age of 12 in sexual abuse cases, and an example of that bias can be found in Lord Chief Justice Lane's most recent guidelines on incest abuse cases. He implied that older incest victims, aged 13 or more, may be culpable. Who are we to make the value judgment that a 13-year-old boy may be culpable in a case of incest? That is evil and unthinking insensitivity.

It is vital that the House should consider practical ways of providing the sexually abused child with support at the time that he or she most needs it. At such times, the child needs to be believed and to have someone to whom he or she can turn for help. The Home Office believes that the existing child abuse register is adequate, but excellent though it is, one cannot expect a child who is frightened and horrified by what is happening to him or her in their own home to know where to find a list of organisations dealing with child abuse.

Why cannot social services departments publicise an easily remembered telephone number on which help and advice is always available? Why cannot local libraries and other places that children may visit also publicise such a service? Why are more positive attempts not made to provide specific training for social workers and those working in education, not only to identify signs of sexual abuse quickly but to take concrete action at the point at which it can really help the child, before he or she is irreparably damaged? Unfortunately, the abused child of today is frequently the abusing parent of tomorrow. We must attempt to break that circle at every opportunity.

I do not want to abuse the time of the House, but I could speak at great length on this subject, about which I feel deeply—as, I am sure, do all right hon. and hon. Members—although I am sometimes tempted to despair of a society in which, in a week in which three of the most brutal child murders ever recorded were committed, I received 25 letters about the deaths of dogs. I am not sure that our country has its priorities right, and the Government have a duty to do something about that state of affairs.

8.48 pm

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): I am grateful for this opportunity to contribute to the Adjournment debate introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), because I have a particular constituency interest in the subject of the rights of the child, relating specifically to the rights of severely mentally and physically handicapped children.

I draw the attention of right hon. and hon. Members to the preamble to the convention. It states

"that the family . . . should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community."

The preamble continues:

"Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding".

I stress the importance of those last few words.

I am sure that few hon. Members do not share the sentiments expressed in the convention, and no doubt we all agree that they should apply as much to children who are severely handicapped, mentally or physically, as to those who are healthy and able-bodied. That is why I am so distressed that that right was nearly denied to the loving and caring family of a young constituent of mine called Carys Saif, and I fear that many other children and their families may also be denied it.

Just over 12 months ago, Carys Saif tragically fell ill and suffered serious brain damage. As hon. Members can imagine, her parents, Alan and Jane Saif, were devastated.

[Mr. John P. Smith]

Carys immediately underwent National Health Service treatment consisting of heavy medication along with some physiotherapy, but it was eventually decided that there was no chance of her recovery.

Because of their love for their daughter and their commitment to her, the parents became dissatisfied with the treatment after a time and began—as, I believe, have many other parents—to seek alternative treatment of the kind that is provided for the children whom our Health Service writes off from time to time. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) refer earlier to the work of the Peto Institute in Hungary, and I am pleased to learn that the Government have allocated funding to it: the institute provides one of the forms of alternative treatment available to physically and mentally handicapped children whose parents will accept any opportunity that may offer some hope.

Mr. and Mrs. Saif approached the Kerland foundation, which is based in Bridgwater, Somerset. With the assistance of the community of Barry, they raised a considerable sum to finance the expensive alternative treatment offered by the foundation. Like many of this country's communities, the town proved extremely generous, and the child began a course of treatment in June this year.

While the treatment was under way, however, the parents were still obliged to take the child for regular NHS check-ups. Unbelievably, on 6 December they were asked to attend the clinic at the University hospital of Wales to meet the medical social worker and the consultant paediatric neurologist. They had expected just another medical examination, but they were effectively told that unless they ceased to receive the foundation's treatment, particularly the drug reduction treatment, there was a possibility that their child would be taken into care. Mrs. Saif was told that a case conference would be held in 72 hours, and that the Kerland foundation would not be involved.

Apparently, the consultant neurologist at the Heath hospital was not interested in the course of treatment that Carys was receiving, and as a result she and the social worker were prepared to recommend in the case conference that the child should be taken into care. Carys's mother was told that, if the conference went against the parents, the child could be taken from them within 24 hours, on the grounds of medical negligence or the possibility of her life being endangered.

That is outrageous. The parents had already suffered the devastation of their child being damaged for life; just over a year later—again, just before Christmas—their lives were devastated once more, out of the blue, when they were told that the child might be taken from them. I intervened to prevent that, I am glad to say, but I am extremely concerned about how the circumstances arose in the first place.

Carys Saif is one of three young children in the town of Barry alone who are currently receiving alternative medical treatment in private clinics—financed, incidentally, by the community, thanks to some tremendous fund-raising work. I am afraid that dozens, if not hundreds, of parents throughout the country may also have turned to alternative treatment, and that they may find themselves in the same position as the Saif family. There is a danger that their lives, too, may be devasted. Although we managed to stop Carys being taken into care, as her parents were effectively forced to readminister the drugs prescribed by the NHS, her seven or eight months of treatment by the Kerland foundation was severely undermined, as was the hope and commitment of the parents.

I do not profess to be qualified to judge which was the right form of treatment—that offered by the NHS or the alternative offered by the Kerland foundation. That, however, is not the point at issue: the point is that there was clearly a conflict of view among the professionals, and that the child and her family were the victims. I have a sneaking feeling that the same thing is happening elsewhere, and that is why I, along with my hon. Friends, ask the Government to sign the convention as soon as possible, and to offer protection not just to the children of this country and the world but to their families.

I also believe that the Government should seriously consider the possibility of introducing legislation that would provide a framework to regulate the relationship between professionals, to ensure that parents and, in particular, children are not caught in the middle; and to ensure that no one else need go through the horrifying experience undergone by Alan, Jane, Rhianna and little Carys Saif on 6 December this year.

8.58 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on raising this issue. I admit to some disappointment, as I gaze across the vast expanse of empty green leather seats this evening. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, this year we have seen the most callous, brutal cases of child cruelty, widespread publicity given to child abuse and the public response to children in Ethiopia and at home. We are also beginning to understand how many children are missing. I sometimes wonder whether we have our priorities right, when I consider the number of hon. Members who attend debates on this subject, but we have an obligation to debate it.

The House likes to look upon itself as a great forum for the nation. We like to think that we represent the various sections of British society, and that we can do that because they are represented here. We discuss the problems of old-age pensioners. I have no doubt that we do it better because there are one or two in House. We discuss the problems of the unemployed, and the sceptics say that we do that better because we have our fair share of them in the House. We discuss the problems of the disabled, and hon. Members such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) bring their expertise to that debate because of their handicap and the difficulties they face.

One section of British society cannot raise its interests in the House—the children. We have a greater obligation towards that section of the community than towards any other, because they cannot be here to speak for themselves.

Later, my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) will cover an extensive range of the items referred to in the convention on the rights of the child, if she manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

To elucidate and inform the House, I shall quote from article 32.1. of the draft convention which states:

"Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development."

Article 32(2) states:

"Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and eucational measures to ensure the implementation of this article."

I honestly believe that the Government are in no position to implement that article in a manner that is commensurate with the spirit of the convention.

The present law on child employment in Britain is a hotch-potch of national laws that, in some cases, date back 50 or 60 years, and of local government byelaws. It is poorly enforced, easily misunderstood and widely abused.

The Government cannot plead ignorance. They must be aware that children continue to play a significant, if hidden, role in the British work force. As with many other problems, there are no official statistics on truancy or on the number of missing children. It is worth noting that we have a list of missing dogs in Britain, but no official statistics on missing children. Similarly, there is a chronic lack of centralised, accurate information about children in the work force. Because of the lack of statistics, it is difficult to assess accurately the number of children who are illegally employed.

Fortunately, despite the lack of official national statistics, we can make an educated guess at the extent of the problem. The estimates make grim reading. Surveys from the Low Pay Unit, the latest covering 1982-83, suggest that as many as one in three children between the ages of 11 and 15 work outside school hours. A more staggering statistic is that, of those who work, no fewer than 80 per cent.—four out of five—are thought to be illegally employed. That is a staggering figure because it shows that between 1 million and 2 million children between the ages of 11 and 15 are illegally employed in Britain. Children are the most vulnerable and exploitable source of cheap labour in Britain, and they are being harnessed in pursuit of private profit.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all is the fact that illegal and exploitative child employment is becoming institutionalised in many families as children from poorer households are more likely to be employed than anyone else in the family. Poverty and family unemployment force the integration of the child's income as a standard unit in the family budget of some of the poorest households. The exploitation of child labour on the scale that I have described is not so much a blot on the collective conscience of the nation—it is nothing short of a national scandal. The effects are at best the arrestment of a child's educational and social development. At worst, their lives are endangered.

The Low Pay Unit survey bears grim testimony to the damaging consequences of illegal child employment on school performance and in a child's social life. Educational welfare officers, teachers and head teachers testify that truancy, tiredness and behavioural difficulties are all associated with out-of-school work and, in many cases, illegal out-of-school work.

Even worse than the arrestment of a child's social and educational development are the risks to life and limb associated with illegal child employment. We already know of serious injuries caused by machinery and sharp knives, but some children are exposed to chemicals and other harmful or dangerous substances. Still others are employed in agriculture and building, which are among the most hazardous occupations even for adults.

The Government can no longer evade their responsibilities in this matter. Given the scale and nature of the problem the need for urgent Government action should be self-evident. I do not want to be over-critical as it is difficult to believe that any hon. Member would condone economic exploitation of children. As a politician said some years ago, to remain silent and inactive in the face of such evil or exploitation is to condone and encourage it in effect if not in theory. It is tragic that that seems to be the Government's stance. On 11 July, my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) asked the Secretary of State for Employment

"when he intends to bring into force the Employment of Children Act 1973."

Not 1983 or 1988, but 1973. The Minister replied:

"I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans to implement the Employment of Children Act 1973."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1989; Vol. 156, c. *462*.]

It is a disgrace that, despite all-party support for it, the Employment of Children Act 1973 has sat idle on the statute book for 16 years and still awaits the signature of the Secretary of State to give it effect. There can be no greater sign of the Government's dereliction of duty in this regard. They will pay for that, because those who do not take seriously the trust of the country's future will in due course be rewarded by the people whom they have neglected. No Government who failed adequately to protect children can have any faith in the future, and no people can have any faith in that Government.

9.8 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) for choosing this subject for debate. Like others, I regret that only a small number of hon. Members are present, but I understand why that is so. It is important, especially at this time of year, to consider the convention on the rights of the child and what is happening to children in Britain.

On 23 November, I wrote to the Prime Minister following reports in the national press that the Government might have difficulty in implementing all the convention on the rights of the child because of the problems of family reunification and immigration. A day or two later I received a reply saying that my letter had been passed to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but I still have not received a reply to my detailed question. I found that rather strange because it occurred to me that the Prime Minister's office considered that the convention on the rights of the child had no domestic application in Britain. I was talking about families in Britain and the need for them to have the greatest possible unity under present-day law.

It is important to remember that many of the discussions about the convention on the rights of the child —I have attended a considerable number in the past 10 years—have been on children in Third-world countries. Those of us who have travelled extensively in many parts of the world know that in many Third-world countries children are militarised, starving, hungry, degraded and exploited. It is a very sad picture. Some of it is caused by

[Miss Joan Lestor]

natural disasters, some by inadequate investment in aid programmes and some by sheer poverty which forces people to do things because of their circumstances.

I wish to concentrate on children in Britain. As we move into 1990, we should not believe or allow it to be thought that we are a shining example to the rest of the world and that all is well in Britain in 1989.

It is 10 years since the discussion on the convention started and since the Conservative Government took office. Christmas is approaching and many of us have spent a great deal of money on our children; we see on television all the wonderful things that are available to them but not to all children. I do not expect answers to all the questions that I intend to raise this evening as they require further thought, but they concern the children who will not be included in the great family festival that we all enjoy.

How many people under 18 will spend Christmas on remand in adult prisons? The figures published recently should be a source of great shame to all of us. The Children's Society recently reported that 98,000 children go missing every year. It is true that many of them turn up, having run away because of a domestic upheaval, but many are never found or, if they are, they cannot return home.

We have no national register of missing children—the figures to which I refer were compiled by the Children's Society in conjunction with certain police authorities—so Government sources do not tell us the reasons why children run away or disappear. We have to find out from other sources. I pay tribute to many agencies which do excellent work. Some children run away from unhappy homes because unfortunately not all children have loving and caring parents. Many of them run away from local authority care.

It must be stressed, too, that many children who run away are not reported missing. Only 39 per cent. of the children in a London refuge centre last year had been reported missing, so the figures must be greater than we know. The children there were aged between 14 and 16 and the youngest was seven. One in five of those children had run away because of sexual abuse or the threat of sexual abuse. I am very glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme raised that issue, because we are all beginning to recognise that it has been under-estimated in Britain and we still do not know its extent.

In 1979 the Council of Europe recommended that member states should have a national register of missing children so that some information could be made available. Unfortunately, that still does not exist in Britain. We have to add to that sad saga the number of 16 and 17-year-olds who may be called runaways and who do not receive the benefits and allowances which should be available to them. Many answers have been given about that group. We have been told that they should be at home or working on youth training schemes. The tragedy is that many young people are unable to live at home for a variety of reasons. Unless we examine violence and sexual abuse within the family, it is useless saying, "It is better that you go home." We must find out what causes young people to run away.

As the House knows, children who run away, sleep out and lead a hand-to-mouth existence are easy meat for evil people who are on the lookout for the vulnerable. Many become involved in crime and prostitution. The Salvation Army reported that, of 1,500 teenagers in the Centre Point refuge in 1988, one in three had been approached for prostitution—that applied to boys and girls alike—and many get involved in the vicious circle of drug abuse.

Recently, other issues affecting children have come to our notice; I am glad that they have, because some of us have been worried about them for a long time. National figures for truancy are not available. I am aware of the difficulties in obtaining them, but other countries manage to do so. I know from concerned agencies that truancy is increasing in primary schools. As it is difficult to obtain national figures, we do not know how children spend their time or what happens to them. According to work that has been done on this, many of them hang around slot machines and amusement arcades day in and day out until it is time to go home. Some register at school but then disappear.

Certain conferences have asked children, "Why are you not at school? What is the problem?" The reply that many of them give relates to another subject that we must do much more work on in the House—bullying. Bullying at school appears much higher on the agenda than it did before. Parents say to their children, "You must stand up for yourself," but the child would not be bullied if it was capable of doing that. Many people believe that we have under-estimated the amount of bullying at school. Some children bully for reasons of which hon. Members will be aware, but others do so for money or because of fear and intimidation. If we are concerned about what is happening to our children as we approach the 1990s, education authorities must pay more attention to what goes on in the playground.

Articles 26 and 27 of the convention refer to the rights of the child to health, good housing and nutrition. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) mentioned free school meals and the difficulty of ensuring that a child has a proper diet.

Child benefit has been frozen for the third year in succession, which has pushed many children back into poverty. In my area of Salford, where people are not rich, the Child Poverty Action Group has estimated that £4 million is owed to Salford's children because child benefit has not been increased by as much as we were led to believe it would be by the Tory manifesto and by past good practice. That is a lot of money, and the result of the freeze is that many children will spend this Christmas in poverty —ill-clothed, ill-fed, ill-housed and without the basic attractions which make Christmas the festivity that we all enjoy.

In 1986, five of the 15 intensive care units at Saint Mary's hospital in Manchester were taken out of service. In 1987, Hope hospital in my constituency reported that 65 of 198 infants who required intensive care could not be accepted—they had to shop around and find somewhere else to go. We must ask, are the lives of our babies to rely on "Blue Peter" appeals for used cans? However great British people are about charity and donations—we know they are from what they have done in the Third world and for Children in Need in this country—it is not good enough to say, "We are cutting down the services but if you want them please collect cans and we will provide them." As someone whose grandchild was in an intensive

care unit a few months ago, where the care was remarkable, I find it unbearable to think that that care could be denied to other children or that they have to be taken somewhere else for it. That is disgraceful in a country which claims to have done so well economically for its people.

The National Carers Association recently reported that 10,000 children under the age of 18 are the main carers for a sick or disabled relative who may be a parent or a child. Their lives hardly conform to the ideals of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. Their access to education and their rights to play and to develop are denied them. Again, the lack of services in this country means that children are being used to provide them. That is disgraceful and something that we should be examining.

Any of us who have attended international conventions and conferences dealing with children's rights have come up against international concerns, one of which is drugs. Drugs are an international problem and the children using drugs are becoming younger. I was recently in Jamaica with a number of hon. Members from both sides of the House. We had a long discussion with a drugs expert about drugs, young people in Jamaica, the way in which drugs are coming into Europe and the age at which children are using them.

The illegal trafficking and adoption of children is also of international concern. Reports from the Council of Europe and other sources show that some children are illegally taken across borders and brought to Europe. There have even been one or two cases of them being admitted to this country. I do not blame the Government for that, but there needs to be international action if children are not to be bought and sold on the market like cattle. That is what it amounts to. If one has the money and knows where to go, one can buy a child. The people who buy those children may have been turned down by adoption agencies and have certainly never been vetted in any way. It is appalling that we do not pay more attention to the sort of lives that many of our own children are likely to lead.

There are also reports of satanic rituals and sadistic practices involving children in pornography, in this country and in many other parts of the world. It is not a pretty picture. The convention on the rights of the child is an attempt to apply international standards to which we can all work and through which we can bring some benefit to children as time goes on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) mentioned child sexual abuse. I did some work on that subject when I was temporarily resting and was not a Member of Parliament, between 1983 and 1987, and I share her concern. She also mentioned the problem which arises when some children—not all—who have been sexually abused turn into abusers. Many of them manage to lead satisfactory lives despite the horrendous things that have happened to them. Society is again in a dilemma. We have sympathy for the child victim, but when that victim becomes the assailant, our understanding vanishes. We need to do a great deal more work to find out what causes it and what we can do to help children and young people who have been thus abused.

Many of us have learnt in recent years that social workers and doctors are in an almost impossible position when dealing with sexual abuse or violence against children. In the Cleveland affair, the doctors and social workers were accused of being too decisive, too sure, acting too quickly and not waiting. In the case of children who have died recently—I am thinking particularly of a little girl beaten to death, but there have been others—social workers were accused of dilly-dallying, of not taking action, not moving quickly enough and of not having the foresight to see what was going to happen.

Society cannot have it both ways. We cannot condemn people who move because they are afraid of what may happen and take precautions and at the same time condemn them if they do not move but say, "Let us wait and see—it may not be as bad as we think." We do not hear about the successes of social workers—only about their failures. They walk a tightrope. We must decide whether we want people to be more decisive and perhaps make mistakes rather than condemn a child to slow murder, brutality and abuse because we thought that we might be wrong and that we could wait a little longer.

There is no clear answer to these problems, and I do not pretend that there is one. However, we cannot have it both ways. There are enormous problems of judgment in trying to understand the way in which other people live. I am sorry that more training for social workers has not been forthcoming. The social workers wanted it and it would have helped us all.

A small problem at the moment, but one that is likely to grow—although I hope that I am wrong in that assumption—is that of children born with AIDS or born HIV-positive. A few years ago, society did not want to discuss child sexual abuse and it was kept very quiet. We could not believe it then and many people cannot believe it now, but we had to face up to it. The same applies to AIDS.

In 1989, 34 children under the age of 14 had been born with AIDS and 309 were HIV-positive. I hope that some of the recent information about a possible cure for AIDS is right. I hope that we can stem the flow. At the moment, however, the problem is expected to increase. In America, the spread of AIDS among women and children has leapt ahead of the capacity of the services to cope with it.

We have some time to prepare here. We must consider seriously the fact that many children will be orphaned or live short lives because of AIDS. Only a small number of children may be affected in that way, but that is not the point. Children have the right to expect to be given long-term support and that the agencies involved ensure that those children have access to education, help and everything else that any child in this country has a right to expect. We must do much more preventive work in all areas connected with sexual activity, with our children and with parenting, if we are to overcome some of the problems to which I have referred.

We will hear much more about children in this country over the next few months and years because we have only just begun to open the door on some of the horrors that many of us did not want to see. Those horrors may apply to a small number of children, but they apply to more than we had thought. We must address the problems.

My plea today is that when we consider the convention on the rights of the child we should not be too lofty and too confident that we have it right. Instead of pointing the finger at other countries and saying that they should be like us—in terms of some of the services that we offer, it would be great if they were like us—we must also consider the children in our society, babies and older, who fall

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through the net and are victims of abusers, sometimes of cruelty and also, I am afraid, of a country which has not yet made the provision for children that it should.

9.28 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): This has been a very wide-ranging and interesting debate and I hope to deal with some of the major themes, if not with every detail, raised by the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). It is good to speak after the hon. Lady, and I congratulate her on her recent appointment to the Opposition Front Bench. I am sure that this will not be the last occasion that she will have an opportunity to debate these matters. I was most interested to hear what she had to say.

I join the hon. Member for Eccles in congratulating the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on her good fortune in securing this debate and on the way in which she introduced it. It is the second excellent and moving speech that I have heard her make in the past two weeks. The last one was made during the war crimes debate last week. I had only six minutes in which to reply to that debate, so I was unable to do proper justice to her speech. Once again, we have seen the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme demonstrate not only her care but her deep knowledge of these issues, which she displayed also in successive sittings of the Standing Committee that considered the Criminal Justice Bills in 1987 and 1988. Perhaps that is enough praise, even at Christmas time. I do not want to damage the hon. Lady's standing with her general management committee.

The convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly exactly a month ago today. It is now open for signature and ratification. The Government will examine it to see on what terms we may be able to ratify. I cannot say this evening, nor do I honestly believe that hon. Members would expect me to, how long that will take. Nor would it be right for me, at this early stage in the necessary examination of the convention against our law and practice, to try to give any indications of provisions against which the United Kingdom might have reservations, for example. It will be quite a complex business looking at the convention and testing it against our laws and practice. However, I can say plainly that the Government welcome the convention and are utterly committed to its broad thrust. We will give it most careful examination.

The convention comprises about 40 articles, and it ranges widely over the rights of the child. It pays particular attention to a child's right to life and development. It covers his or her name and nationality. It has regard, as it should, to parents' rights and duties in relation to the child. I hope and believe that it incorporates provisions that would be generally applicable to people of all ages, such as freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom from maltreatment, and protection from cruelty. They are matters from which we hope that people of whatever age in whatever country would always be protected. The convention covers health, welfare and education, and there are provisions dealing with economic exploitation.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) drew attention to article 16 of the convention, and the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) drew attention to article 32 and to allegations about the economic exploitation of children and young persons. I shall certainly draw his speech to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment who has responsibility for such matters.

The convention is directed to the full gamut of member states of the United Nations. Of course, they have widely differing social and economic conditions, but I certainly would not wish to suggest that Her Majesty's Government regard the convention as an instrument for pressing less-developed countries to improve their standards. I agree with the hon. Member for Eccles. It is right that fortunate countries such as ours should also examine what more they can do to protect, foster and improve children's rights. This is not simply a mechanism for trying to get other countries up to western European or north American standards.

The theme of prevention has run through the debate. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich has a deep interest in these issues—in the past year I have answered enough parliamentary questions from her to learn that—and is concerned about prevention and trying to inform children who may be open to abuse of where they can turn. She believes, too, that there should be a central authority charged with the responsibility of tackling child abuse. The police have clear responsibility for investigating all allegations of child abuse that are put to them. They do so with increasing sensitivity, just as they try better to treat women who have been raped or subjected to domestic violence.

The police involve social service departments, education departments and the Churches, all of which need to be involved. One would have to demonstrate clearly that the police were failing in their duty—which I know that those concerned do not wish to do—or that they were simply unable to carry out that task before the Government would want to go down the road that the hon. Lady has suggested.

Mrs. Dunwoody: There appears to be a slight misunderstanding. I am not suggesting in any way that we should alter the role of the police, who do an extremely good job and are often the only real social workers available, but I am concerned at the plethora of Ministries involved with this in Whitehall. It is vital that the child knows where to turn. I do not know of many abused children who would willingly go into a police station of their own volition. We need a central register and a central co-ordinating authority somewhere in Whitehall that will bring the whole thing together and begin to operate a framework to which the ordinary child can respond.

Mr. Patten: The Department of Health and the Home Office—the two Departments that are very much in the lead in this area—work in close co-operation, especially when trying to deal with the problem of to whom a girl or boy can turn when he or she is being maltreated, and especially when they are being maltreated within the family. Maltreatment by someone whom he or she loves must be one of the most difficult things for a child to bear. I recognise the predicament of a child who is caught in that way. We have tended to support the code of advice that has been drawn up by the independent body known as Kidscape.

Among other techniques for dealing with the problem, the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich would like us to have a national advertising campaign to inform abused children where they can go. The hon. Lady and myself share exactly the same aims. The difference between us has nothing to do with expenditure, ideology or party politics. It has everything to do with what actually works. There is an inherent danger about national advertising campaigns that are aimed at heightening in children's minds the fact that there are both child abusers and people to whom they can turn.

The danger is common to all crime prevention advertising. By advertising the ways in which we can prevent certain crimes, we unnecessarily exacerbate fear of that crime. Administrations all over the world that are interested in crime prevention face the problem all the time that the advertising campaigns themselves can sometimes backfire. I would hate the majority of children to feel that they were threatened all the time by adults, because they should regard adults as their friends.

I am prepared to consider with an open mind the suggestions that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich has put to me, although at the moment I am nervous about going down the road that she has suggested. If she will come to see me in the new year, I shall be happy to discuss these points in greater detail.

On parental responsibilities, we must put parents first. The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) stressed the role of the family and mentioned a constituency case. I hope that he will forgive me because I am not aware of the full background to that case, although I listened carefully to what he said. I agree that, when putting children first, one must look first to the family to solve all the problems. I was especially interested in his comments about the Peto Institute. If I may say so through him to his constituents, I think that the people of Barry have done a great deal through public appeals to help the children involved.

The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme was particularly interested in children's evidence in court. She has campaigned about this for some years, along with several other hon. Members of all parties and a number of interested bodies outside the House. Indeed, I have made a speech or two myself on this issue over the years. In seeking to find the hon. Lady's speeches in the Committee on the Criminal Justice Act I not only found some of hers, but chanced on one or two of my own as well. I thought that her speeches and mine read rather well and that they will stand the test of time when we reach our retirements.

I clearly remember our debates. It is the most terrible ordeal for any child who has been the victim of abuse to appear in a Crown court. We must do what we can to alleviate that, and we have already done a great deal. We have changed the rules of corroboration and introduced live video links for evidence in courts. That practice is spreading, although some courts still stick to the screen system, which also appears to be effective. There is no perfect model.

We wanted to determine whether we should go further, so we set up an advisory group under the chairmanship of Judge Thomas Pigot, the Common Sergeant of the City of London. It included distinguished representatives from the police, the social services, academic lawyers and others. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I are grateful to Judge Pigot for his excellent report. I am only sorry that he recently suffered a stroke. I hope that he will soon be able to continue his invaluable work on this topic.

The report is radical and it recommends that video-recorded evidence should be available in Crown courts—for child witnesses under the age of 14. Where the offence is of a sexual nature, that should be extended to children under the age of 17, because of the delicacy of the situation.

The group dealt with how such video recordings should be used. It suggested that, if a video-recorded statement was to be admitted, in whole or in part, there should first be an informal pre-trial review out of court, conducted as soon as practicable. The child witness would be shown the recording and asked to confirm his or her statement and to expand upon anything that he might have missed out so that the prosecution could explore it. At that stage, the defence would be given an opportunity to cross-question the child.

It is important to realise that, even where video-recorded evidence was admitted into court, the child would still be subject to the stress of cross-examination, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic. I can only advise the House that it would be impossible to circumvent that procedure and preserve the right of the defence to test the evidence. Of course, it does not necessarily follow that a person accused of child abuse is guilty of that child abuse.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Hear, hear.

Mr. Patten: I welcome the hon. Lady's support. It must be awful to be wrongly gaoled for murder, and it must be pretty awful to be wrongly gaoled for child abuse. We all know the hatred of fellow prisoners for those who have been convicted of child abuse or sexual offences.

Mrs. Golding: It must be worse for an accused person not to be able to go to court to defend himself, as is the case under present law. That is not justice for the accused.

Mr. Patten: No, and that is a balance that Judge Pigot was trying to strike.

Under Judge Pigot's proposals, under no circumstances would the child have to appear in open court to give evidence in person during the trial. If it should prove necessary to recall a child witness who had been cross-examined at a preliminary hearing, the further hearing would be outside the framework of the formal court and would be held under exactly the same conditions as the preliminary hearing. I hope that it would be as informal as possible, which would help the child. There would be a video recording of that further hearing, which would then be presented to the jury at the trial.

The report includes some important proposals for child witnesses. It was published only recently, and I hope that hon. Members will take the opportunity to read it and, within the consultation time, make their suggestions known to the Government, who have an open mind. This evening I cannot commit the Government to introducing legislation to implement the recommendations. We wish to hear what others have to say first. Several matters of both practice and principle will have to be dealt with during the consultation process.

The Government welcome the Pigot report as an impressive contribution to knowledge and debate. Whether the group's proposals, or something like them,

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strike the right balance between the need to protect vulnerable child witnesses, not least so as to ensure that the guilty are convicted—which is important—and the right of the accused to a fair trial, will be for Parliament to resolve when any proposals are put forward. Our misgivings within Government are confined closely to the question whether the proposals would work out in practice as intended.

We do not have many inhibitions about the intent, but we are worried whether the proposals, if they became law, would have the desired effect. Sometimes, when changing the criminal law, the changes do not have the effect that one set out to achieve. We recognise that the criminal justice system is a complex apparatus. It is not always possible to predict what impact changes will have, simply because magistrates and judges may use the provisions in the new law in a way that we did not foresee. That is why we welcome the views and advice of others.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme on her excellent speech and the debate that she has promoted. It has given the House much food for thought.

West Midlands (Economy)

9.46 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I have been fortunate enough to come second in the ballot. My debate is on the west midlands.

I hope that it is appropriate for me to mention the recently deceased hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, Mr. Heddle. He was a good friend and colleague. I pay tribute to the work that he did not only for his constituents but, in conjunction with his west midlands colleagues, for a wider group of people. His advice and energy will be greatly missed. On behalf of my colleagues in the west midlands, I send our deepest sympathy to his relatives at this tragic time.

The west midlands has recovered remarkably well economically and is now in a far better position than we envisaged at the beginning of the 1980s. That is startlingly highlighted by the change in the number of unemployed in the west midlands area. In the early and mid-1980s, unemployment in the west midlands was much higher than those of us who have lived there for many years ever anticipated.

The west midlands was once a booming area in terms of skills, choice of jobs and wages. Everything was improving for many years for the working people of the area. We could see little end to that success—and then, in the 1970s, it ended abruptly. Since then, unemployment in the area has fallen from over 15 per cent. to about the national average. In my constituency, unemployment has fallen to under 5 per cent., which has given rise to the other problem of skill shortages.

The west midlands has improved enormously. A variety of changes has taken place which is not completely due to the efforts of the west midlands. It is easy to assume that our style of industry has existed for many generations. In fact, it has continually changed. This century there has been a change from many tiny industries and backyard companies to larger ones.

Until well into the century, there were few extremely large firms within the west midlands. The region contained a mixture of small and medium-sized firms that covered a tremendous range of industries. Strangely enough, as we have overcome the problems of the 1970s and early 1980s, the range of skills and of work undertaken within the west midlands have grown. Some of the old skills, such as nail making and chain making, disappeared long ago, but now many new skills have been introduced associated with high technology and science-based industries.

It is important to consider how the new developments will cope with the immediate problems. We are told that 1990 could be a hard year and that the economic growth generated by the Government's policies of the past few years may slow down. The west midlands is still heavily dependent on engineering and manufacturing. Those industries are important in terms not only of jobs, but of exports. Much of our export growth depends on the manufacturing industries, and if the growth of those industries slows it will affect our exports. The impetus for growth has been with us for a few years, but if growth slows down, it may become difficult to regain the momentum which is so important to future growth.

Investment is one thing that affects momentum and growth in the engineering and manufacturing industries. At the moment, our interest rates are high, as the

Government have rightly decided that such interest rates are necessary to guard against high inflation. High interest rates, however, often lead to a reduction in investment in the manufacturing and engineering industries.

I am delighted that the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs is on the Front Bench as he also represents a constituency in the west midlands and he understands its problems. Perhaps my hon. Friend could pass on to his Treasury colleagues our concern that investment might be affected by the present high interest rates. Perhaps the Government should consider offering some help to keep the momentum going.

It may be worth considering some tax changes on, for example, depreciation of capital plant and machinery. At the moment, a 25 per cent. allowance is available for the first year, but perhaps that could be increased. Perhaps some better incentives could be introduced to allow some total write-offs during the first year. Tax incentives on investment should also be considered, as the immediate economic future will largely depend on such investment in engineering and manufacturing.

As a result of grants from the Department of Trade and Industry, as well as advice, we have seen the development of new industries. In the west midlands there are two excellent science parks at Warwick and Aston universities. Some of the old skills and the old knowledge have been the basis on which new ideas, such as courses on advanced manufacturing techniques, have been developed. Such developments are extremely important, as one of the keys to our competitiveness and to the improvement in the west midlands has been the improvement in productivity. It could be cynically suggested that there have been significant increases in productivity in certain industries because they were not very good in the first place and that, therefore, the rate of improvement was bound to be exceptional. It has been exceptional.

We must improve, and continue to improve, our productivity if we are to be competitive. In about two years' time, in 1992, we shall have the single market. For many of our industries in the west midlands, that is an opportunity and not something about which to be pessimistic. As competition grows, so does the emphasis on productivity. Many of our industries and many of those involved in them fail to make productivity one of the highest priorities. However, for most manufacturing units it is the key to their future success, investment and development.

This does not mean that things will be cheap. We shall not have cheap labour; we must increase the return on the resources that we put in. We want to obtain a better output rate from the resource of capital and people. That is how we have improved, particularly in the west midlands. It is why industry is returning there and new industry is coming in. Productivity must be one of our highest priorities if we wish to maintain that development.

We are attracting industry throughout the region. New industries, such as the distribution industry, have been attracted to my own area of Warwickshire. If we are to attract such industries, we need good infrastructure systems. A motorway runs through the middle of my constituency, and there is a rail network from north, south, east and west. The constituency is therefore ideally placed. That in itself creates traffic flow problems.

There are moves to improve the infrastructure within the west midlands and I am sure that some of my hon. Friends will go into that in detail. Organisations such as the urban development corporations enable such moves to happen faster. We must not allow red tape and bureaucracy to interfere with what we are doing and slow up the improvements. Often hon. Members are carried away with their bureaucratic and overall planning sense. We know how we want to plan and achieve our aims. However, industry, commerce and our general structure develop as individual parts. Although there may be some co-ordination at a higher level, we need the ability to get on with the job and make decisions quickly. The Black Country urban development corporation can move much faster than it could under any of the previous systems.

There is another sense of urgency. Not only are there insufficient skills in some trades, but they often occur in surprising trades. There are skill shortages among turners and grinders. Whoever thought that districts such as Coventry and Birmingham would be short of such skills, but they are. Shortages also occur because of demographic change which brings to the fore the importance of training.

The six training and enterprise councils to be set up in the west midlands will have a key role to play in the development of training. The emphasis is on speed. We want the TECs not only to work, but to work quickly. If the momentum for change, improvement and growth in the west midlands is to continue at the necessary pace, the TECs have an important role to play.

Many organisations—enterprise agencies, and county and district councils—have played an important part in the development. However, it is essential to keep up the momentum. The west midlands will face competition from abroad and from other parts of the country. We are not the only industrial region, although we may think that we are the most important and the best, and many other areas compete fairly with us to attract new industries and trades.

Engineering remains the key in our area and in this country. It is one of the main wealth-producing industries, and such industries cannot be replaced by service industries. Perhaps not many jobs will return to manufacturing and engineering, but it is essential to maintain the volume of output. We must use new methods and systems, even though we do not need the same size of manual work force.

There has been a change in our engineering industries. The number of jobs in them is now more constant and there are fewer redundancies, but change is continuing and many former manual jobs have become more technical and professional—and that puts the emphasis on training.

The future of engineering is the future of the west midlands. I hope that the Government will continue their policies of economic growth and that they will not ignore the great claims of manufacturing and engineering, claims which are those of the west midlands.

10.2 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): These debates provide all of us who bother to apply to initiate them with the opportunity to discuss matters of great importance to our areas, and nothing is of more importance in the west midlands than manufacturing industry.

It is easy, as we did in the past, to blame trade unions and to say that industry would have done better had it not been for the Red Robbos of this world—as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) and I know so well. British Leyland had its problems, to be

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sure; it became Austin-Rover and it is now Rover, and trade unions and their members had to understand that things had to change if manufacturing industry was to prosper.

Time has moved on since 1979 and the unions have changed, whether because of legislation or by inclination. Capitalism has to move on as well. I have been involved in raising money for manufacturing industry in the west midlands and Birmingham, so I know that some things must change. Mr. Branson, of Virgin, got tired of being quoted on the public stock exchange, and one or two other companies have also tired of that. They feel unappreciated. Branson sold out to a Japanese company, not because he wanted to be disloyal to this country—he made quite a few millions on the deal—but because, as he said, too many people in this country who invest in shares and companies think of the long term as six to 12 months, whereas the Japanese and Germans are willing to think of the long term as five to 10 years.

In the same way that trade unions learned their lesson, capitalism in this country must learn that long-term investment is not a matter of six to 12 months but, as the Japanese and Germans discovered, of five to 10 years. If that lesson is not learned, this country's investment potential will be precious little.

The Government must learn of the effects on industry whenever the pound falls gently or floats gently. In 1980, when the pound was valued at $2·40, manufacturing industry in the west midlands was collapsing about our ears. Britain was unable to export, but when the pound fell against the dollar to $1·50 or $1·20, our export trade began to prosper. The same applies today. As the pound falls, our exports begin to prosper.

The unions learned their lesson, but capitalism has yet to learn—as have the Government—that it is wrong to imagine that a strong pound helps to fight inflation. It does not. Nor do high interest rates help industry. Whenever I hear Ministers or ex-Ministers—among them, former Chancellors of the Exchequer, happily—claiming that high interest rates and a high pound help to kill inflation, I cannot follow their logic. The Government's present policy is much sounder.

Industry in the west midlands wants not so much a stable pound as a pound that is at a lower level against the dollar and lower interest rates. Exports and our general prosperity will then climb.

10.6 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): This is the time of year to send Christmas cards of good news, and the debate provides an opportunity to send greetings to every citizen in the west midlands. At the same time, it is necessary to recall ghosts of Christmas past. I am reminded of the necessity to do so by the report of the Confederation of British Industry's west midlands region and Coopers and Lybrand, which notes changes in the region, the recession between 1978 and 1983, and the period of regeneration from 1985 to 1989.

My hon. Friends and I remember the dark times of the 1960s, when no industrial development certificates existed, when there was no new building, and when grants were being given everywhere except in the west midlands. That continued for decade after decade, until the dictum of weakening the weak became the dictum of weakening the strong. Birmingham and the west midlands generally were reduced in all their trappings. About 250,000 jobs were lost, and the regional unemployment rate was 30 per cent. above the national average. There were about 14,000 acres of derelict land, rents were falling, and incomes fell by about 8 per cent. Those were the years of decline, and they are the spectres of Christmas past.

Since then employment has picked up to an extraordinary extent. For the 40th month, running the unemployment rate has fallen, and although there has regrettably been a reduction in industrial employment, there has been major growth in all the service industries, especially tourism. That has helped to regenerate the west midlands still further. There has been an increase of at least 25 per cent. in the redevelopment of derelict land, and rents have risen for all classes of property—industrial, office and commercial.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) mentioned the excellent developments in training, and at a time when we are sending Christmas cards it is no bad thing to remind ourselves of the recent improvements in the employment rate. In November, unemployment in the west midlands had fallen to 5·8 per cent.; in Coventry and Hinckley, it was 6·1 per cent.; in my city of Birmingham, it was 7·2 per cent.; in Dudley and Sandwell, it was 6·8 per cent.; in Walsall, it was 6·3 per cent.; and in Wolverhampton, it was 8·7 per cent. Throughout the area, it had reached an almighty low. In my constituency, which has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Birmingham, there was a reduction of 28 per cent. in one year, up to last July, and a reduction of 42 per cent. in two years.

Where else has that good news been repeated? The figures for claimants of unemployment benefit in the west midlands have improved tremendously. In my constituency they fell by 54 per cent. in the three years from November 1986 to November 1989, in the west midlands county they are down by 51 per cent. and in the region they are down by 56 per cent. They are 51 per cent. down in Great Britain as a whole. That is another indication of the massive improvement in the quality of life for our citizens.

All this is attributable to the regeneration that has taken place right across the spectrum, to the efforts of the people of the west midlands and to the fact that investment in the area has ben helped by the regional grant that is now sometimes received. I understand that 22 per cent. of the grant for the whole of England flows back in the lifeblood of industrial investment in the west midlands, and 12 per cent. of that of the United Kingdom as a whole. That investment is evidencing itself in many ways.

Earlier this week, I asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money had come into Birmingham recently. I was told that the second largest grant in the city, amounting to £6·2 million, had been provided for the Waterlinks project, which had received £10 million. We heard excellent news from the Secretary of State for Transport, who had met our requests for investment in the Heartland spine road, which will redevelop more than 2,000 acres in the area. When I said that I hope that that would be capped by approval for the electrification of the cross-city line—which I initiated when I was chairman of transport in the area—we got a nod and a wink that that would soon happen.

We see investment everywhere—in the transport support grant for the new heartland scheme, the Lichfield road, the middle ring road, the north-south road, the

Dudley southern road, which will cost £46 million in total, for roads in Shirley and for the A44 to A422 link. There has been a massive cash injection into local road infrastructure. The amount that we had budgeted for—some £5 billion—will become £12 billion during the next four years.

All the arteries and highways serving the west midlands will be redeveloped and widened and will have carriageways added. The M6, M54 and the M5 are all needed to speed goods from the factory. Extra productivity has resulted. For example, in the car industry export production has increased by 32 per cent. over last year, and commercial vehicle export production has increased by 22 per cent. There was total extra production of 8·5 per cent. on cars last year and 11 per cent. for commercial vehicles. No wonder we defend the car industry in the west midlands and Birmingham, and no wonder they were successful in their representation that they should remain British.

It is wrong for anyone to accuse a former Secretary of State of not having done precisely what Conservative Members and my Opposition Colleagues asked them to do. They kept Land Rover British. That marvellous situation was achieved at a small cost, and now those industries are thriving, as are the aeronautical and car components industries.

Orders are coming in for every conceivable product. Last week a £150 million order for extra rolling stock for new trains to be used in the Channel tunnel was ratified for Metro Cammell.

Next year, I trust that we shall have the pleasure of passing the second part of the Bill to introduce light electric railways. The first part of the Bill, costing £60 million, has already been passed by the House. That will link Wolverhampton with Birmingham via West Bromwich. The next portion of the Bill, costing £240 million, will join up the areas between the national exhibition centre and Fiveways via the Heartland and a third line will join Wolverhampton and Dudley. The scheme will provide the west midlands, which has suffered at least £420 million in losses as a result of traffic congestion this year alone, with an alternative cheap, cost-effective, environmentally acceptable form of extra transport that will supplement rail and bus services.

When the Bill is passed, the west midlands will have one of the most modern systems of transport in the world, and that is just one of the massive new capital injections made in the area.

The issues that could bring us down, and that could render a Christmas card less acceptable, are interest rates that are too high for too long and Germany's ability to use an extra 1 million skilled workers at cheap rates from the east in its aided economy. That economy was developed by the Americans from nothing, with great goodwill and benevolence. New factories were developed out of the rubble and they were given a new trade union structure. I believe that there are only 14 trade unions in Germany.

Another problem would be a massive intrusion of an immigration force that would drain the west midlands of its natural resources in housing, benefits, and health care, for example. Another difficulty is that young labour is moving away. It is estimated that a frightening 23 per cent. of 16 to 19-year-olds will move away between 1989 and 1995. We must prove by all this investment and confidence, by having rectified the years of neglect and by the years of achievement, that ours is a vital area for the young to live in.

If I could write just one message on my Christmas card, it would be that we are living in an area which will be one of the most dynamic, excellent, residentially desirable and most strategically salient in Europe.

10.21 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on his success in the ballot and on giving us this opportunity. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) centred his speech around a Christmas card. I remind him that Christmas cards are based largely on myth, tradition and fantasy. I listened with respect to the hon. Gentleman, but some of what I heard fits that description.

I share the hon. Gentleman's vision. I, too, want to create a dynamic economy and to build out of the crisis and deprivation—"rubble" is too strong a word—an economy of which we can be proud. I want to make the west midlands again the powerhouse of the British economy.

It would be wrong to speak in propagandist terms. Although I want a healthy, vibrant private sector, I believe that the regeneration of our area depends also on a healthy public sector. The past decade has not been one of undiluted success which we can willingly laud and trumpet. Much of the infrastructure of our region has been destroyed, and there has been what often amounts to a malevolent attack on local government.

I am not an uncritical analyst of local government—far from it—but I believe that much of what it has done has been useful. I include in that the West Midlands county council, which, ironically, Labour opposed when the Conservatives wanted to set it up, although the roles were reversed in the end.

I believe that the West Midlands county council performed a useful role as a catalyst for economic regeneration. It provided many public services and fulfilled a co-ordinating function. At its demise—"destruction" would be more appropriate—a vacuum was left which has not been filled.

I want to recreate in our region not public sector hostility to the private sector and the private sector hostility to the public sector, or Government hostility to the public sector, but partnership.

I have long abandoned the view held by many of my hon. Friends—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] There are not many more on the Conservative Benches—that the major conflict is between British capital and British labour. The conflict is British industry against everyone else abroad and we need consensus, harmony and working together. The Government have got the balance wrong. The public sector is pre-eminent in providing the infrastructure, and the infrastructure in our region is collapsing.

I am not saying that a multitude of public sector companies exclusively should be created in the region. I hope that, when Labour is returned to office, we do not indulge in the same hostility against the private sector that the public sector has faced in the past decade. Our goals may be the same, but the way in which we seek to achieve

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them clearly differs. I should like the public sector and local government to have an increased role in the regeneration of our industries.

Much of the industrial health of our region was based on the motor vehicle industry, which has declined in recent years. Mention has been made of a recent report, but reports produced in the 1960s revealed the beginning of a crisis that was not properly recognised by Government or industry. The chickens came home to roost with a vengeance. The difficulties in the 1970s were followed by a critical period when unemployment in my constituency increased from below 5 per cent. to approaching 20 per cent.

The hon. Member for Yardley spoke about the continuous fall in unemployment in recent years. However, despite that reduction, unemployment in my constituency and in many others in the west midlands is still higher than it was when the Conservative Government took office. I do not belong to the group of people who, whenever the unemployment figures are published, make carping criticism and complain that unemployment is too high. Although unemployment is falling, the tragedy of our region is that the apparent improvement in the unemployment statistics is due partly to the fact that new industries have been developed, but many of the new jobs that have been created are part-time and low-paid.

The hon. Member for Yardley stressed the importance of the service sector, but we must have a strong manufacturing base. The many reports of the Low Pay Unit reveal a rather different picture from that described by the hon. Gentleman.

Mention has been made of the role of the Black Country development corporation in industrial regeneration. I was not happy that the development corporation was established, because, as a supporter of local government, I firmly believe that, had proper resources and powers been given to the local authorities, they could have provided much of the regeneration of the region.

I still do not like the lack of accountability of the development corporation. I welcome its resources, but I am irritated by the fact that the Black Country development corporation is endorsing and supporting shopping developments in Sandwell that I fear will have an adverse effect on shops in other parts of the region. Although I welcome the construction of new roads, it is ironic that, as a Labour Member, I should be approached by business men in my constituency who are most anxious that the Black Country development corporation gives them proper compensation for the virtual liquidation of their companies as a result of road construction.

Two years ago—I hope that the Minister will consider this—I attended a public meeting at which the spine route was discussed. The local authority decided that the brunt of road construction would not be borne by residents—many people would have been adversely affected by the construction of the road from Wednesbury to Moxley—but that industrialists would fall on their swords for the collective good. At least 20 factories in my constituency were in the line of route of the spine road, which is important for the regeneration of the area—I make no criticism of the concept of the road.

What the owners of those factories told me caused me some anxiety, and it should cause Conservative Members even more anxiety. Those small companies have been offered compensation for their elimination from the site, but it is insufficient for them to purchase comparable facilities nearby. The managing directors of the companies were worried, because one of the alternatives facing them was to take the inadequate amount of money and retire.

It may have been impolite to raise this matter in the House before doing so with the BCDC, but I hope that it will consider carefully the way in which it provides compensation for companies adversely affected by development. I hope that it will provide something of benefit not only to those who will use the road but to the companies and to those in employment who might suffer.

We heard much about the importance of transport. Our region is largely based on, and has had almost an obsession with, the motor vehicle. I welcome what the hon. Member for Yardley said. He has done much for the midland metro, which is an example of the public and private sectors working together. He lauded the private sector, yet much of his speech was devoted to one of the great achievements of public investment. The West Midlands passenger transport authority has decided to look not a year or two years ahead, as politicians normally do, but a decade ahead. It has recognised that we must transfer passengers from the roads to the railways. I endorse the concept and operation of the metro, although a number of my constituents will be adversely affected because their gardens will be removed.

We wish to see not only the metro but a good rail network established. In my area—this is almost unprecedented—a small rail line has been opened, but some of British Rail's rolling stock is pretty ancient. We do not need a re-run of the debates that we have had over the past few days. The railway industry should receive not less but more subsidy. Anyone reading the statistics would conclude that the amount of investment per head in our rail network is deplorably low vis-à-vis our industrial competitors. A good rail network is critical to the speed with which goods are transferred within the manufacturing process. As someone who regularly uses the M1 and M6, I say, please improve the motorways, but the infrastructure of the west midlands must be based partly on a good rail network.

We have heard about the importance of education. One of the Government's trumpeted aims is to establish city technology colleges. While I believe that the Black Country development corporation is largely doing a reasonably good job, when we consider the major educational authorities to which we might defer, we would not instinctively put the BCDC high on the list. It has a great deal to do to regenerate industry in the west midlands. However, it should not assume a serious role in education.

In my town, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), a city technology college is soon to be established and the Minister is very enthusiastic about it. However, the Walsall council education committee was not consulted in the process of establishing a large college or school in the area. At the moment, the authority has the difficult task of trying to match the number of comprehensive schools with a declining number of pupils. There are varying estimates of how many comprehensives will have to close. One will certainly close, and a few months ago the suggestion was that three might have to close because there are simply not enough pupils to fill them.

At a time when schools are being closed, it appears to be perverse logic to build a CTC with Government endorsement. I cannot accept that the kind of education that will be provided in the CTC could not be provided in a comprehensive so long as it had the proper resources. The establishment of the CTC is another manifestation of political ideology being elevated to such a point that it has a distorting effect.

I want to see a well-paid, efficient region which contributes to the regional and national economies. This country is a member of the European Community and much has been provided by way of infrastructure funds to the region, and in particular to Birmingham. We are engaged in a co-operative venture to create a new economy for the region.

I hope that all Conservative Members will agree that there must be a co-operative venture between the public and the private sectors. If we can get the balance right, we will have a more soundly based regeneration. At the moment, business men in the region are sad about the interest rates which are making high investment difficult, and that investment is the goal which in the long term will create secure jobs.

I welcome this debate and hope that, in some small way, it will contribute to an understanding of what is happening in the region. I hope that the Government, in the final part of their over-long period of office, will have another deathbed repentance—of that in the House at the moment —and recognise that the public sector should not simply be the whipping boy or be eliminated or emasculated.

I hope that the Government accept that we should have a healthy system of local government in which the Government have confidence, provide it with proper resources and allow it to build council houses to help create a powerful and effective building industry—an industry which is ailing at the moment. Hopefully, we will then see the regeneration of our region, which, despite what has been said, we still await.

10.38 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): In his succinct opening remarks, my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) placed great emphasis on the ability of the west midlands to maintain the momentum of economic growth that it has achieved over the past few years as a result of dramatic changes in the structural make-up of the region. Old industries which in many cases have been in the region for several hundred years have fallen by the wayside and new opportunities have sprung up. Some of those new opportunities have involved higher technology, and much of our industry has had to embrace new working schemes in the new technology. Much of it has been done successfully.

I cannot start my contribution in any better way than to emphasise that the one momentum that we must keep going in our region is transport. It is apposite that we are having this debate just a day after the opening of the first section of the northern link of the M40 motorway—11 valuable miles which will eventually comprise a second motorway link between Birmingham, the west midlands —the heartland of the country—and London. That section is many years overdue. When one considers this matter in the context of a completed motorway programme around the west midlands conurbation and the existing motorway system, one can begin to see the infrastructure for which we have long asked and which we must have to survive in an increasingly competitive European, let alone world, environment. We have certainly made some great progress.

I look forward to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's promised existing motorway stock, including the widening of the M6 and parts of the M54, although I am not yet aware when the work will start. We certainly look forward to a dramatic improvement in the M6 north of the west midlands conurbation towards Manchester and the north-west—something that is now of vital importance. It is one of the most heavily congested roads in the world. We must face the challenge of accommodating the traffic growth that is now occurring.

The west midlands is a wide area. It covers not only Birmingham, the black country and Coventry, but a significant section of middle heartland countryside such as Shropshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. It comprises a wide, disparate area with many commercial and industrial disciplines. The birthplace of industry is in Shropshire, in Telford new town, which has enjoyed phenomenal expansion over the past 10 or 15 years. One need only visit the area to realise the tremendous achievements of the past decade or so. Many hundreds of new businesses have come from all over the world. It is a successful area for development, and the improvement in prosperity in the area is dramatic.

Much of our base industry circulates round the motor industry. That encapsulates the history of the west midlands industrial region. The rise—not so much the fall —and regeneration of the motor industry has been well catalogued by many writers and politicians. This is not the time and place to deal with its chronological history. However, the industry is still of major significance to our industrial capabilities. That is particularly so as the motor industry has gone through huge worldwide convulsions. We have seen the arrival of the Japanese in our country, starting as partners in joint production facilities such as we enjoy at the Rover plant at Longbridge in my constituency. Those activities have been most successful, and have proved a lifeline for the Honda company. We are seeing it expanding production again as a result of co-operating in developing necessary new models in a competitive marketplace.

Of course, we have also heard the announcement that Toyota is going to an area which, is not, strictly speaking the west midlands, but it is just across the border. It has had a major impact on the west midlands, in that the vast concentration of component industries in the west midlands conurbation will take up the challenge and supply components not just to the Rover, Honda and Toyota factories but to Nissan, as many are already doing. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to note that there are warnings that the European Commission is planning to jeopardise that.

As we all know, many member states have made voluntary agreements with Japan about the level of imports from Japan. It is significant that some countries —for example, France and Italy—have steadfastly refused to allow much of their markets to be penetrated by Japanese production. Of course, this will change as a result of the open market in 1992, because the European Community will have to have a policy towards Japan. The European Community's present scheme is called voluntary restraint agreements, whereby the total level of Japanese production or sales into the European Community will be no more than 12 per cent., rising to 16 per cent. At the moment it seems that that 12 to 16 per cent., which will grow over a number of years, takes into account Japanese production in satellite plants in Europe, which means Britain. That will be a severe setback for our motor and components industry.

If artificial restraints are placed on Japanese badge cars that are sourced and made in this country, it will be a black day for our car production. We need to be ever-vigilant to ensure that the European Commission does not pull a fast one on British industry now that we have got our car industry act together and can look forward to closing our present balance of payments gap. Although I look forward to its being closed over the latter part of the next decade, the fulfilment of that hope could be put in jeopardy unless we get the right voluntary restraint agreements which discount Japanese production from transplanted factories that have been set up in this country, or anywhere else in Europe. If we do not resolve the problem, much of the progress that we have enjoyed in the past few years in the motor industry, which is the powerhouse of our region, could be jeopardised.

One problem in the west midlands, although it is not confined to our area, is that of investment. It is essential that our industry invests in the new products and equipment that are necessary to taking up the challenge of 1992 and fighting off competition from wherever it comes. It seems that much of the current investment is confined to big manufacturers. About 22 per cent. of all English payments of regional assistance are made to businesses in the west midlands conurbation. That is extremely encouraging, but it is unfortunate that they are almost entirely restricted to large businesses.

Medium-sized and smaller businesses are not getting that assistance because they cannot raise the necessary money themselves to add to the amount of regional assistance for which they would qualify. They cannot raise that money because interest rates are higher than they would like. We have an opportunity to ensure that such

businesses invest, but the opportunity is running out. If we do not encourage them to make those investments and to take up the opportunities, we could be caught short in 1992.

I am not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but now is the time to make our Budget proposals and to put forward our ideas. One way of targeting assistance to small businesses would be to introduce a small business interest rebate scheme. Businesses that invest could attract an interest rebate after their financial year end. If it was for no more than 5 per cent., the rebate would not cost the Exchequer a great deal, but it would be enough to encourage small businesses to make those vital investments.

The image of our area is not very good. About 65 per cent. of companies that have been polled reckon that the image of the west midlands is poor in a variety of respects. We must put that right. The hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) made some relevant remarks about the role of the old county council. It is true that it did some good work, and certainly the assets that it collected for itself in its 12 or 13 years of existence were huge. The residuary body is constantly handing out cheques to many authorities as it liquidates those assets. However, the county council played an important role as a co-ordinating body for the disparate schemes that were available throughout the west midlands county. The trouble was that it required a whole body of councillors to be elected and a bureaucracy to be set up. There are many schemes in the west midlands and many opportunities with training courses, investment schemes, urban development corporations and Birmingham Heartlands, which are all helping our area. We also have an inner-cities policy.

However, what we really need is someone to co-ordinate these things. I do not believe that we need a separate body or council. We do not need to go to all the trouble of elections, because if the Government would allow it, our Members of Parliament from both parties could set up some regional body of Members of Parliament to act as the guiding body. Perhaps one of my Conservative colleagues could become a regional co-ordinator, or even the governor, of the west midlands. It is only a suggestion. We need someone to take the lead and to present the image of our area constructively. He could co-ordinate all the many agencies and target assistance where it is required. We would welcome that.

It is a question of image. We have a certain momentum and we want to keep it going. I am sure that, given the opportunities, industry in the west midlands will rise to the occasion and our prosperity will continue.

10.50 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) has made a typically robust and helpful speech, as he did once before. On 25 June 1983, he introduced a similar debate on the economy of the west midlands to that which my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) has introduced today.

I made my maiden speech in the 1983 debate. Hon. Members on both sides of the House contributed to that debate, but the circumstances of the west midlands then were very different from those which prevail today. That debate was characterised by accusations from the Opposition that the industrial outlook in the west midlands had never been so bleak. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said:

> "I hope that neither the Minister nor Government Back Benchers will claim that they can now see light at the end of this dismal tunnel. There is no real prospect of that—only of worse."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1983; Vol. 46, c. 892.]

The hon. Gentleman, unfortunately, is not in his place tonight, but I hope that he would be the first to accept that he was wrong. My hon. Friends have tonight shown him to be wrong. Even the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), who takes a rather more pessimistic view than my hon. Friends and I do, would agree that the evidence overwhelmingly shows that there has been change.

That change is reflected in the unemployment figures. In the west midlands in 1983 unemployment stood at 15 per cent.—in November 1989 it was 5·8 per cent.

Mr. George: What was it in 1979?

Mr. Howarth: It would have been lower than 15 per cent. in 1979, but it would not have been lower than 5·8 per cent. In the Walsall travel-to-work area, which affects both my constituency and that of the hon. Gentleman, the unemployment figure has fallen from 17·5 per cent. to 6·3 per cent.

Those figures show the change. The economic foundations laid in the early 1980s have paid off with dividends. There is no longer any land in my constituency available for development. It has all been taken. New industries are locating to the west midlands. Recently, a garden furniture manufacturing company moved its production facilities from Jutland, a high-cost area in Denmark, to the west midlands because that is the best place to locate. Indeed, it has moved to Cannock in my constituency.

In the debate in 1983, I said that people had to be lean and hungry. I referred to a company which had no receptionist, merely a telephone in the entrance foyer with a sign saying, "Pick up the telephone and ring '0' for inquiries." Today that company, Albion Pressed Metal, at the gateway to Cannock, employs more people than ever in the automotive industry. It is proving highly successful and won a major training award this year.

I will take up the point made by the hon. Member for Walsall, South about the private sector. The railway line to which he referred runs into my constituency, and I pay tribute to Staffordshire county council for bringing forward that railway project. It has not done much for the shops in Hednesford, however, because people now want to shop in Walsall rather than locally and the train helps them to do so.

Although there are no pits in my constituency, many miners live there. Despite the dramatic cut in employment in the coal industry, both Littleton and Lea Hall collieries have thrived, producing record outputs week after week. I pay tribute to the miners for what they have done.

Another subject of my maiden speech was the Cannock community hospital, for which people of all parties campaigned for more than 50 years. This wicked Tory Government who do not care about health care are providing the £18 million to build the Cannock community hospital which, it is hoped, will open in 1991.

Unquestionably, we face some difficulties. I salute my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his

[Mr. Howarth]

recognition of the role of interest rates and the fact that there is work to be done to ensure that British manufacturing industry, about which we all care, is able to compete internationally. If there is one message that I wish to convey to the House tonight, it is that it is vital that we in the west midlands do not talk ourselves into a recession. In my discussions with manufacturing and other industries, few people tell me that they are not doing well, but they are worried about future business confidence. We owe it to them not to talk down the prospects for British manufacturing industry.

I conclude on a personal note. In the past 36 hours, I have shared with my colleagues in the west midlands the tragedy of the loss of one of our colleagues there, the former Member for Mid-Staffordshire, John Heddle. I hope that you will not think it amiss, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if, as the hon. Member who now represents part of the constituency that my hon. Friend so ably represented from 1979 to 1983—Burntwood—I pay a small tribute to my late hon. Friend. He was a most dedicated, enthusiastic and kind Member of Parliament who will be remembered with affection and gratitude not only by his own constituents but by those of my constituents whom he represented so ably between 1979 and 1983.

10.56 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): As only a short time remains to debate this matter, I shall curtail my remarks. I thank the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) for initiating the debate. His speech was constructive but I detected in it, as in the speeches of other Conservative Members, a little anxiety about the future. He referred in passing to possible structural weaknesses in some of the developments in the west midlands.

When I was given the job of responding to the debate, I looked up some of the economic and industrial indicators for the west midlands. I was surprised at the depth of the recession between 1979 and 1983. The area suffered probably one of the greatest declines in employment of any region and experienced a near collapse of its manufacturing base. A massive 21 per cent. of companies were lost in that period. In that four-year period, more than 250,000 jobs were lost in manufacturing industry. That was a massive and unmanageable loss, which created many problems.

The turnround of the past three years has been referred to this evening. One must ask whether it was due to development of the infrastructure and sustained growth or was in response to a boom. That question gives rise to some concern. The manufacturing statistics show that the upturn experienced from 1986 to 1989 does not bring the sector back to the level of 1978; there is still a long way to go. One must accept that the services industry has mitigated the rate of unemployment. There has been a rise in activity in that industry.

Much has been said about investment. It is true that the west midlands has benefited from 20 per cent. of recent inward investment in the United Kingdom—investment in the region has increased by a factor of four. In the main, however, the investment stems from buy-ins, which means that it is equivalent to zero investment. Although I do not want to diminish the importance of inward investment, one must decide whether it is new investment or a buy-in and therefore a zero gain. It is also interesting to note that the west midlands is lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of its contribution to the growth in GDP experienced since 1981. GDP per head in the west midlands remains 10 per cent. adrift from the rest of the country. In 1987-88, the rate of investment in the west midlands was 10 per cent. below the United Kingdom average.

The hon. Member for Nuneaton referred to training, but since 1979 the number of apprenticeships in the west midlands has fallen by 70 per cent. Of all the figures quoted, that one has the most serious implications for the region. The hon. Gentleman referred to turners and millers, but if we do not train them they will not be available.

It is worth assessing how the west midlands will fare in 1992. We usually compare the region with Yorkshire or the south-east, but it is important to compare it with the European regions. I have studied the GDP per capita of the länder of West Germany. Our best region in terms of GDP per capita and productivity growth does not even match the worst of the länder. The other interesting factor is the way in which economic development and the subsequent benefits have been distributed in West Germany. In the United Kingdom the south-east is over-heating while the northern regions are under-utilised. The tax regime at the federal and länder level acts as an equaliser. Therefore, the economic benefits are distributed across Germany and the country takes considerable advantage of them. A study of the economic indicators for West Germany and France show that the west midlands is at a major productive disadvantage.

The Henley forecasting centre has made a study of the expected growth of the west midlands from 1988 to 1995. From the data fed in it appears that the region will grow at a rate of 2·6 per cent. of GDP per annum up to 1995. That means that it will lag behind France and West Germany, which will become our major competitors.

I agree that we should not talk down the west midlands or any other region, but we must be realistic about what things will be like post 1992. Most people are reaching the conclusion that we have a major structural weakness. That weakness is apparent from the role of venture capital, and the attitude of the financial institutions to the manufacturing base. Research and development is under-funded and unco-ordinated, although I accept that the science parks, to which reference has been made, are a positive development. Our transport infrastructure is also weak.

The greatest weakness, however, is the tendency to pump ever more resources into the south-east. We heard recent evidence of that from the Government. We are to spend billions to try to relieve the congestion in the south-east. The Government should heed the suggestions of their hon. Friends tonight and should follow an interventionist policy to attract development away from the south-east to the midlands and to Yorkshire. We should look at the major structures, particularly the infrastructures, where that development can take place.

It will be interesting to hear what the Minister says in his reply because, apart from one, all the speeches, from both sides of the House, have been critical—sometimes constructive—of the Government's policy towards development in the regions. That is true for not merely the west midlands, but for most of the midlands and the north. An overhaul of the policies for the regeneration in the

regions is needed. The Audit Commission's report which was published in the middle of this year said that the patchwork quilt of grants was totally unco-ordinated and now so complex that even businesses could not understand what they were being offered.

The Government are in a hell of a fix. Unless something is done about these weaknesses in the near future, 1992 will expose them even more.

11.6 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): The time left to me is short only because of the enthusiasm of hon. Members to participate in the debate, for which I am grateful. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) for initiating the debate. I fully associate myself with the remarks made by my hon. Friends about the sad loss of our former hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire, Mr. John Heddle. He will be greatly missed in the House and in debates such as this. This is an appropriate time for us all to remember him, which we do.

I shall attempt, but inevitably fail, to deal with even a small number of the points made by all those who have participated in the debate. A theme ran through the speeches of Conservative Members. They recognised not only the great difficulties which occurred in the west midlands in the early 1980s—those of us who lived through them remember them well and will probably never forget them—but, equally, what has been done by people in the west midlands to regenerate the area, pick themselves up and get on to a completely new footing. It is important for us all to recognise that.

It was a little uncharitable of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) to talk, as he often does —I have listened to him for many years with varying degrees of pleasure and often desperation—about grants, redirections and interventions such as we had in the bad old days. What both the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central and the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) said was a sad reflection of the fact that, when looking back to 1979, they could talk about employment levels, but not productivity or profitability levels and the ability that west midlands' industry now shows in competing with the rest of the world. We all know that it could not do that in 1979. That was substantially the reason why we went through what we did in the 1980s.

I do not want to fall out, on this of all occasions, with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), but I must reflect for a moment on an observation that he made. He made a number of interesting observations and a teasing reference to the fact that capitalism must move. I look forward to a new philosophy of capitalism—I do not know whether it will be known as Darkism—and I hope that my hon. Friend will elaborate on his thoughts on some future occasion.

My hon. Friend said that the fall in the sterling exchange rate parity had been an important factor in the improvement of our export performance. That is stating the obvious, and there is nothing wrong with that, but it leaves one reflecting on how the Japanese and the Germans have managed to export spectacularly successfully over the strengthening exchange rate parity of the yen and deutschmark. That suggests that the answer is not necessarily exchange rates, important though they may be. It is more fundamental. It may lie in productivity differences, for instance.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central was keen to draw parallels with the Federal Republic of Germany, but it is significant that that country's labour force has been prepared year in and year out to accept pay increases related to productivity and performance. One of the key differences over the years between this country and Germany is the fact that even now we are claiming and often awarding ourselves pay increases averaging 9 or 9·5 per cent. which none of us could remotely imagine were related to economic performance or productivity.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I very much hope that we are approaching Darkism, which will mean a new age of light. Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the other great differences is that manufacturing industry in the midlands pays 18 per cent. for money, while industry in Japan pays 5 per cent. and industry in Germany 7 per cent.? If we had that advantage, we should really move forward.

Mr. Forth: I accept what my hon. Friend has said, but there is a danger of becoming involved in a chicken-and-egg argument. My hon. Frend understands better than most the relationship between the level of interest rates in a country and its international competitive position, which in turn is related to the other factors that I have mentioned. I well recognise the strength of feeling expressed in the debate and the problems caused by high interest rates, although the latest figures suggest that investment in the west midlands and throughout the country is holding up extremely well. That is encouraging.

I cannot deal in as much detail as I should like with the comments made by the hon. Member for Walsall, South. The best that I can say is that I shall endeavour to pursue his point about compensation to his local businesses. That is a classic example of the difficulties inherent in seeking to create what he described as a much-needed local improvement of infrastructure. I should appreciate it if the hon. Gentleman would let me have the details, and I undertake to have the matter looked into.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned in passing that he wanted subsidies for rail. Where will the money come from? It is all too easy to ask for subsidies, but the Government have tried to keep down tax burdens, both corporate and individual. We have enjoyed much success in doing that, but it inevitably means that we cannot pay the sort of subsidies that we would like.

That brings me in one leap to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) who, as ever, was upbeat and optimistic, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) who, typically, told us how things were looking up. He gave many examples of the great strengths of the region. Those who, like me, have the privilege of representing a constituency in the west midlands want to ensure that the world knows that the region continues on the up and up and that business is attracted to the area. We do not always need bribes and subsidies to bring it in, either—the region is a good place to be and in the end that is the best and only good reason for investing there on a permanent basis.

I slightly regretted that my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield departed from his usual robust attitude when discussing a small business interest rebate scheme. I hope

[Mr. Forth]

that my hon. Friend will reflect on it and return later with details, such as how small the business would have to be, at what point the scheme would be triggered, whether there would be limitations on it, where the money for it would come from, what the rules for it would be, and so on. I must tell my hon. Friend, with as much generosity and friendship as I can muster at this time of night, that such a scheme—*[Interruption.]*—which is getting Opposition Members so excited is easier to suggest than to implement. I look forward, perhaps in the privacy of another part of the building, to hearing how my hon. Friend envisages the scheme working in detail.

Time has run out, but the debate has been useful and productive, not least for those right hon. and hon. Members who take a pride in the west midlands, what it does, and what it stands for. The region has weathered great difficulties and made enormous adjustments, and it has shown itself capable of making the adjustments so necessary for the future, with the imminent arrival of the single European market. We can take pride in the fact that our region stands tall and aims to succeed with the minimum of help and intervention because it knows what it wants to do and will continue to be very good at doing it. In that spirit, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton for allowing the House to debate the west midlands.

Fishing Industry

11.15 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I chose the broader subject of the United Kingdom fishing industry for debate rather than concentrate on particular crisis areas, because I hoped that that would allow right hon. and hon. Members from other parts of the country to reflect the concerns and wide geographical interest that were evident not only in last week's debate on the fishing industry but when the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made his statement earlier today, responses to which were made by right hon. and hon. Members representing constituencies in Cornwall, Northern Ireland, the south of England, north-west Scotland and the east coast, as well as by myself.

I thought that it would be useful, following the meeting of the European Council of Fisheries Ministers, to have a debate in addition to a statement so that the House can discuss critical issues that were the subject of negotiations at the Council. I hoped that such a debate would allow right hon. and hon. Members to flush out the Government's proposals for the industry's future.

I am grateful to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), for attending this debate. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it could have taken place in the middle of the night and that the Minister might have already spent the two previous nights negotiating. I understand that he managed a reasonable amount of sleep last night, but spent all Monday night at the negotiating table.

It will not be surprising if the debate focuses on the outcome of the Council's meeting and on the other matters that the Minister mentioned in his statement this afternoon. When the House debated fishing last Thursday, there was broad agreement that Ministers should go to Brussels with the object of negotiating the maximum total allowable catches consistent with the scientific advice that the European Commission had received.

We knew that that would not be an easy task, because, for some reason still unexplained, the Commission, in its bilateral negotiations with Norway, initialled an agreement that set TACs for haddock and cod in particular at levels below those recommended by scientists.

Many right hon. and hon. Members, and particularly those representing fishing constituencies, know that, while it is difficult to persuade fishermen to observe TACs based on scientific recommendations, it is almost impossible to persuade them to observe TACs founded on some unexplained negotiating position adopted by the Fisheries Commissioner, Mr. Marin.

Fishermen will inevitably question the basis on which many scientific recommendations are made, and it is important not always to accept such advice as holy writ. Nevertheless, there is overriding concern to comply with such advice. There is genuine concern that haddock stocks in the North sea are reaching a critically low level, and the people working in the industry recognise more than anyone else that its future depends on taking a responsible attitude to conservation today.

I believe that the team representing the United Kingdom's interests achieved what was, in the circumstances, the best possible deal on TACs. As I said in response to this afternoon's statement, I feel that credit should be

paid where it is due. The Minister, however, would be one of the first to recognise that the deal, although it was the best possible, was not a good one. The TAC for North sea cod, haddock and whiting in 1990 will be 110,000 tonnes, compared with 155,000 in 1989. That is a substantial cut, especially in view of the drastic reduction in the 1989 TAC from that of 1988.

I do not want to be accused of carping, as another hon. Member was this afternoon by the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food—I do not know whether the pun was intended—but, as Mr. Speaker invited us to leave the detailed questions until this evening, I should like to deal with some now. I understand that, following the Ministers' success in invoking the Hague preference, the United Kingdom allocation of the North sea haddock TAC of 50,000 tonnes will be 36,300 tonnes. Prior to the negotiations, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation had estimated that, if the Hague preference was successfully invoked, the United Kingdom share would amount to some 38,800 tonnes. Can the Minister explain the apparent shortfall of 2,500 tonnes? Hon. Members may say, "What is 2,500 tonnes?", but with our TACs as low as they are it becomes a significant amount.

Can the Minister tell us whether the 50,000-tonne TAC includes an allocation to Norway of a 3,000-tonne by-catch? If it does, can he explain why that is much the same as the 1989 figure? As a proportion of the total allowable catch, the by-catch figure was much lower in the current year. Why, when the TAC has been so drastically cut back, has the haddock by-catch not been similarly cut?

Perhaps the Minister can also tell us why, although there was a reduction in the industrial by-catch of whiting amounting to some 20,000 tonnes, the whiting by-catch —which I understand to be 50,000 tonnes—is so much higher than the 20,000-tonne allowance for the current calendar year. I think that all hon. Members would agree that most fishermen fish for produce that will end up on the consumer's table, not for industrial purposes, and it is a source of mystery to many that the by-catch has shot up so much.

As for pelagic species, I welcome the flexibility that resulted from negotiations on mackerel in north Scottish waters, which will give much-needed help to the industry. That was, I think, one of the toughest parts of the negotiation, and a very satisfactory outcome was achieved —although I understand that again the TAC is lower. The Minister shakes his head: I welcome that reassurance.

This year, after many years of pressing, Lerwick in Shetland was given limited designation as a transhipment port for a certain amount of mackerel in September-October. That amount was used up very quickly, and it will come as no surprise to the Minister or to his Scottish Office counterpart that we shall try for more.

As some of the stocks are caught towards the east, it makes good sense, not only in commercial terms but in safety terms, for boats to go to the nearest port—which in many cases is Lerwick—rather than undertaking the longer and, in adverse weather, more hazardous journey to Ullapool.

The Commission conceded a 29 per cent. share of North sea herring to Norway when, if the current allocation agreement was followed, having regard to the spawning stock biomass, the share should have been only 25 per cent. This seems to have slipped through. I question the apparent generosity to Norway, which does not seem to have been explained. Why do negotiations have to be concertina-ed into a short time at the end of every year? The Norwegians can always hold a gun to the Commission's head because they know that it has to present proposals to the Council of Ministers in the second or third week in December. This year, some unsatisfactory arrangements were made which I am glad are to be renegotiated. Is it not possible for the negotiations with Norway to start earlier, so that we do not have this crisis period every year?

In his statement this afternoon, the Minister did not say anything about precautionary TACs on the north-west coast of Scotland for monkfish, megrim and plaice. They are based not on any scientific case, but on historical fishing. It is claimed that, for a number of species, not least monkfish, the status quo is unrealistic. The value of monkfish is great, and if the fleet is denied opportunities to fish for haddock or cod in the North sea, it might get some compensation by fishing for monkfish on the west coast. I should be interested to hear what negotiations there were on precautionary TACs. There will be disappointment that no great increase, if any, has been announced.

The sacrifices that are demanded of our fishermen in the next year as a result of these drastic reductions will be for naught if the vast volume of dead cod and haddock, especially juveniles, are thrown back into the sea after the TACs have been fully fished. Discard is a subject which everyone in the industry to whom I have talked recently has mentioned.They are no longer allowed to fish for haddock, but it is inevitable that, if they are fishing for other white fish species, they will catch a large volume of haddock which they are obliged to throw back into the sea, although dead. That seems almost counter-productive to establishing conservation by TACs.

If TACs are to be effective as conservation measures, they must be backed up by others. I welcome the Minister's announcement today that the Commission has committed itself to produce proposals for further technical conservation measures by the middle of next year. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation can claim to have set the ball rolling. It has given a responsible lead with a package of measures which it proposed much earlier in the year. Every opportunity should be taken to build on that co-operative approach. I should be interested to hear what kind of conservation measures were considered at the Brussels meeting.

There should be tougher and simpler enforcement rules to give proper effect to TACs. We must ensure that there is adequate funding of fishery protection vessels. Can any of the measures that have been proposed be introduced by the Government for United Kingdom waters ahead of agreement with our Community partners? It may be that we can make some advances towards more effective conservation, at least in local waters.

All those who know the industry accept, and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food repeated today, that conservation measures are tough. They are not easy, but the industry accepts the need for them and has put forward measures only after considerable negotiation. Nevertheless, they have been proposed by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation with support from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation. The Government should build on that spirit of co-operation in the industry.

Another suggestion which was not made by the industry but which may be worth considering is the possibility of identifying areas where spawning grounds or juvenile stocks predominate where it would be possible to

[Mr. James Wallace]

have a closed season during some parts of the year. That would be bound to cause some controversy. Last week, I asked one fisherman whether it was a worthwhile measure, and he said, "If you propose it, all hell will break loose. You will be roundly criticised, but those who criticise you will go home and say, 'That guy is talking sense.'" Proposals to close off fishing grounds are always controversial, but, given the crisis in some North sea stocks, we must consider such possibilities.

Measures to conserve stocks will be defeated if there is too much capacity chasing limited stocks. The only effective solution is to reduce capacity through a decommissioning scheme. I have had no other suggestion which can meet the scale of the present problem. Many people recognise that decommissioning is the only way to achieve a significant reduction.

Clearly there will be a reduction in fishing opportunity. In return for a worthwhile success in getting the Commission to drop the two measures it had proposed for the management of our national fishing quotas, the United Kingdom Government have been asked to submit by the end of January proposals regarding the management of the reduced quotas and methods to reduce the fishing effort. I would welcome from the Minister a timetable of negotiation with the industry and proposals for meeting that requirement from the Commission. Undoubtedly, he will need the co-operation of the industry, but how does he expect to get it, considering that this afternoon's statement slammed the door on the proposal that the industry has supported for so long?

The statement said nothing about a temporary lay-off scheme, although that may have been included in the blanket dismissal of any form of subsidy. In the past, a temporary lay-off scheme has not been considered a particularly suitable or effective way of solving the industry's problems, not least because of the strict rules that have to be met and the relatively small sums of money provided for complying with the requirements. At present, almost anything would be welcome to ease the financial burden that inevitably will fall even harder on the industry. As other countries have managed to top up their decommissioning grants, is it possible for the Government to top up temporary lay-off schemes and make them financially worthwhile to implement and give boats over 18 m long at least some temporary respite?

Last week, the Secretary of State for Scotland poured cold water on the idea of a decommissioning scheme by quoting the criticisms of the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. He asked how it would

"reduce the amount of fishing effort? In its 1987 report the National Audit Office questioned whether the removal of vessels under the earlier scheme did anything to relieve the difficulties of the fishing quotas that were under pressure. It would be difficult to target a scheme properly, as it is difficult in such circumstances for the Government to intervene effectively and precisely in an industry with so many active participants".—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1989; Vol. 163, col. 1246.]

This afternoon the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food again used the excuse of the PAC as a reason why decommissioning might be inappropriate.

In fact, the report of the PAC made it clear that the PAC did not actually reject all decommissioning grants but, rather, noted that member states in 1986-87 were given options as to how the decommissioning scheme should be introduced. The report said:

"MAFF decided to introduce a regulatory approach, with provision for the automatic payment of a flat-rate grant. It is clear that this was exploited by some owners, and grants were paid in several instances at a level which exceeded the unlicensed value of the vessel . . . We consider that in drawing up the decommissioning scheme, the Agricultural Departments could have made much better use of the flexibility allowed by the relevant European Community directive. As a result, in our view the scheme was grossly expensive for what it achieved."

But in its next conclusion—in the section of its report which I quoted in the debate last Thursday—it said that it saw some future use for decommissioning grants. It made it clear that it was objecting not so much to the principle of decommissioning as to the manner of operation of the decommissioning grant scheme introduced by MAFF in 1986.

One readily appreciates why the present Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, having been involved as Minister of State at that time, does not want to get his knuckles rapped twice. While such personal feelings may be understandable, they should not stand in the way of easing the process of restructuring so that the industry can cope with the much reduced fishing opportunities that are about to occur.

In an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) in November, the Minister of State, Scottish Office, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), referred to the criticisms of the previous scheme by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, and then made the telling remark

"although my view is that those criticisms could be met".—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 112.]

If the Scottish Office believed that the criticisms could be met, one would have hoped that it could have persuaded its counterpart at MAFF that they could be met. It is clear that it failed in that task, so that effectively MAFF vetoed a scheme that the Scottish Office must have thought was viable.

Another criticism of the National Audit Office and the PAC was about the difficulty of targeting those to whom the scheme should apply. How should it be targeted? What discussions have the Departments had with the industry in recent months, when the industry had expressed its willingness to have a decommissioning scheme? Have discussions taken place to see how that could be effectively targeted without leading to some of the more efficient and newer vessels being taken out? Many other EC countries operate decommissioning schemes. Has MAFF considered those examples with a view to seeing how they might be implemented here?

If we are not to have decommissioning—which would seem to be the outcome of today's ministerial statement—what shall be have? How far will the steps announced this afternoon go towards meeting the targets set under the multi-annual guidance programme? No steps appear to have been taken in that direction, and that is regrettable.

We appreciate that MAFF is hooked on a licence aggregation scheme. I have no objection to that, because such a scheme has a part to play in the overall licensing system, but the Minister is kidding himself if he thinks that that will make a significant contribution to reducing the

capacity of the fleet. How does he see the reduction in the fleet size being managed? The fear must be that it will not be managed at all.

Will the Minister expand on what was said in this afternoon's statement to the effect that, with the exception of grant aid for essential safety improvements, vessel grant aid will be restricted to those cases where it is needed to back up European Community grant aid? It is my understanding—I shall willingly accept correction if I am wrong—that European grant aid was given if a project was already in receipt of national aid. I may have misinterpreted what was said, and any elucidation of it will be most welcome. It appears, however, that the cart was being put in front of the horse, and effectively all forms of grant aid were being cut off. I shall welcome correction if that is not the position.

What is being suggested could have serious implications for the boat building industry. That is of considerable concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), as many of her constituents have jobs at the shipbuilding yard at Campbeltown.

Other parts of this afternoon's statement suggest that the industry will be obliged seriously to reduce its fishing activity, yet there has been no suggestion of financial underpinning. When farmers were expected to accept milk quotas or to take the set-aside scheme, some compensation was payable.

We tend to talk generally about the fishing industry, but in many parts of the country, especially Scotland, including my constituency, the "industry" means individual boats and very small businesses. Individual skippers and crews have directly to provide for their families. They are to be subjected to high interest rates and fewer catching opportunities with which to generate an income to meet household expenses and payments on their boats.

The Government seem to be cutting the industry adrift, as it were. Onshore processing workers, workers in the boat building industry, skippers and crews, and fishing communities generally are about to take the full blast of free market forces. If that is the position, it will be a haphazard way of deciding who will be around when, as we hope, stocks are built up again and there are greater catching opportunities.

The way in which the Government seem to be asking the industry to go provides no guarantee for the future security of the industry, let alone its future prosperity. The Government have a responsibility. The licensing scheme which they introduced in the mid-1980s failed. It did not keep a check on the expansion of the industry. They were warned by my right hon. and hon. Friends, and by official Opposition Members, of the likely outcome of the scheme. The Government presided over the building of new boats and helped to fund their construction at a time when fishermen were being told that things were looking good for the fishing of haddock. Only two years have passed since the scientists were recommending an increase in the total allowable catch for haddock.

Ministers cannot run away from their responsibilities. It is important that we take every opportunity to pursue them to ascertain exactly what they are proposing to assist an industry that is facing a crisis. I acknowledge again the efforts that were made at Brussels successfully to negotiate a better TAC than looked possible at one stage, but that was only one part of the package by which we said that Ministers would be judged. On the critical part of the package—the restructuring of the industry—they have said nothing. It would appear that they are abdicating their responsibilities in that regard.

11.43 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am pleased to be able to take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). He is to be congratulated on his tenacity in keeping us in our places at this hour of the night to debate the fishing industry. I am sure that the Minister and the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), the Opposition spokesman, will agree that it is a trying time for the industry in all its various manifestations.

We are in a hopeless mess: it is difficult not to be pessimistic about what is happening and what will happen over the next 12 months. We must, however, be as positive as we can. I think that my hon. Friend was right when he said—I echo his sentiment—that the ministerial team deserves credit for the advances that it managed to achieve against the terms of the scientific advice. No one should under-estimate, however, the uncertainties and the difficulties that the industry will face.

The catching industry will experience difficulties with the reduction in TACs. The Minister is aware that I am concerned about haddock and cod quotas; fishing against a quota of 36,000 tonnes will be a dire prospect next year. Although the catching industry will experience difficulties, those experienced by the processing industry will often be greater. It will have to cast its sights ahead over the coming years and, like everyone else, put together investment plans for capital machinery. It will experience economic problems such as exchange rates and interest rates, which will put it at a disadvantage compared with its competitors in the European Community.

I do not know what can be done to assist the processing industry—the Government have no proposals. I recognise that the Minister lends a ready ear to problems. Indeed, his ear is chewed every time he visits a quayside in Britain. I do not envy him his task. Quayside markets are not only damp and wet, but it cannot be nice to get one's ear bitten off by people who are genuinely worried about their future livelihoods. But at least he has it in his power to give them some hope of help from the Government. The Government must recognise by now that they need help, if they did not know it previously. The processing industry must be given urgent consideration.

One of the most frequent arguments that the processing industry makes to me—I realise that against scientific advice this may be difficult—is that, if it had a rolling programme of TACs—if it knew, plus or minus 10, 15 or 20 per cent. over three or five years, what raw materials would be available for it to process—it could have more confidence when making investment decisions for the future. At present, all it has is a lottery.

The processing side of the herring industry became extinct under the seven-year closure, and it was impossible to revive it within a short period. The lesson to be drawn from that is that the processing industry must be given special consideration in the difficult and testing year ahead.

I have a constituent who has an interest in the boat building industry—the Minister kindly granted me an audience when we went into the detail of this earlier in the year. I have his interests very much at heart and in mind

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because he is a prominent member of the Conservative party; he therefore deserves special attention. I say that slightly facetiously, but his substantial boat building company is in the port of Eyemouth. He is an important employer and his company provides an important service to the fleet not only in building boats but in refitting, refurbishing and reconditioning them. His prospects for orders are bleak.

I am disappointed by the Government's news that there is not to be a decommissioning scheme. If they had been more visionary, they could easily have produced a scheme that would not have exposed them to the kind of criticism that they received when they last produced such a scheme. It was subject to abuse. A figure of £45 million for the decommissioning scheme has been bandied about, and of course some of that money could come from Community funds. That £45 million is not an insignificant sum, it is substantial. I do not under-estimate the difficulties involved in finding such a sum, particularly when we consider the budgets available to the Ministry at the moment.

If the Minister had gone back to the Treasury and argued for fresh money—even if it was not as much as £45 million—he could have made substantial progress in taking some of the capacity out of the fleet. That would have offered some hope to boat builders, because they could then have taken on orders to build new boats equipped to carry out their tasks properly. At the same time, the decommissioning scheme could take capacity from the fleet, and we could move more readily towards the multi-annual guidance programme targets for 1992.

My stalwart Conservative constituent will regret the bad news. I will have much sympathy with him when I tell him that bad news; it will give me no great pleasure to tell him that the Government could have done much more. No doubt my stalwart Conservative constituent will tell me the same thing, but time will tell.

I want to refer tot the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland about conservation. A package of conservation measures should have been put together some time ago. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation has been arguing for months, if not years, for the elements of a scheme which could have been up and running. I agree with my hon. Friend that that would not have been a painless scheme. It would have caused heartache and it would have been difficult to persuade the industry to accept it. However, we have lost much valuable time. There are opportunities and scope for Government action on conservation. The Government will be derelict in their duty if they do not move quickly in that direction.

I am worried that, in the financial crises facing the industry in the short term, we may lose the valuable benefits derived from the share fishermen's scheme—a system of share fishing that is unique to Scotland. I know that the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are aware of the problems with that scheme. There is some constructive tension—I believe that that is the phrase—between the lead Ministry in England and the Scottish Office. I believe that the Minister recognises that share fishing in Scotland is a unique scheme which may be damaged by default if the Government make proposals inimical to its continued prosperity.

The Government should consider very carefully what the Department of Social Security is doing to the income available to some of the members of the share fishing crews. Earlier today, I reminded the Leader of the House that the new change in unemployment benefit for part-time workers will have a severe financial effect on such crews. If a boat is tied up for servicing or because of inclement weather for four or five of the six-day benefit week and then it goes out and the crew earn more than £43 on a one day in the week trip, they will be denied benefit for the rest of that benefit week. That will prejudice them to the tune of £53·10 per crew member. One need not be a genius to work out that it is much easier to lie in bed for the sixth day and collect the £56·10 unemployment benefit than to go down to the sea in ships, do business in big and deep waters and then return to find oneself deprived of five of six days unemployment benefit.

The share fishery and other parts of the United Kingdom fishing industry have always constructively relied upon that system—they have not abused it—to support their income when boats have been laid up. The Government have under-estimated the impact of that change. Technical as it may sound, it will have a fundamental impact on available income.

When I first saw the social security regulations, I thought that share fishermen were exempt, because special provisions were deliberately and properly made for the industry. I am now told that that is not the case and that it will suffer as much as everyone else. It is not a matter of getting better lay-up schemes and trying to get compensation to the industry in other ways: we must be careful that the new regulations do not cause unforeseen and untoward difficulties.

The Government must quickly come forward with some ideas about the future for the catching sector, as well as for processing and boat building. I understand the Government's general free-market philosophy. The Minister would not have any difficulty persuading me about certain aspects of a mixed economy, free market and so on as they apply to the economy generally. However, my experience as a constituency Member is that there will be little stability in the fishing industry either now or over the next two or three years. It is a serious business for coastal communities that depend on fishing to generate a large part of their income. Fishing is a way of life. If the fishing industry goes down, it will be the equivalent of the Ravenscraig steel closure in Scotland.

The Government cannot wash their hands of the matter and stand back and let the market sort out the mess. If they do, they will be culpable of criminal neglect. There are available methods, but they will cost money. The Government must go to the Treasury and argue for the extra money. If not, the coastal communities that depend on fishing for their livelihoods will simply never forgive them.

11.56 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) outlined in great detail and very knowledgeably the problems being faced by their local communities, not only on the catching side but on the production and shipbuilding sides of the industry. Whole communities rely on the fishing industry, particularly in the parts of the

world that those hon. Members represent. They have made many points with which I do not disagree, but I shall explore some of the issues that they have raised.

To be fair to the Minister, I recognise that the Government have had difficult negotiations in Brussels. I accept also that the maximum that we could expect the Government to negotiate is up to scientifically agreed levels. It is irresponsible to argue that there is a magic figure and that, in some way, we can exceed quotas. If we do not accept the best scientific advice available, there will be no fisheries.

It is important that we should know what steps the Government intend to take to ensure consistency of supply to the processing side of the industry. We need stability in the industry. When the fleet faces severely reduced quotas, we must ensure that consistency of supply is maintained. If we cannot maintain our supply from our own home fleet, we may have to look to third countries to make up the shortfall in raw materials. As the Minister is aware, that involves import tariffs. I should be grateful if the Minister would outline whether ways in which shortfalls of supply could be overcome were discussed in Brussels.

Like previous contributors, I am amazed that the Government are using a free market approach to decommissioning. At the height of advocating this free-market approach, the Government were giving out decommissioning grants as well as grants for building and improvements. As has rightly been said, the report of the Public Accounts Committee was not necessarily critical of the concept of decommissioning grants, but it rightly criticised the way in which the scheme was run, without any kind of targeting, planning or structure. I shall deal with the detail of that in a moment and suggest how it could be made to work better.

Conservation measures are vital. I should be interested to hear what was discussed at Brussels. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations have made some helpful suggestions to assist the industry to get out of the crisis facing it at present, and I very much hope that they are taken seriously. Some of those suggestions have related to an increase in mesh size and to experiments with square mesh. I understand that a derogation has been given to the president of the NFO to experiment with square mesh with fishing nets that have a smaller mesh size than the 90 mm minimum.

The question of spawning grounds is worthy of consideration. Indeed, I discussed this with the Minister, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), who informed me that, on the basis of the scientific advice that he had received, restricting the catching of spawning fish would not necessarily improve the breeding stocks. While I do not want to quibble with the scientific advice that the right hon. Gentleman has received, by instinct I feel that, if there could be some restriction on fishing in spawning grounds when fish are spawning, that must be to the advantage of the stocks. I hope that the Minister will consider the scientific research that has been carried out on this.

I am sure that the Minister will be aware of the package of measures put forward by the fishermen themselves, which includes the limitation of extensions on nets to a 6 m maximum. They also suggest that the diameter of cod ends should be reduced to prevent the killing of juvenile fish and suggest placing restrictions on the nets currently carried on board trawlers. They suggest making it an offence to carry nets of a different mesh size, and also a one-net rule to help to enforce conservation measures.

I should like to extend those suggestions and to ask the Minister to consider a regional fisheries policy, whereby there would be some protection for local fisheries, taking into account traditional and historic rights. I accept that, historically, fishermen have moved around the country to different fishing grounds, but some small comunities rely very heavily on their local fishing. I hope that some thought will be given to protecting them from the knock-on effects which might arise if the large east coast trawlers were unable to fish for white fish and moved to other fishing grounds or even switched to other types of fishing. I am thinking of prawn fishing and of the possible effects on the west coast traditional fishermen.

I should also be grateful if the Minister would give some thought to the way in which the quotas are allocated and managed within the United Kingdom. I noticed from the current issue of *Fishing News* that Aberdeen's producer organisation managed to keep its fleet fishing right up to the year end by allocating its quota among all the boats in the organisation, divided across the year. In Scottish terms, Aberdeen seems to have been successful in managing its fishing quotas. Perhaps there are some lessons to be learned from the way in which it has done that.

Will the Minister consider suspending the licences of those fishermen who persistently break their quota allocation? I was interested to note that there is a court case in Scotland at the moment in which some fishing boat owners who do not belong to producer organisations are claiming as a defence that they cannot be prosecuted in a criminal court for exceeding the quota limits because those fishermen who belong to producer organisations are not prosecuted criminally but are disciplined within the PO. I hope that he will comment on that and give an assurance that an anomaly will not arise whereby people get away with ignoring the quota rules.

The unacceptable discard rate of some fisheries is a cause for concern. It is tragic that some of the discard is haddock, which must be dumped back dead into the sea because the quota has been exhausted. Has any thought been given to organising the quotas to prevent that?

Norway has came out of the negotiations very well, increasing its total allowable catch by 2 per cent., while our fleets are suffering substantial cuts in Norwegian waters. I am concerned about the large proportion of whiting that has been transferred to industrial fishing, especially by the Danes. I have severe doubts about the justification for industrial fishing. I wonder whether it is a good use of the fish for industrial processing, especially whiting which can be used for human consumption.

Policing is important to ensure that our restrictions and regulations are obeyed. The number of boats that DAFS has available for policing has been cut from five to four. I hope that the Government are taking seriously the need to ensure strict policing of the quotas and to prevent the significant abuses which I do not think anyone would deny have occurred.

I can well understand why the Government are wary of a decommissioning scheme; there is no doubt that the previous scheme was abused. Some 50 per cent. of the money paid out in that scheme went to just 15 ships, the average payment to each being about £500,000. Some of those ships were put back into fishing to qualify for the

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100-day minimum fishing time required for a decommissioning grant. Some companies even bought redundant trawlers so that they could apply for a decommissioning grant.

I do not doubt that the previous decommissioning scheme was a failure. It was abused and, most importantly, all the money went to the trawler owners and not a penny to the deck hands and crew. If we are to consider decommissioning schemes, as I believe that we must, I hope that they will include compensation for crew who do not have shares in the boat.

In the past we have provided substantial funds for redundant steel workers, although I accept that that was partly paid for from EEC funds. However, we have also provided substantial funds for redundant dockers, for which no EEC funding was available. That was financed by the Government. In addition, there have been substantial payments in the farming industry, such as for set-aside schemes and various other forms of compensation. There is no reason why the fishing industry cannot be assisted by decommissioning grants and support during its present difficulties. However, I recognise that there is still a need for some grants for modernisation in certain parts of the country where the fleet is aging and where there is not the overcapacity which exists elsewhere.

The failure of the previous decommissioning grant lay in trying to operate an interventionist policy in a free market system. We cannot have both. Because of the restrictions under which the fishing community must operate, there must be some structure, planning, intervention and assistance. If we do not give the industry that assistance, there will be no industry left and the many people who rely on it will be thrown on the scrap heap. Yet with a little thought, support, intervention and planning, we can ensure that our fishing industry gets through this difficult period and prospers. I hope that the quotas, the conservation measures and the other structures will begin to work and that we shall once again have a thriving and prosperous industry.

12.9 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I am grateful to the hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) for the moderate and balanced way in which they spoke. This is a serious subject. None of us is unaware of the gravity of the problems facing the fishing fleet in all parts of the United Kingdom. It is only reasonable that we should discuss these matters with the seriousness and intelligence shown tonight.

When the ministerial team negotiates, it does so for all parts of the United Kingdom and is conscious of the needs of all parts of the United Kingdom. While there may be debate on policy, as in all spheres, we present a solid front for the United Kingdom at negotiations. When we came out of the negotiations, we reported to representatives of fishermen from all parts of the United Kingdom who were in Brussels. Like the hon. Gentleman, who had the grace to say so, they recognised that the deal that we obtained was the best possible.

We set out our priorities to the House before we went into the negotiations. They were to increase the total allowable catches to the levels that are regarded as the best buy, as it were, by the International Council for Exploration of the Seas. It gives a range of possibilities and then recommends a best buy. The best buy was to combine fishing opportunity with conservation. To a large extent, we achieved that aim although we did not quite do so on cod or whiting, we succeeded on haddock. That was a significant negotiating achievement.

We achieved an underpinning of relative stability. That is important both in principle and materially. We were most anxious that, as in the past, the taking of cod from Greenland should be exclusively a British and German fishery. We did not want the fisheries policy to be fractured by a departure from that tradition. That was a difficult negotiation, because some member states felt that they had historic rights in those waters and would have liked to get back into that fishery.

As hon. Gentlemen have said, we succeeded in having the Hague preference applied to haddock. The amount that that represents is 36,280 tonnes. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland was almost exactly right in his estimate of the amount that would be made available to the United Kingdom by that application.

We also achieved some flexibility on western mackerel. There was no cut in the TAC. The amount that we can fish in the North sea was slightly reduced from last year's amount.

We came home with many of the principal elements on our shopping list but, as hon. Gentlemen have said, that is the beginning, not the end of the problem. The fact that we managed to push up the quotas and TACs simply means that we have reduced the scale of the problem that would have existed had the original proposals been adopted.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland asked me for some specific responses, which I shall seek to give. He said that full application of the Hague preference would have represented about 38,000 tonnes of haddock. In fact, we were able to obtain the same proportion as last year. That was the incremental amount that came to use from the Hague preference. We should have liked a larger amount, but we obtained as much as possible. The truth is that we obtained the same percentage as last year.

We managed to reduce the by-catch to Norway to 13 per cent. The original proposals would have left us with a rather higher figure. An allocation will go to other countries, too. The whiting by-catch takes account of the ICES estimates. The 1989 allowances had understated the amount of whiting taken in industrial fisheries.

We were not happy with certain elements, such as the fact that the Norwegian take of North sea herring was 29 per cent. It became clear in the negotiations that we would not win on that, and we had to accept it.

In Brussels we defined the precautionary total allowable catches, TACs, analytical or non-analytical total allowable catches. Some of them have a bit of science involved—for example, those relating to Channel cod. We did our best to push up those TACs where we thought we were justified. We did not get as much as we wanted, but we got some way towards what we were seeking. We cannot disregard the precautionary TACs; that would be the wrong route to follow. Our aim, as in other matters, is to produce a better science so that we can estimate the fisheries that are available.

A number of Ministers have begun to get worried about the technical conservation measures. That anxiety was not apparent at previous meetings. They share our belief that such measures should be at the top of the agenda. A high-level group, effectively senior officials from the member states, will get together quickly and it will produce its recommendations by the middle of the year. Those recommendations will come to the Council in the form of proposals by the end of July. I suppose, being realistic about the way in which the Community works, the proposals will form part of a package discussed at the end of 1990. If accepted, the date for application of the package may be the middle of 1991. That is a realistic assessment of the timetable for introducing a new series of conservation measures. To suggest their earlier introduction would be over-optimistic.

We have produced a consultation paper, which is with the industry now and which is largely based on its recommendations. Hon. Members have already said that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation has had considerable input in that paper, as has the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, which represents other parts of the country. The key is to get better selective fishing and selective gear. It is worth reminding the House that the 90 mm nets have been in operation for a year only. Those nets are rather like string shopping bags: when they get heavy, the meshes tend to close. It is also important to consider square mesh. Certain technical problems associated with the physical operation of that mesh will be studied at our laboratories in Aberdeen.

It is also important to consider the role of the extension piece and, as the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe said, to study the meshes round the cod end. We need to study the selectivity of the gear carried on board. In other words, we must try to make the quotas fit the catch more effectively and to introduce much greater selectivity in the fishery.

We are committed by the agreement to a cut in haddock fishing. We shall contact the industry as soon as we can after the Christmas holiday to discuss the best way to proceed. One possibility is to restrict the number of days at sea. We shall discuss that with the industry and we shall keep an open mind. We would not want to close down the entire fleet for X days per month because, as hon. Members have already said, we must remember the processing industry for which continuity of supply is essential. It is important that the industry should be able to satisfy consumer demand.

Hon. Members have mentioned the decommissioning scheme, and it is important to spell out why we thought it was not the right course to follow. A decommissioning scheme takes out capacity and does not necessarily reduce fishing effort. One of the problems is that more and more fishing effort is made in chasing fewer fish. It is not simply a case of heeding the Public Accounts Committee's criticism of the previous scheme. We could have devised a scheme to overcome at least some of the problems earmarked by the Public Accounts Committee, but we did not feel that it would be value for money but would prove expensive for the amount of tonnage removed.

Another important factor is that we are still in the process of finding out how big the fleet is. The registration process is not complete and we are not yet certain of the fate of the famous quota hoppers. There are 20,000 tonnes of quota hoppers in suspended animation because we do not have the definitive European Court ruling. They could be knocked off our registers if, as we hope, we win the final ruling on quota hopping. We are in contact with Brussels about the implications of our decisions. We firmly hope that Brussels will understand our approach.

We believe that the answer lies in much better management. As I have said in my meetings around the country, if I had absolute truth at my disposal, I would be an archbishop, not a Minister—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am grateful for that. We are talking to the fishermen about various ideas we have—including capacity aggregation and entitlement aggregation—to see whether they will work. We need to explore the notion of individually transferable quotas to enable the fisherman to take more decisions about his investment capacity and requirement. Technical conservation is essential to this debate.

It has been said that we are launching the fisheries and the fleet on to market forces. We spend £18 million a year on fisheries protection and control, £15 million a year on marine fisheries research, and in the past five financial years we spent £56 million in grant aid on vessels and £17 million on decommissioning. That must be stacked up against a landings value of £400 million. Therefore, the amount of public money involved in the fishing industry, in relation to its gross domestic product, is considerable. There is no fear of the industry being thrown exclusively to market forces. The Government believe that market forces have a role to play, alongside the support which the Government give and the framework which the European Community inevitably provides for fisheries management.

Subject to the Commission's approval, under the aids provision of article 92 of the treaty, we shall introduce a new grant aid scheme that will provide grants at a rate of 30 per cent. for all essential safety improvements. "Essential" means improvements necessary to comply with Department of Transport safety regulations. The back-up grants, to which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred, will be at the 10 per cent. level necessary to provide the national grant element needed to secure the EC grants for modernisation and construction. There is nothing new about that; we already have the same arrangement for fish farming. When the fisherman succeeds in obtaining a Community grant, we will ensure that the complementary national grant is still provided.

Mr. Morley: Does the Minister accept that one of the objections put forward by the fishermen to the fact that the Ministry will not consider decommissioning grants is that a considerable amount of public money has been made available for modernisation and construction in the past? I realise that the construction element has been dramatically reduced, but what is wrong with the case for switching some of that money to decommissioning, bearing in mind the relevant point made by the Minister that a scheme could be constructed to get round some of his valid objections?

Mr. Curry: When we looked at the amount of money involved and what we are likely to get for it, we decided that this did not provide good value for money. We accept that the absence of a decommissioning scheme means that we shall have to look to the longer term with regard to targets. Every other decommissioning scheme proposed would also have failed to reach those targets which are fuzzy because of the uncertainties about the number of boats on the register and the quota hoppers. I am

[Mr. Curry]

confident that we will be able to negotiate an effective target and that the measures mentioned in today's statement, which will be unveiled when we consider our consultations with the industry, will bring us into line to achieve those targets.

Mr. Wallace: It is clearly important that the fleet does not ossify. While it is necessary to take out some capacity, it is also important to have an up-to-date fleet. I am worried lest the 10 per cent. national grant, supplemented by the FEOGA grant, should lead to difficulties. Thanks to the efficiency of the Ministry and of DAFS, the national grant comes through quickly, but grants from the EC often take a considerable time to arrive. The implications for debt repayments and interest payments are obvious. I am concerned that what the Minister proposes will not allow the fleet to develop, with damaging effects on boat buildings and on the long-term age profile of the fleet.

Mr. Curry: We are willing to examine any proposals to accelerate the arrival of grants from the Community on time. The wheels of the Community, like the wheels of God, grind rather slowly. Preoccupation with avoiding fraud has tended to pile bureaucracy on to the system; that is the difficulty.

If fishermen are allowed to take more of their investment decisions themselves and to decide how to handle their capacity more effectively, the way is cleared for a much more effective rationalisation of the structure of the fleet. We shall be discussing these ideas with the industry over the coming months.

This week, the Council of Ministers agreed to regulations that will provide aid for the marketing and processing of fishery and aquaculture products, and fisheries Departments will be drawing up a sectoral programme to provide a framework to set priorities for aspects of processing. Thus, there will be aid for this sector. I can understand the wish for stable supplies. While the idea of a rolling total allowable catch is attractive, it has drawbacks because the recruitment of young fish to the fishery can vary enormously from year to year. While stocks are low, fisheries are relying on single-year classes; a rolling TAC would require setting TACs at low levels and not taking advantage of the years of relative plenty. I can see the attractions of the scheme, and if people come forward with valid ideas we are prepared to look at them, but we shall need to be seriously persuaded before we go down this route.

It is, of course, generally accepted that the fleet is too big. It is therefore difficult to see how we could encourage more boat building. The fleet will have to go through a period of rationalisation and we hope to harness market forces, in association with other elements that I have described, to improve quota management arrangements and speed up this process. If we can loosen the quota management regime and remove some of the restrictions on fishermen, we expect that successful fishermen will want to build new boats with new confidence—some of them, perhaps, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. No doubt that will be, as he said, to the benefit of the Conservative party if the gentleman that he cited is such a dedicated follower of the Government.

I hope that I have covered most of the points raised tonight. We have two major priorities to help to get the fishing fleet in shape. First, we need a real policy on conservation. We are beginning to see a genuine earnestness about putting one in place, and we shall do all that we can to propel and encourage it, and to participate fully in the elaboration of these programmes.

At the same time, we need sensible and constructive quota management arrangements. I believe that we are in a position to start freeing up the system, which will enable that management to be much more effective. Finally, we need sensible proposals from the European Community, representing an intelligent balance between fishing opportunities and the interests of conservation. That balance was not present at the beginning of our negotiations; it exists today and I hope that the lessons to be learned from the negotiations will be useful in future years so that, when we debate the fishing industry, we shall be able to say that it went through a period of great difficulty, that we recognise that we are a long way from the end of the road, but that a rational policy will facilitate a long-term future for an industry which, as all hon. Members have said, is vital to our coastal communities.

Central and Eastern Europe

12.29 am

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity of introducing this short debate on developments in central and eastern Europe. Anyone who reflects on the events of the past few weeks will appreciate that the House would be failing in its duty if it did not examine them before rising for the Christmas Recess. The difficulty of analysing such a broad canvas is that events are moving at a rapid pace and almost anything one says may be overtaken by events before the weekend. Another is the sheer scale of the subject. I hope that the House will understand, therefore, if I concentrate my remarks on two or three main areas and touch on points which do not always get an airing in this House.

The democratic development moving steadily through central and eastern Europe is evident in its various forms in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. The trend is distorted only by the exception of the recent horrible events in Romania. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will be able to comment on those events today, because I know that the Government reflect the feelings of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House in expressing horror at what has occurred in Romania.

I returned on Sunday from a visit to East Germany and West Germany on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, accompanied by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who I am delighted to see in his place, and the IPU secretary-general. During that visit, we explored not only recent developments in the two Germanies but ways in which this House might facilitate the process of dialogue both with existing parliamentarians and, perhaps more importantly, with the future politicians of East Germany who may be the making of the democratic development that we all want to see.

East and West Germany will be the main theme of my remarks, but I turn first to the background of the Soviet Union. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has repeated on many occasions, the developments in the Soviet Union that we have witnessed could not have occurred without the personal involvement in and commitment to glasnost and perestroika of President Gorbachev. If he and the Soviets had not made plain their unwillingness to intervene militarily in democratic protest, and had not dissuaded its military prevention by the Governments concerned, events might have taken a very different turn.

The Soviet Union clearly has great domestic problems. One must try to understand and have sympathy with those who, in seeking to move from a highly centralised to a decentralised structure, are inevitably facing strains on their economy and political systems. What can we do at this time to help them? The problem is on such a vast scale that it is unrealistic to imagine that we can do much on a bilateral basis. That is why I warmly welcome the signing recently of the trade agreement between the EC and the Soviet Union. It is probably on a Europewide basis that more opportunities can be found to provide the economic linkage that is essential if democratic development in the Soviet Union is to continue.

Industrial linkage is a theme to which I shall return in respect of other parts of central and eastern Europe. Several British companies are playing an important part in that. One example is the recent joint venture between GEC and the Moscow telephone company, as part of the crucial objective of uprating the Soviet Union's telecommunications. I refer also to the work being done by Cable and Wireless—I remind the House of my interest in that company—in pursuing developments on the same lines.

Inevitably, much of our effort is directed towards wider co-operation with our western allies. That is certainly true of disarmament. Although we all have our separate perspectives, we must keep both the Warsaw pact and NATO in view when discussing the wider aspects of our relationship with the Soviet Union.

I know that the Minister has a special interest in space activity, and I believe that that, too, will play a part in both disarmament and other kinds of co-operation between Governments, in industry and throughout Europe. The current convergence of civil and defence technology will allow the satellites that give us weather information, help us to control floods and deal with drought, and carry out remote sensing and earth observation to monitor mutually balanced force reductions and, indeed, the whole peace-keeping process. I am glad to see this country once more beginning to reaffirm the wider, collaborative role of the European Space Agency. I welcome the recent agreement with the Soviets in relation to British cosmonauts, which will take effect in the near future—as, indeed, will the similar agreement with the United States about astronauts.

How can the West, and the United Kingdom in particular, assist the Soviet Union during the time it needs for development, not only economic but democratic? Let us consider specific examples of progress in other parts of eastern Europe. Many of us will have had a chance to see and appreciate the advances made in Hungary and Poland, which in some ways reflect what has been described as "goulash Communism" in Hungary, which lasted a decade or more, and the progress in Poland, going back to the remarkable work and courage of Solidarity in the early 1980s. Those two countries have experienced a relatively mature development of the democratic process; in such countries, however, the winner picking the winner, as it were, may be of the best use in furthering glasnost and perestroika. If the link between democratic and economic development is seen to be working there, the Soviets may be helped to move along the same track.

I applaud the Government's creation of a £25 million know-how fund for Poland. That was done at an early stage in the recent developments there because the Government saw an urgent need for help in such matters as food, management training and English language teaching. That determined an important principle—that the urgency of cases should be taken into account.

I am rather concerned about the view which is tending to gain ground, that economic aid should be related only to democratic development. I shall try to show later in my speech that in many instances democratic development is not possible until economic progress is made. While the former might be a nice ideal, it does not square with reality.

Bilateral effort has been important in Poland and I applaud it. I welcome the fact that, from 1 April, a similar fund of £25 million for Hungary will come into operation. It will help with the English language, for which one finds a thirst throughout eastern Europe, and with know-how,

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which will be useful. Both know-how funds have been used to assist sponsored visits and to arrange political and industrial exchanges.

The political exchanges have provided opportunities for parliamentarians to meet and for visitors from Poland and Hungary to go to constituencies as well as to be involved here at Westminster. On the industrial side, however, we have some way to go. Many hon. Members were impressed by the case that Lech Walesa made for joint venture activity in Poland when he came here. He made a powerful argument and contrasted, somewhat ironically, the limited number of examples that he could cite involving the United Kingdom with the large number of bilateral exchanges with companies from the traditional enemy—the Federal Republic of Germany. In Budapest, an IBM official has been seconded to the United States embassy to assist with the detail of joint ventures.

To what extent can my hon. Friend the Minister assure the House that the Government are responding to such professional need in the growth of trade and investment in Poland, Hungary and the rest of eastern Europe? I hope that my hon. Friend will reaffirm that the effort to concentrate our efforts on the early success which has wider political significance attracts his and the Government's support.

I have already mentioned the Inter-Parliamentary Union visit to Germany. I cannot claim that a four-day visit gives a comprehensive view, but one cannot but be staggered at the lightning changes evident on both sides. It is only six weeks since the Berlin wall started to come down. This year alone, 700,000 East Germans have moved for permanent residence in West Germany. That process continues at a rate of 2,300 per day. Like the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), I saw the flow continuing by the thousand.

Such is the regularity of the process that it is virtually becoming a normal part of daily life. It is almost unremarkable. It has, however, had a major impact on the East German economy. There is evidence of strain at all levels. When we talked to people there, we could not help feeling a great deal of sympathy and anxiety for many of them. I remember meeting a professor of medicine who is a leading activist in New Forum, which is perhaps one of the key groups in the emergence of new political thought and parties, who was grey with exhaustion because he had been involved in setting up political groups and trying to sustain the work of the medical department with which he was involved when many of its most skilled people had left for West Germany. That story is also true for Church leaders.

Those who have been most active in promoting democratic change are now inclined to think that they would like to return to private life, but I foresee problems if the old faces appear under new party labels. As a leading official in the Federal Inter-German Ministry said, a bad winter, continued economic collapse and the failure to achieve early democratic growth will result in East Germans voting with their feet. That is a fact of life.

What attitude should the Government adopt? They should make it plain that they accept the inevitability of economic unification. It is apparent that West German industry will be streaming all over East Germany on the back of substantial Government assistance with infrastructure—road and rail links, the development of telecommunications and, in a wider context, anti-pollution investment, which is important to us all. West German political parties have daily contact with parties of the same name or those with which they are beginning to recognise certain links. Those political and industrial links are important in drawing the two countries closer together.

There may be a temptation to leave it all to West Germany, but that would be a fundamental mistake. It is clear from the talks that those of us who have visited East and West Germany have had with the Bundestag foreign affairs committee, with members of the IPU and with the Berlin Reichstag that there is a feeling that British involvement, a British lead in recognising the situation at this stage will have a much wider symbolism—not just because of the old wartime battles between Britain and Germany—which represents the sensitivity of German parliamentarians who recognise many of the old fears and resentments and want to assure the world and their western allies that they want the development of unification to have the support of their allies and they put Britain top of that list.

In a week when Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand are visiting East Germany, it is timely to ask how we can respond. We really should establish a know-how fund for the GDR. Sadly, I believe that economic strains will move towards pressures over food, just as in Poland. There are real opportunities to assist with language and management training. In addition the knowhow fund would be a valuable adjunct to the activities of our industrialists. I make no apology for raising that point of pragmatic self-interest. I have already mentioned the opportunities being exploited by West Germany. Clearly there is a feeling that a second German economic miracle is possible and that the extra market of 19 million people can be deployed to the advantage of Germany.

British industry also has a part to play. The tie-ups that have emerged in Europe in recent years—involving British companies which have particular alliances or formal partnerships with other European companies—may be the way forward, especially if those companies have West German connections. The recent Plessey-Siemens tie-up points to future opportunities for British companies through the West-East German connection.

As one reflects on the opportunities for the five traditional länder of East Germany to join the 12 current länder of West Germany, one thinks of the tremendous potential which must be involved in bringing together the Prussian and Saxon workers and work ethic with those of West Germany. That must result in a very powerful combination. If we wish to influence and be part of that development, we must be there in the early stages.

We have before us a chance to assist at the political level. We are talking about people in a political system who have no paper, no typewriters and no copying machines. They have had no experience of creating any sort of political organisation, of canvassing or of performing any such tasks.

In parliamentary exchanges and work such as the IPU and the Great Britain-East European Centre can perform, we can begin to offer our help, saying that while we may not have a perfect model here at Westminster, we can exchange ideas. We found that such exchanges were greatly welcomed. There is a great thirst for knowledge in

western Germany. The grass-roots activity—the chance to spend time with parliamentarians in their constituencies—is perceived as of equal value to taking part in the Westminster tradition, which is widely respected.

Looking beyond the immediate opportunities and developments, it is clear that major problems remain—in defence, in respect of the four-power agreement and over the Helsinki background—but I urge the Minister to accept the inevitability of economic unification, which is now under way, to confirm that the British Government and industry can play a part, and to move in parallel, as we approach elections in East Germany on 6 May, in making the political contacts which are of immense value.

No visitor to the German Democratic Republic can leave without having a clear recollection of the wall—that affront to western civilisation. One recalls what are called the steel woodpeckers and the tap, tap, tapping of the many people with hammers and chisels who, while getting mementos, in their own small way are helping to bring the wall down. The House can today send a message of support to all those who are working to bring the wall down. By our early initiative, we can show that we wish to use this opportunity to move forward towards the restoration of, in this case, the European community.

12.54 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): It is a pleasure to speak following the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) because he and I, as officers of the IPU, were fortunate to be in West and East Germany and in West and East Berlin last weekend. As he said, we witnessed the enormous changes that have taken place in that part of Europe.

For the last 40 years, East Germany has been regarded as the most loyal supporter of hard-line Communism. It is surprising now to think that the people of that country are enjoying a feeling of freedom such as many of them have never known. While we welcome that, we must be aware of the problems and uncertainties that such changes can create, not only in Germany but throughout Europe.

It was made clear to us last week, as the hon. Member for Arundel said, that we in the West must ensure that free elections take place in East Germany, for there are still strong remnants of the old guard there. If given the opportunity, they will resurface, perhaps under some other name. And as we do all we can to encourage free elections there, we must not overlook the need for industrial development and prosperity in East Germany.

When we talked to people about the forthcoming elections—it was clear that they were enthusiastic about them—we found that they had no experience, understandably, of organising campaigns. I am sure that at election time we all, no matter what party we represent, complain about not having this and that. I have no doubt that we all say, "If only we had more equipment, the campaign could be run much more efficiently." We were told by East Germans that they have no equipment. For example, there would be enormous problems in securing small quantities of paper for election manifestos or addresses. There will be tremendous difficulties in mounting campaigns prior to the elections in May 1990.

As an officer of the IPU, I pay a warm tribute to the work that the union has done over a number of years. It became obvious during our visit last weekend that it is held in great respect in Europe and throughout the world. Many in East Germany look to it to help and advise up-and-coming young politicians and newly formed political parties. I am sure that the IPU will seek to do that, and that plans are afoot already. Our expertise must be made available to the East Germans, but I hope that the Minister will deal also with financial help.

I hope also that all our political parties which have wide experience of campaigning will start to relate to fellow parties that are being set up in East Germany, so that parties that are respected in the United Kingdom can advise the new parties that are now emerging on what they have learnt over many years. If it had not been for the heroic resistance that was shown in October and November in East Berlin and other parts of East Germany, I am in no doubt that the old guard would still be in power.

On Saturday evening, we went to a dinner in East Berlin. Some of the members of the old guard were present, and it was amazing to listen to them. It became clear from questioning them that they still believed, after 40 years, that there was nothing wrong. I said to one of them, "When did you realise that things were wrong?" He replied, "Last October." I said, "What caused that realisation?" He answered, "The demonstrations which were taking place." I said, "If those demonstrations had not taken place, would you have realised that for the past 40 years you had been misleading the people of this country?" He replied, "No. We would still have been in power." It is only right that we ensure that the members of the old guard who are still around are not given the opportunity to regain power.

Along with free elections, there must be continuing prosperity, even if progress is slow initially. In the absence of that, members of a population of about 17 million would start to walk across the newly opened borders to start to establish themselves in West Germany. That would create unemployment problems and social and welfare problems. We were told that there are signs already of inadequate housing. Such problems would start to cause a great deal of instability.

Much has been said over the past few weeks about the future of Germany. There have been calls for reunification—a unified Germany. In today's edition of *The Times* there are examples of the differing points of view. I am sure that hon. Members have seen the photographs of Chancellor Kohl in Dresden. The headline in yesterday's *The Times* read "Reunification fever greets Kohl's visit". Yesterday, the Russian Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shevardnadze, gave warnings in Brussels. The headline on his visit in *The Times* said "Fears on German unity spelt out by Shevardnadze". That is an example of the current dilemma.

We in the West must begin to respond and to help. I am receiving letters from my constituents saying, "Of course we welcome the new freedoms, not only for East Germans but for the people of eastern Europe—but specifically East Germans," but they express a fear of a united Germany. Hon. Members may say "Those days are long past," but I am sure that the Minister will agree that many people in Britain hold such fears. We may say, "Don't worry about it," but, as the hon. Member for Arundel and I saw last week, unless East Germans can foresee prosperity, calls for the reintegration of Germany will undoubtedly lead to a powerful Germany.

The hon. Member for Arundel mentioned the comments that were made to us last week. Fears were expressed that a severe winter in East Germany will lead to

[Mr. Tom Cox]

enormous problems with food and heating. I should be interested to hear from the Minister about the discussions that are taking place in the EC to tackle that problem. I am sure that there are stockpiles of food in the EC. If there is an emergency in East Germany in the new year, I hope that the West will organise help, which obviously will have to include food and other aid.

I should like to follow the point that was well made by the hon. Member for Arundel about Britain's involvement in the industrial development of East Germany. Not East or West Germans but our representatives criticised the lack of interest shown by British companies. It is not good for British industry to say, "Of course we are interested, but things are not clear enough yet for us to take a decision." We must show that we are willing to help, and that we have the necessary knowledge and expertise. We also have the money, and it will be interesting to learn what additional funding will be made available.

I am a member of the defence committee of the Western European Union. I could talk at length about the military changes that are taking palce and the problems that they will cause us in the West. Those changes will call for courage and imagination by the West in its response. To some extent, time is on our side in these matters. We are now moving away from the possibility of conflict so we need not rush into decisions.

There are real problems in East Germany. If we really are Europeans and belong to an alliance, we must support West Germany, because there are fears that many of the 17 million East Germans might cross the border into West Germany.

Over the past few months, we have seen events which offer hope not just to my generation, but for generations that are growing up in the European Community. As the East Germans begin to take their country away from a dictatorship towards democracy, we must support them. From the very warm reception that we received in Germany last week, I have no doubt that help from this country would be warmly welcomed by the East Germans.

I cannot believe that very much can divide the House on issues such as these. Although this debate is taking place at a very unfashionable hour—debates that contain much of substance often take place at these times—I hope that we will hear from the Minister that the Government have a commitment to help, with their technical and financial resources, a country which, after 50 years, is beginning to see a return to democracy.

1.6 am

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I must congratulate my colleagues in the Inter-Parliamentary Union on their successful trip to East and West Germany. My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) and the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) have given us a fascinating insight into their visit last week. I have not seen the wall since it began to be demolished, but I had the dubious privilege of passing through checkpoint Charlie on the first day that it opened after the wall was built, because I was stationed in that part of the world at the time. Things have changed a great deal since then.

The IPU in its centenary year has much to celebrate. We had an extremely successful conference in London. My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel, our chairman, was the president during that conference and as a result I had the honour to lead the British group. I had the pleasure of addressing the conference, and I made some inquiries about the problems that existed 100 years ago. I was rather surprised to discover that the problems then had a rather familiar ring to them. In those days, there were problems with drugs, in particular the opium trade. There were also conservation problems, because ivory stocks were being depleted, particularly in the Congo. Revolutionary changes were taking place then as they are now, and they are familiar to us all.

The most important and significant event from the point of view of the British group of the IPU was the visit to this country five years ago this month of Mr. Gorbachev, just before he became leader of the Soviet Union. He came here leading the Soviet Union IPU group. Mr. Andropov fell ill then, and died soon after. Mr. Gorbachev took over the leadership of the Soviet Union almost immediately after his visit to Great Britain. That gave this country a considerable opportunity to influence him towards the advantages of our type of democracy. Other hon. Members and I had the honour and pleasure of meeting him and were extremely impressed.

We were able through the IPU to exert some influence upon Mr. Gorbachev and show him that there was a much more successful way of achieving the advancement that he clearly wanted for his people. He was not blind to the faults of the Communist system, as the people of East Germany were, as the hon. Member for Tooting told us. They woke up to the problems only in October this year. Five years ago, Mr. Gorbachev readily recognised the great disparity and what had to be done to put it right. That exciting situation is now being unveiled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel mentioned the technology that is so important to eastern Europe and the balanced force reductions. The Soviet bloc has an enormous way to go. I have a defence interest too, as I am a member of the Select Committee on Defence. The disparity between the two armies is enormous. However, we will not help Mr. Gorbachev if we drop our guard prematurely. We must approach matters in a sensible and balanced way. We must make it worth his while substantially to reduce his forces before we can reciprocate.

We have considerable contributions to make, particularly in educating people behind what was the iron curtain which we hope will never return. I welcome the support and help that the West can give by funding an educational programme. It is extremely valuable, and we must get on with it, because it will help enormously with our trade and our ability to influence those parts of the world. Hon. Members have heard in the media that there is much good will towards the Westminster type of democracy, so we would be foolish not to grasp this opportunity with both hands and ensure that people in central and eastern Europe are made fully aware of how they can introduce such a system and choose between the available alternatives when deciding what route to follow. It will not be an easy path for them, and we must all hold our breath for their success.

We saw what happened in Tiananmen square not so many weeks ago, and we are seeing what is happening in at least one country in eastern Europe now. We must give encouragement but at the same time make sure that people are not running so fast that the fledgling democracy collapses. I would hate us to drop our guard because we

had so much sympathy for what has happened in eastern Europe, only to find that an even greater monster had grown up in its place. That would not help Mr. Gorbachev's leadership. It would not help him to resolve the dilemma of eastern Europe and ensure that the economy comes up to standard so that he can give the people of eastern Europe the prosperity that we now take for granted.

There are trade difficulties. Our involvement with the United States of America sometimes gives me grave cause to wonder, especially when we find it difficult to sell submarines to the Canadians because of some small quantity of technology in the submarines that had been bought from the United States perhaps 30 years before. I cannot imagine why that should be. We certainly cannot allow such an issue to hold us back if we are to take full advantage of these unprecedented opportunities.

At the same time, we must be careful that we do not give away all our secrets on a plate. We are often criticised for being extremely innovative and for failing to take advantage of our innovations. That is indeed the case, because we have lost many opportunities to the United States of America, Japan and other parts of the world when we could have exploited our designs and kept our lead. That would have helped our balance of payments considerably.

However, we still have a major contribution to make towards the lowering of world tension. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has done an enormous amount during the past 100 years to help. All the members of the IPU worldwide are to be congratulated on the way in which that body has developed and given parliamentarians an opportunity to exchange views and to make relationships that Governments sometimes find it hard to make. With the financial support that the Government can provide, the IPU can play a major role in providing democratic education to those people who need our advice and support. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to make some encouraging remarks about that, so that we shall be able to play our full part in the years to come.

1.16 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) on giving the House the opportunity to discuss the exhilarating and epoch-making events in eastern Europe. I thank him and the other hon. Members who have spoken for their thoughtful and detailed contributions on the opportunities and dangers that lie ahead. The hon. Gentleman has also given us our only chance to discuss the unfolding horrors that have taken place in another east European country as we learn daily of the events in Timisoara. We know that Ceausescu has said that he will introduce in Romania the same reforms that have taken place in the newly democratised countries of eastern Europe only

"When the beech tree bears apples and reeds bear flowers."

Sadly, the people of Romania cannot wait that long.

The abiding image of the past few days that haunts all our imaginations is that of the woman in an agony of despair offering her unborn baby to the bayonets, with the cry, "Take my child, he has no future but starvation." Ceausescu's feudal edict that women should bear four children, with no control over their fertility, is evidence that he sees no limits to his despotism—and there is no limit to his megalomania. Romania has become a newly under-developed country. He is leading it into a new dark age—a place of ignorance and fear controlled by the irrational forces of cultural barbarism, language pogroms, and the shrinking rights of the individual to those of a medieval vassal.

There is forced urbanisation. The slums inflicted on Britain in the last century are being replicated in modern Romania. Its picturesque villages are being bulldozed; and shoddy flats, many without internal sanitation, are replacing them. It is a country where, incredibly, the horse is promoted as the alternative to the car and the candle to electric light.

Today we hear that the new estimate from an East German news agency of the numbers of martyrs of Timisoara stands at 4,000, including dozens of children. The House now has an opportunity to express its outrage and to salute the vision and bravery of the martyrs. One hundred and fifty years ago last month, there were martyrs in my constituency, when 20 people were shot down. They were Chartists who were marching in a similar cause—in the cause of a wider democracy. They spoke of their willingness to sacrifice their lives in what they described as a noble cause.

We are now celebrating the anniversary of that event. A new generation of children know about those who died in their town 150 years ago. We have erected a tombstone to honour those 20 martyrs whose graves have been dishonoured for a century and a half. The valuable lesson is that the children immediately make a connection between the events of Newport of 1839 and the events of Tiananmen square, and will now connect them with the events of Romania during the past few days.

The names of Timisoara and Tiananmen square will live for ever in the annals of infamy. Those deaths must spur us into action. Parliament can take practical steps to curb the excesses of Ceausescu and to hasten his downfall. That action is not longer a political choice. Timisoara has made it a duty for all of us to work to end the reign of the Pharaoh Ceausescu and his dynasty. He has erected a vast mausoleum by destroying the centre of picturesque Bucharest and creating a palace to his own memory, to his ego.

We must now take the opportunity to gain from the collapse in the whole landscape of world power that has been in place, seemingly immutable, since the time of the Yalta conference. The metamorphosis is taking place and democracy is spreading like an agreeable contagion. Whole nations, with their new knowledge, have become restlessly ungovernable, and leaders have lost their will to govern. At last, we can escape all the waste and futility of the past 45 years, when both super-powers backed tyrannies in Europe, Asia, south America and Africa either because they were capitalist or because they were Communist, regardless of the degree to which those countries oppressed their own peoples. Now, happily, America is critical not only of Cuba and Nicaragua, but of the Right-wing Governments of Chile, Colombia and, today, of Panama. The Soviet Union strongly condemns Romania and tells the truth about the atrocities there.

During the past few days, the Minister has spoken with courage and eloquence of his condemnation of Romania. There are other things that we can do. Our duty is to arouse the same appetite for democracy in all parts of Romania as has been evidenced in the new democratised countries of eastern Europe. That cannot happen while the majority of the population of Romania are being deceived

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

by their own media. It is signficant that the riots and demonstrations have occurred in areas where people know the Hungarian language—most are either Hungarian or German speakers—and have heard the broadcasts from other countries. It is a sad fact that Nadia Comaneci, when she escaped from Romania, had to cross the border before she heard for the first time that the Berlin wall had been breached, such is the news blackout in Romania.

We have an instrument by which we can inform the people throughout Romania of the truth of Timisoara. They must be told that no Government, even that of Ceausescu, are immovable. Action has already been taken to expand the Romanian language services provided by the BBC World Service. Another practical step, which was reflected in the speeches of all hon. Members who have spoken of their vision of the Europe of tomorrow, is to initiate a Pan-European campaign of East and West to cement the new reality of life in Europe by not only thinking democratically but acting in unity with them to expose to the people of Romania the excesses of Ceausescu. We must pressurise that regime with economic sanctions. Although he has isolated himself from most of the western world, he still has strong but vulnerable economic links with the eastern world.

Most of all, we should mount an information campaign by expanding the activity of our broadcasting media which have had such effect in the changes that have already taken place in other eastern European countries. We must ensure that the people of Romania know that their country is the final Stalinist gulag of Europe. It is wrong that the people should have to wait, in Ceausescu's words, until

"the beech tree bears apples and reeds bear flowers."

1.25 am

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, West): I congratulate the troika of fellow officers of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on their speeches. I gladly join them in this consensus debate in sending a signal of support to forces in central and eastern Europe struggling, mostly successfully, for fundamental change.

I fully agree that the pace and scale of change is almost alarming. Even this evening we heard the news that the Communist party in Lithuania has declared UDI from the Communist party of the Soviet Union. That has substantial implications for the role of the Communist party as the cement for the Soviet empire.

To put the pace of events into perspective, we must remind ourselves that only on 17 November this year was the student demonstration in the streets of Prague bloodily suppressed. Much has happened in the weeks that have passed since then.

Only two countries stand out from the general trend, leaving aside Albania, which has not been mentioned. First, there is Romania, which was described so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West. We congratulate the Minister on the proper tone in which he has condemned the savagery of the suppression of popular demonstration in Timisoara. Opposition Members recognise that we have little leverage over the Government of Romania—because they are relatively autarchic in their economic structure—but perhaps we could at least send a signal.

The Foreign Office could advise the Palace that the honorary knighthood conferred on President Ceausescu during his visit here in the late 1970s should be withdrawn. Equally, it could be requested that the Queen formally hand back the star of the Romania that was granted to her by the President of Romania. Is there a reason in principle why the Foreign Office should not tender that advice and why the Palace should not accept it as a gesture of symbolic importance?

The other exception is the sad country of Yugoslavia, which has not been mentioned tonight. It was in the vanguard of reform in the past, but the very existence of the federal state of Yugoslavia is now in question. There are real fears of either a break-up or a military Government there. We should do nothing that in any way encourages secession of the Slovenes or the Croatians.

The events of the past months have been akin to a volcanic eruption. When such a vast stirring of the earth occurs, there are a series of subterranean movements, natural movements, the course of which cannot be clearly discerned by those who stand above them. Part of that natural movement is the whole concept of middle Europe —Mitteleuropa. The Minister will be aware of the fascinating conference held in Budapest in November. The representatives were Italy, a member of the European Community, Hungary, a member of COMECON, Austria, a member of the European Free Trade Association and Yugoslavia. It recognised that the infrastructure needs to be improved as the journey time to Trieste is longer than it was at the time of the Austro-Hungarian empire. During the time of the Italian presidency of the EC, Czechoslovakia is also expected to join that grouping, which is looking at means of regional co-operation.

Mitteleuropa is stirring. The exciting developments in that area have been recognised by the Japanese. After the G24 meeting in Brussels, the Japanese Foreign Minister, alone of the Foreign Ministers at that meeting, went to Austria and at Sopron met Gyula Horn, the Hungarian Foreign Minister and Alois Mock, the Foreign Minister of Austria. Perhaps a signal for the future is the fact that Mitsubishi decided to locate a new plant not in Styria, as the Austrians had hoped, but in Szent Miklos in Hungary.

The South Koreans, in part for political reasons and for recognition, have shown great interest in Hungary. As a number of my colleagues have mentioned, including my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), the sad thing is that perhaps British business is behind. The South Koreans, the Japanese and others are willing to look long at the developments in central Europe.

The developments in eastern and central Europe pose a question mark over the concept of Europe that stems from the Delors initiative. The Single European Act, 1992 and all the other exciting developments stem from a time when one did not, and probably could not, anticipate what has happened in eastern Europe. Those developments are based on a much narrower concept and definition of Europe.

To what extent can the Delors concept of Europe be accommodated within the new, wider definition of Europe? We noted what the Minister said about the new agreement between EFTA and the Community. Although the dust has not yet settled, it is clear that, if the new Europe, wider than the Delors concept, is to develop, an institutional framework must be established at some stage. No such framework is in prospect yet.

We have seen how the SPD congress in Berlin and the political parties in East Germany have reacted. The Minister, because of his office, may not be able to comment as he would wish, but it is sad to note the contrast between the courage of Dr. Vogel in saying that the western boundaries of Poland are sacrosanct and the unwillingness of Chancellor Kohl to say clearly that the Oder-Neisse line is not in question.

There is no way in which the Federal Chancellor can benefit from keeping that question open. He will not gain votes which would otherwise go to Republicans. By failing to answer the question, he only fans flames that may revive the worst sort of memories of revanchism. I hope that the Government will urge Chancellor Kohl to make clear formally, directly and publicly the recognition by his own party and the Federal Government that the western frontiers of Poland are fixed and are not in question as a result of these developments.

I have one or two words of caution about the Warsaw pact. We should not think of Mr. Modrow in East Germany as a liberal. There are clear signals that he is one of those who is dragging developments in central Europe. The Communist parties in central and eastern Europe still hold the key ministries—the Interior Ministry and the Education Ministry. Happily, Czechoslovakia is an exception to that and, although arriving late in the field, it appears to have outdistanced some of those who started before it.

The key question must be that which colleagues have already mentioned: what do we do with this victory for democracy? We must respond with some humility and not assume that we have all the answers. I have a personal nightmare that, when the Channel tunnel terminal at Waterloo opens, the first travellers to come out of it will step right into the cardboard city which is developing apace at Waterloo station. That is a sign of one of our democracy's social failures.

We have to win our credentials in the wider European context by showing that commitment to Europe that the Government have signally failed to do. I do not blame the Foreign Office for this, because it is subject to other orders, but we must be careful that we do not feed suspicions that we show an enthusiasm for the wider Europe only as a device to dilute what has already been achieved in terms of European integration.

We must concentrate on bringing central Europe into the main stream. I have heard the analogy used that central and eastern Europe are like a severed limb and that microsurgery is needed to bring the two parts of Europe together. Microsurgery in that context means a network of relationships right across the board, including professional organisations and others.

The know-how fund has already been established for Poland and will, from 1 April, 1990, be set up for Hungary. Are the funds new money, or are funds being diverted from existing money in the Overseas Development Administration vote? The emphasis on Poland and Hungary was understandable at the time, but since the decisions have been made, Czechoslovakia has come on stream. To what extent are the Government now prepared to include Czechoslovakia in a similar know-how fund?

How does the Minister respond to the similar call made by the hon. Member for Arundel in respect of East Germany? I concede that East Germany is different because it is already partly linked to the European Community through its special relationship with West Germany. Perhaps a far stronger case can be made for Czechoslovakia.

How can the Minister ensure that the money is spent across the spectrum? What sort of missionary work is being done among professional and other organisations? What publicity is being given to this? The impression that I have gained from talking to various organisations is that they are not yet aware of the opportunities. I hope that many of our professional organisations will find placements within their structures for their sister organisations in central Europe. Does the Minister see scope for expenditure on party political activities? The Federal Republic of Germany and Austria already have foundations that receive public funds indirectly. It is surely a properly democratic investment to allow political parties from this country to meet their opposite numbers in central and eastern Europe. I hope that the Minister will confirm that such exchanges will not be ruled out in principle.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting and the hon. Member for Arundel queried the readiness of the Government to respond flexibly to new developments in central and eastern Europe in terms of embassy staffing. To what extent have the Government considered staffing levels in our embassies—particularly the cultural and commercial posts in them? Are we geared to respond flexibly to these new opportunities?

I hope that the Minister will have ample time to answer the questions that I have asked.

1.42 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): It is a pleasure to have another opportunity to talk about the immensely important changes in eastern Europe. We had a good debate a couple of Fridays ago, to which the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) was a major contributor. The hon. Gentleman is silent tonight, but I note that he has stayed to listen to this important debate.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) for raising this subject. The IPU certainly has an important role to play. Its role has been difficult in the past; it has tried to keep open connections and contacts with people who were not those with whom the IPU would have liked to have contact. Now it has to transfer its contacts—joyfully, I am sure—to genuinely and democratically elected partners. The IPU has an important role in validating the newly elected parliamentarians of the countries of eastern Europe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel spoke of the scale of the changes in the Soviet Union. We must be humble before that scale of events. Perhaps we should also be humble about our capacity to influence them, but I think that we have a small chance of doing so. The Prime Minister played an honourable role in recognising the genuineness of the Soviet reforms early, when it mattered, and in recognising that Gorbachev was qualitatively different from previous Soviet leaders.

The Soviet Union is intensely preoccupied with its own changes, but if it proposes areas in which we can help—it has not yet done so—we must respond. Perhaps that response will be made in terms of parliamentary contacts. We look forward to the twice-postponed visit of the representatives of the Supreme Soviet, which is now

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

assuming a role that would have been inconceivable only a few years ago. We look forward to welcoming those representatives to our country in due course.

Mr. Michael Marshall: I omitted to say earlier that we are appreciative of the common ground that we share with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and of the excellent co-operation that exists. The visit to which my hon. Friend refers is part of that continuity and demonstrates the value that the Soviet Union attaches to that connection and that it wishes to sustain it. I am grateful to my hon. Friend and to his Department for their work in that connection.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks, which I shall convey to the officials who undertake the work to which he refers.

I am happy to say that the £25 million of know-how funds to which he referred has been doubled to £50 million, which is a considerable amount in terms of expenditure on the movement of people, salaries and expertise rather than on major capital equipment. We shall not find ourselves short of money for good projects, which is an aspect on which the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) also touched.

We have ventured into the sensitive tarritory of Government funding of political activities, and that is why I took the precaution of issuing an invitation to the hon. Members for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), which they have accepted, to join me on the fund's steering group. If we are to support financially political activities, it should be done on an all-party basis. And certainly it should be done.

We ought not to stand back from the process of developing democratic institutions because we are nervous about having any involvement in such activities. Obviously we shall not involve ourselves in campaigning, but we shall take an interest in developing contacts between the various parties of central and eastern Europe and their equivalents in this country.

There must be equivalents in this House to all the parties that exist in central and eastern Europe, for the House embraces nationalists and various factions of liberals and democrats. Now that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) is in his place, I can cite also a group within the Labour party. When we last debated these matters, profound and moving speeches were made by the Trotskyite faction.

Mr. Flynn: Did the Minister watch a Channel 4 programme on Sunday morning about a fortnight ago, which showed a distressing example of aspiring Hungarian politicians receiving tuition in how to deceive the electorate? It concerned a promise to increase state child benefit without really making any such commitment, by using guile to break that promise later. I hate to introduce a controversial note, but would it not be better to concentrate on teaching the emerging politicians of eastern Europe the best of our political practices, not the worst?

Mr. Waldegrave: Of course the hon. Gentleman is right. I shall not sound any note of controversy either, but there are examples from recent decades of both good and bad politics. The Opposition may point to bad examples of which Conservatives were guilty, but I suspect that I could give examples of bad practice among Opposition Members too. Nevertheless, we are united in stressing the key point that, in free elections, the people must be the final arbiters.

We must not be too squeamish about holding back from any involvement in democratisation, provided that a balance is maintained across the spectrum of political parties. That is why the Government invited representatives of all political parties to be represented on the know-how fund steering committee. Perhaps the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East can add to the political spectrum.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Minister will realise that, as I am opening the next section of the debate in 10 minutes' time, I am not allowed to speak in this section, but I can ask him a question. He referred disparagingly to those who, over the years, have preferred the Leftist opposition led by Leon Trotsky to the repressive element led by Stalin. Does he recogise that it was Stalin's agents who, nearly 50 years ago, murdered Trotsky for leading that opposition?

When, about 10 days ago, I was fortunate enough to spend just short of two days in East Berlin and Leipzig, the young people whom I met were keen to bring about anti-corruption committees, free trade unions, free political parties, freedom of assembly and a free press. They were keen to retain public ownership rather than giving away what the East German economy had built up —albeit with the bureaucratic mismanagement and totalitarianism that had developed over the past 40 years. They were far more interested in listening to the ideas of the Left opposition than in listening to those of capitalists.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted to have spurred the hon. Gentleman into speech. We in the West can offer a tremendous pluralism of ideas, and the hon. Gentleman will be able to offer his, as he is able here to offer them to the electorate. The joy is that people in East Germany and Czechoslovakia will be able to submit the same ideas to their electors.

I have a suspicion—which I believe may be shared by the hon. Member for Walsall, South—that the ideas of Leon Trotsky will not ultimately win the competition; but who am I to say? It will be for the people of Czechoslovakia and East Germany to decide. It may well be that, as the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East suggests, the Stalinists have been wholly overthrown in eastern Europe by Trotskyite groups. The people whom I saw in Wenceslaus square did not look like Trotskyites to me, but perhaps they were good at disguising themselves.

Mr. Anderson *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, who is not a Trotskyite.

Mr. Anderson: Before I enter into the Stalinist-Trotskyite controversy, may I ask the Minister again whether we are talking about new money or money from the existing ODA vote?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is right to ask that question. I am afraid that I was diverted by my extremely pleasurable debate with the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, with whom I always enjoy exchanging views.

I am delighted to give the hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance that the money in the know-how fund—£50 million for Poland, £25 million so far for Hungary—is completely new money, on a different "line", as the technical jargon would have it. I am happy to say that my colleagues have awarded that money to the Foreign Office for it to spend on these important projects.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether there would be more money for other countries, such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany. He was right to say that we have put the emphasis on Poland—which is experiencing an acute crisis and facing a tough winter—and on Hungary: both countries have high per-capita debt figures. I do not rule out further funds, however. Do not let us forget Bulgaria. Astonishing though it may seem, the spectacular events in neighbouring countries may have prevented us from concentrating on Bulgaria enough, although I do not criticise anyone for that. Bulgaria has removed the leading role of the party, and is talking about genuinely free elections. A number of countries will be legitimate claimants for further resources in due course, and I certainly do not rule out such provision.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East also mentioned the response of the European Community, and I have considerable sympathy with his views. Although he teased us about our commitment to Europe, I do not think that, fundamentally, there is much disagreement between us. The hon. Gentleman does not want a fortress Europe; he shares, I think, the scepticism of his party about the unified central bank and the possibility of too much commitment to a central currency. The main point on which the House is agreed is that the Community must not put up barriers against the emerging new democracies in eastern Europe. We must remain flexible enough to make arrangements with them that will help them economically and democratically.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) made a point that it is important to make in all these debates—that the changes are far from permanent. We must spend some part of each of these debates reminding ourselves that defences will continue to be needed. We must keep our insurance policies in place.

I have to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). I hope that I do not embarrass his Front Bench by doing so. He has taken some part in the events, especially those in Hungary and Romania, because he has done some good broadcasts. I am happy to say that, as a result of his asking at Question Time, I think, whether we could do more broadcasting, I was able, armed with the pressure he put on me, to go to see Mr. John Tusa of the World Service. We now have an extra, and useful, quarter of an hour a day of broadcasts in the Romanian language. I think that that is helpful. I have taken up some of the extra quarter of an hour already, and I am sure that the hon. Member will join in shortly.

On a more serious note, it is important at this time, of all times, when the Romanian Government are taking steps to try to prevent any flow of information or movement of people, to have such broadcasts. The only access we have is through the broadcasting organisations using the Romanian language, so the BBC Romanian language service is critical at the moment. I am sure that the House will join me in welcoming that additional broadcasting time. I hope that good use is made of it.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel touched on the huge issue of the reunification of Germany. To judge from what the Leader of the Opposition said during his recent visit to East Berlin, both sides of the House take somewhat the same view. We do not for a moment doubt the right of the German people to reunification. We cannot choose between self-determination and political rights in one country or another, but it is right for those who are a little further back from the intense emotions that are bound to be expressed in Germany to say, "Do be a little careful about the security structure of Europe in the process. We know that you have waited 40 years, but let us, if necessary, ask you, not necessarily to wait, but to take account of the sensitivities of your neighbours in the immediate steps ahead because it would be terrible to upset the apple cart of progress by taking steps that caused a dangerous reaction." It is not that we are in any way challenging the right of those people to decide their own future, but perhaps it is fair to ask them—it is a difficult thing to ask after they have been divided for so long—to look also at the geopolitics of where we are in Europe and not to upset the apple cart of progress by going too fast.

The progress is welcome. The debate is welcome, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel for initiating it. It would be proper to have a debate on the subject almost every day, events are moving so fast. There is something new to announce every day. Mr. Havel now seems set to be the elected president of Czechoslovakia. In the countries where progress is being made, we are not quite certain of it. There may be reactions or difficulties. We are not yet wholly over the watershed. That means that the attention of the House and the western nations to the progress that is being made and the help we can offer through broadcasting and all the other means is still needed to carry those countries into a secure future of democracy and freedom.

Ambulance Dispute

1.59 am

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): As we move into the 15th week of one of the most serious national industrial disputes that has occurred in Britain, people outside this place will be amazed that this is only the second debate on the issue in the House of Commons.

I am particularly pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who managed to secure the first debate some weeks ago, is here at 2 o'clock in the morning. I am not surprised that the Government are afraid of a debate on the ambulance dispute. They did not provide one in Government time because the shameful role played by the Government team has now plummeted to new depths. They are responsible for deaths in Coventry, Birmingham, London and elsewhere.

The Army is on the streets of Coventry. I received a telephone call from the mother of one squaddie saying that the Army have a carrot-and-stick approach. The carrot is £30-a-day standby money and the stick is the threat of the glasshouse. One staff sergeant in Welwyn Garden City who showed an affinity with the ambulance workers and spent seven hours on the picket line outside their station was returned to Gloucester barracks and threatened with disciplinary action.

The Government can pay squaddies £30 a day; they can spend £200,000 on advertising in the press; they can watch directors get 28 per cent. pay increase; they can allow Members of Parliament to get an 11 per cent. pay rise—yet still they insist that ambulance workers must take a pay cut. Frankly, that is scandalous.

In 1986, ambulance workers were due parity with fire fighters. There is now a £60 difference between their wages. I could read out the statistics, but I can do better than that. I shall quote a letter from the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), to the Secretary of State saying that he was

> "not previously aware . . . that the pay difference . . . is now £60 a week, and . . . there are striking differences in conditions of service between the ambulance personnel and their counterparts in the fire service. For example the latter group is eligible for free prescriptions, and dental and optical treatment, their retirement age is 55 as opposed to that of the ambulance service which is 65."

He concluded his letter:

> "Firemen and policemen have all received increases above inflation, and ambulance personnel feel embittered that they should be asked to settle for only 6·5 per cent. I have to tell you that I have to see the logic of their claim, and would ask you to look at this one again because there is a dedicated ambulance service out there, and it is a pity they feel constrained to take industrial action to draw attention to their grievances."

After writing such a reasonable letter, it is a pity that a few days later the Minister felt that he had to apologise, crawl away and say that he did not really understand the ramifications of the dispute. Although he had written a letter some 10 weeks into the dispute he then tried to deny it. He is not here tonight, so I have read out his letter.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) is not here either. The dispute reveals a split in the Tory party because of public pressure and support for the ambulance workers. The only Tory Members present are the Under-Secretary of State for Health and, presumably, his parliamentary private secretary. No other Tory is willing to come to the House and defend the Government's shameful record.

It is little wonder that ambulance workers are fired up and angry. There is no doubt that they have public support. According to opinion polls it is between 83 per cent. and 95 per cent. They have the support of 3,500 controllers and they certainly have the support of the control assistants who are paid even less than they are. They even have the support of the Police Federation. At a press conference, the chairman of that federation backed the action of fellow emergency workers. The opinion polls show that they have the support of the public, and would have that support even if they were taking strike action, which they are not.

In that context, I want to nail one lie tonight. No ambulance worker is on strike. The ambulance workers have been locked out throughout the country. They are not taking strike action and, where they are allowed to do so, they are working without pay to provide a service which, as dedicated professionals, they are committed to give.

The Tory Government have contemptuously rejected arbitration. I am not the greatest fan of arbitration, and there is probably a little between my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston and myself about that. Arbitration, by definition, involves a compromise, and I believe that the ambulance workers' claim is fully justified and that they should not have to give up any part of that claim. In 1977-78, the fire fighters did not win their pay formula—to link their pay to the top 25 per cent., the upper quartile of British earnings—through arbitration. They won it through action.

But any half-decent person, on having the ambulance workers' case put before him, would not fail to provide justice to those workers. That is why the Tory Government will not go to arbitration. They know that the workers' case is unanswerable.

The result is that we get half-truths and lies from the Government and their spokesmen. For example, the Secretary of State for Health said, in effect, "The trade union leaders recommended acceptance, yet these members have rejected that advice." But the Conservatives have been saying for years, "Give the unions back to their members because the members know best." When the members reject a pay offer, suddenly they do not know best.

We hear that 95 per cent. of staff in the National Health Service have settled. Many have settled above the 6·5 per cent. figure, and many have not. They include midwives, speech therapists and other professional groups who feel decidedly upset about having to take a pay cut, as the ambulance workers are being asked to take, and they are still in dispute with the management.

In today's "PM" programme, the Secretary of State for Health said that, if the money was given to the ambulance workers, it would have to come out of patient services. In other words, there would have to be another cut in the NHS. How despicable for the Government to trade off inadequate health services to maintain the wages and conditions of those in emergency services such as the ambulance workers.

I remind the Tory Members who are not here tonight that it did not bother the Secretary of State for Health and his colleagues when, in July 1987, we debated the pay linkage formula for Members of Parliament. When I

forced a Division on that, the Secretary of State for Health and each member of his ministerial team went into the Aye Lobby to give themselves an £80 a week rise in 1988, £30 a week rise in 1989 and a £50 a week rise from next January —an increase of £160 in 24 months. That is more than the take-home starting salary of an ambulance man for a whole week. If that is not hypocrisy, I do not know what it is. The Secretary of State for Health has the security of getting £1,000 a week, yet he demands that other workers take pay cuts.

Whatever arguments are adduced by the Secretary of State and his health team, or by Duncan Nichol, the general manager of the NHS, that there is no compatibility between the jobs of those in the emergency services of ambulance, fire and police, on previous occasions, I have given the House personal examples of such occurrences in Coventry. Consider what is said by those in the front line. Ambulance man Peter Cole reported about Deal:

"All the emergency services—ambulance, fire and police —dug together in the rubble knowing there might be another bomb."

Ambulance man of the year, Malcolm Woollard, reported from Brighton:

"We were at the scene of the explosion where a whole hotel floor collapsed minutes after we dragged the bodies clear."

The Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and the present Secretary of State for Energy should hang their heads in shame for having the temerity to say "Thank you" to the ambulance workers five years ago in Brighton, and then treat them like dirt now over their pay claim. The Prime Minister was happy to chase ambulances and praise workers for their efforts at Clapham and King's Cross, yet now she is prepared to treat them in a despicable manner.

There is now a lock-out in many regions, including the Coventry area. Yet it is interesting that it was not the Army which was asked to provide ambulances for the State Opening of Parliament. It seems that the Army is not capable of looking after Members. There were two paramedic training officers from the Woolwich ambulance station in a Woolwich ambulance station ambulance on standby here on 21 November. Why was that? That arrangement was made because of the incapability of Army medics, with a couple of days' refresher training, with police escorts and assistants, to provide anything like the service that is given by the professionally trained ambulance personnel.

I shall give some examples. I have a form which was completed by a professional ambulance person on 22 November as a result of an incident that took place in NW9. A one-and-a-half-year-old child—I shall not give the child's name because that might be a breach of confidentiality—was badly scalded. Under the section headed "Nature of illness" there is the following entry:

"Patient found lying on bed, with wet burn to chest and neck area (9-14 per cent.) approx."

Under "Ambulance aid rendered" there appears:

"1 × No. 3 bandage with sterile water applied to burn area. Baby carried in arms to ambulance in burns sheet."

We are then told that the mother accompanied the baby in the ambulance. There is the driver's name and the attendant's name. There are the exact times when the ambulance was called, when it left, when it arrived at the hospital, when it left the hospital and when it returned to the station. There are numerous pieces of other information. This enables a hospital accurately to treat a patient.

The adjoining postal district is NW10. I have a form which relates to an incident that took place on 29 November. There is the time of the call, which was 20.21. The time of arrival at the scene was 20.35, so the response to the call took 14 minutes. There are the times when the ambulance left the scene and when it arrived at the hospital. The patient's name is supplied, but there is no address. The injury suffered is described as "Head injury". The entry against "Treatment given" is "None". There is no other information supplied on the police ambulance report.

I have a second police ambulance report of an incident that took place on 10 December. There is the date, the time of call, the time when the ambulance left the scene and the patient's name. The incident again took place in the NW10 area. Under "Injury suffered" there is the entry "High temperature". The treatment given is described as QT102. That is the call sign of the officer who attended the call. What use is that information to an accident and emergency department at the hospital to which the patient is taken?

I have another form which does not state where the patients is from. Against the section marked "Remarks" there is written "Collapsed". How can people in London or elsewhere have any confidence in that sort of information? That is one reason why we need the dedicated emergency staff of the ambulance service.

What is the effect of using inadequately trained personnel with inadequate equipment in their vehicles to provide a substitute service, be they from the Army, the police or voluntary services such as the St. John Ambulance Service or the Red Cross? In normal circumstances, I have the greatest respect for workers who, after a day's work, give their services to the St. John Ambulance Service or the Red Cross. They are not, however, bringing this dispute to a close. They are being used as strike breakers and they are prolonging the dispute.

Did the Minister listen to the "PM" programme at about 5.40 pm on 15 December? Did he listen to Dr. David Williams, the senior consultant across the water at St. Thomas's hospital, who claimed that the number of patients now arriving dead at the hospital, or who died at the accident and emergency department at his one hospital during the time that the Army have been used in London, from 7 November to 13 December, had increased by 70 per cent. over the equivalent period for each of the previous three years? Dr. Williams is no insubstantial commentator. He is the president of the Casualty Surgeons Association. When he says that there is a substantial increase at one hospital, we can believe that throughout London and in other parts of the country there have been unnecessary deaths because of the Government's attempt to crack the resolve of ambulance workers.

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that, because of the latest disgraceful policy of preventing ambulance crews from responding to emergency calls, the lives of thousands of seriously ill citizens are being put at risk every day? Was not my hon. Friend present when ambulance crews belatedly received a call to assist Mr. John Downes, a senior citizen who lived at 170 Almond Tree avenue in my constituency? Does he agree that Ministers and senior ambulance administrators are guilty of a most heinous crime by preventing ambulance crews from responding to emergency calls?

[Mr. John Hughes]

Did not that inhumane policy deny Mr. Downes urgent medical attention for 59 minutes? Unfortunately, even with the skilled attention of the ambulance crew, who responded to the call within three minutes, he died in hospital. I know that the House will join me in offering sympathy to the bereaved family, but does that not pose this question? Would Ministers and senior administrators prevent their wives, children and parents from having urgent——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a long intervention.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend refers to a serious recent tragedy. I join him in offering sympathy to Mr. Downes's family.

I was at the Foleshill ambulance station in Coventry on Sunday visiting ambulance workers who, because of the actions of management—I know that they are "only obeying orders"—are having to provide a service without the normal telephone lines. At 12 o'clock, the doctor telephoned 999. At 12.56—an Army ambulance had not arrived 56 minutes later—he telephoned the special council hot line connected to the ambulance station in Coventry and asked for help for his patient, who had been unconscious for an hour. Within three minutes, an ambulance arrived at the patient's house. He was taken immediately to hospital and given oxygen treatment. The Army ambulance arrived at 1.45 pm—one hour 45 minutes after the call was made, despite the fact that it is only three or four miles from Woodend to the police station in the centre of Coventry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) said, tragically, Mr. Downes died on Monday.

I am not medically qualified to judge whether the one hour that Mr. Downes had to wait unconscious for the Army ambulance was the sole cause of his death, but I can say without fear of contradiction that if he had had a proper ambulance three minutes after the doctor had called, and if the Army and police had not been on the streets of Coventry, he would have had a better chance of life.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I visited the ambulance station in Walsall. Experienced crews were waiting for 999 calls, but they were being diverted to the Army and police. All telephone lines to the station had been cut off. The ultimate insult was that insurance had been withdrawn from ambulance men. Is there not a degree of malevolence in that? If anyone dies as a result of it, does my hon. Friend appreciate, as I do, that the finger of suspicion and guilt will clearly be pointed at the Government?

Mr. Nellist: I fully agree with my hon. Friend. Telephone lines to ambulance stations throughout the west midlands and Coventry have been cut. That applies not only to the control rooms but even to the coin-operated boxes in the locker rooms and social clubs. What will happen if there is a fire? What will happen if ambulance crews want to phone out to the emergency services? It will be impossible.

In the past seven years, I have had one or two harsh things to say about the Labour-controlled council in Coventry. But within hours of the phone lines being cut in Coventry, my Labour-controlled council installed a special hotline to the city engineers building on the other side of the road from the ambulance station. It also made a room available for the stewards and advertised in the local paper and on the radio the special hotline number —Coventry 832208—which has allowed the people of Coventry to call the ambulance service directly.

In Birmingham, such lines have been cut; the depths are being plumbed there. Racal has given the Birmingham ambulance service Motorola phones, a base station and three radio sets. At least the ambulance crews could then cover the centre of Birmingham. Over the weekend, 30 life-saving missions were carried out.

That has now stopped, because on Monday the regional general manager of the regional health authority, Mr. K. F. Bales, who was "only following orders", issued a letter to all ambulance personnel. I have a faxed copy of that letter which will probably be sent out to crews in Coventry today—Thursday 21 December. He wrote:

> "Management therefore had no other alternative other than to determine that 999 and emergency calls should be directed only to the Army, Police or Voluntary services and certain Professional Staff. . . It is, therefore, my responsibility to point out to you that if you carry any patients in an ambulance when not authorised by the Authority or use an ambulance for any other purpose, you may be liable to the following:—
>
> 1. Prosecution for driving a vehicle that is unisured—section 143 Road Traffic Act 1988.
> 2. Prosecution for driving a vehicle without road tax—section 8 Vehicle Excise Act 1971.
> 3. Using a vehicle without the owners consent. Both driver and any passengers"—

that is the patient, remember—

"may be prosecuted under section 12 Theft Act 1968."

Can anyone imagine a more craven or worse example of moral blackmail on the ambulance workers in Birmingham and elsewhere—to try to make ambulance workers choose between saving a life and prosecution?

I have had some research carried out into the claims in that letter. I am not sure whether prosecution under the Road Traffic Act 1988 for driving an uninsured vehicle can be enforced by the Government. From my reading of the regulations and of the consolidated measure, it seems that the argument that anyone driving an ambulance outside the rules governing a particular ambulance authority or contrary to management instruction, rests on the assumption that such use would not be

"in accordance with the terms in which it is so made available."

I happen to think that ambulances are there to save lives. It would be interesting to test in a court of law whether an ambulance is the personal plaything of a regional health authority manager, a Minister or a Secretary of State for Health, or whether it is public property intended to save lives.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend has been outlining the impediments placed before voluntary ambulance crews fulfilling an act of skilled mercy. Is it not appropriate that, when the Minister replies, he should tell us the extent to which the impediments—whether they be telephones or insurance or any other threat—have been created on the instructions of Mr. Duncan Nichol or the Minister or with their connivance? If so, the direct link between risk to life and Government instruction will have been made. If no such instructions have been given, is it not time that the Government said that such instructions should not be issued?

Mr. Nellist: I believe that my hon. Friend's alternative of direct connivance is right.

Four or five weeks ago, there was a similar example of moral blackmail in London. The acting chief ambulance officer, Mr. Tom Crosby, issued a letter to all 71 ambulance stations in London. I raised that matter at 3.30 pm on 14 November, in the presence of the Secretary of State for Health, in an application for an emergency debate. One hour later, the Secretary of State went to a press conference, withdrew that instruction and, according to *The Independent* of 15 November

"had not 'contemplated launching into the area of prosecution.'"

The Government have had four or five weeks to consider the withdrawal of the initial introduction of that letter into London. The fact that it went out on Monday —nearly 60 hours ago—in Birmingham, leads me to the conclusion that it has been checked all the way up the tree to the Secretary of State, and that political permission has been given to the regional health authority to remove the professional crews from the streets of Birmingham, and possibly Coventry tomorrow, by the threat of criminal prosecution if they drive ambulances. It can be described only as moral blackmail. Such an escalation of the dispute can be done only on the political authority of the Secretary of State. The Government are using the sickness of old folk and bairns as a political weapon to try to beat a group of workers into submission.

I do not exaggerate very often—hon. Members may not think that that is the case—but I can now see little difference in moral terms between the Government's tactics in the ambulance dispute and the Stalinist leadership in Romania. There may be a difference in scale or degree between thousands of deaths by bayonet and, so far, only dozens of deaths by denial of facilities, but the same tactic is being used to try to beat a group of working people into submission by the use of physical force. The Minister will not break the resolve of ambulance crews by those tactics. He will not cut the umbilical cord by which they are linked to overwhelming public support, which was evidenced last week when my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston attempted to present a petition signed by 4·5 million people.

We know that tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of pounds are daily being collected from working people in the streets of this country. If the dispute is not settled within days—I do not know why I should be warning the Government and giving them advice; perhaps I should direct my remarks to those who will read my speech rather than to Ministers who never listen to Opposition Members—there will be even greater pressure, such as that evidenced on 6 December when 5,000 workers took industrial action in London, or in Bedford or Manchester today, when other workers will support the ambulance workers.

I have watched worker after worker put a day's pay into the ambulance workers' collection boxes. It will only take someone with a little more clout than I—perhaps someone on or even leading the general council of the TUC—to ask all workers in this country to give up a day's pay on the same day and have a national day of action, such as a 24-hour stoppage, to defend ambulance workers and the NHS. If 500,000 people can demonstrate in Wenceslaus square, we can certainly put 500,000 in Trafalgar square in support of the ambulance workers and the NHS.

No Socialist or trade unionist is asking ambulance workers to go on strike, but the pressure is building up inside their ranks for an escalation of action. Our folk would be denied an essential service if the ambulance workers went out on a lengthy strike. It is not their job alone to defend their wages and conditions and the service that they provide. Our job, as working people who rely on the service, is to go to their aid. We must stand shoulder to shoulder with them, and I remain convinced that working people will do so.

That support for the ambulance workers is widespread is evidenced by a letter that was faxed to the Secretary of State today by the Coventry city council, stating:

"The City Council is amazed at the deliberate acts of provocation which ambulance management here are taking, presumably with your knowledge and consent, that can only serve to escalate friction and deepen the dispute.

Army ambulances, supported by Police, are already on the streets of Coventry. They are no substitute for the trained professional ambulance service which the public has the right to expect.

We would be failing in our duty to our citizens if we did not demand that the Government immediately ceases what appears to be a clear policy of escalating confrontation, and instead concentrates every effort on resolving the dispute."

In those sentiments, my Labour council represents the overwhelming majority view of the 300,000 citizens of Coventry and, I am sure, of working people throughout the country.

I say through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the Minister, if he will listen, and to anyone else who may read or hear of this debate that the ambulance workers of Britain—all 22,500 of them—will not be bullied into submission. Every time they are kicked in the teeth, they are brought closer together. They have learnt the true meaning of solidarity, of relying on each other and of the generosity of ordinary folk with the 50ps and £5s from pensioners and the bigger donations from better-paid workers.

I heard one ambulance worker from Liverpool say about a month ago that he wanted only two things out of the dispute—an 11 per cent. pay offer and a tobacco pouch made from Duncan Nichol's scrotum. I cannot deliver the second item, but I advise the Minister that those workers will win their just desserts. They will not be deserted by the working men and women of this country.

The Government will rue the day when they took on a section of the emergency services in an attempt to crack their union and in an attempt to bring in the privatisation and sale of the service of taking people to hospital, or to bring in the opt-out and the two-tier structure. They will rue the day they began this course, because ambulance workers will stick together and working people will back them. They will get their pay award.

2.31 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has mentioned Mr. Duncan Nichol. One of the less pleasing aspects of this sad affair is the extent to which people who are, in effect, civil servants are being put up by Ministers to protect them. I have asked a few questions about this practice. The Minister may wish to correct me if I am wrong, but it seems to me that this trend has been instituted in the National Health Service. I question whether it is right and proper for the political decision of Ministers to be produced on television or at a press conference by a senior civil servant who is not responsible

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

for the policy. We should look into this trend as a Parliament. Perhaps the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service might wish to turn its attention to this matter.

This is the fifth debate on ambulance services since 1986. Up to 1987, we had four on the London ambulance service alone, which has been in crisis for the past four years. Indeed, in the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund on 8 December 1987, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and I outlined the serious condition of the London ambulance service and warned the Minister what would happen. In earlier debates that Minister, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), boasted of a 40 per cent. cut in non-emergency calls, apparently completely unaware of the human suffering and distress that that caused three summers ago.

The London ambulance service, which is the biggest municipal service in the world, has been starved of money. It is clear that it has not been demand-led. Whether an ambulance service is taking people to hospitals or clinics or providing an emergency service, it must be demand-led. The excuse that the then junior Minister made was that the cuts in the non-emergency service, which were reprehensible and wrong, were being made to keep the front-line services up to scratch. However, since then the front-line services have not been kept up to scratch. There has been a so-called efficiency saving every year. The funding arrangements between the Department of Health, formerly the DHSS, and the extremely awkward South West Thames regional health authority and its London ambulance board, which has wrongly remained anonymous throughout this terrible time, is murky in the extreme. It is clear that that service, its executives and senior officers have to cut their coat according to inadequate cloth.

The Government do not seem to understand that the ambulance service must be demand-led. They have provided it with less money and fewer resources than it needs. The result has been a running down of the service, especially in respect of human skills.

The Government do not appear to understand that capital is more than cash. Let us take the example of this House. It shows the importance of experience, of building up skills over a number of years, of dealing with problems and of passing on that experience to new Members. That is what happens in the ambulance service. Skills and experience are acquired as people face more difficult porblems. Those skilled people should be retained, but that does not happen.

I quoted the relevant figures during our debate under Standing Order No. 20, and I shall quote them again. The total number in the London ambulance service is 2,379. In the two years 1987 to 1989, no fewer than 572 people left the service. Some 166 people retired, but of that number 148 had to leave on medical grounds. Only 18 people in two years retired at the normal retiring age. The pressures on the crews—psychological, physical and financial—were and are too great. Coupled with that is maladministration of the service on a grand and terrible scale.

The Government were warned four times, and they are now reaping the whirlwind. The Minister, who has been listening intently, will, I am sure, do his best to reply to the debate. However, in view of the importance of the matter, it would have been more appropriate if the Secretary of State had appeared. This is no ordinary debate; it is no ordinary industrial dispute. If we believe in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, we must also believe in the accountability of those who take the decisions. I do not think that the Minister is in that category. Indeed, perhaps the Secretary of State is not in that category. We can guess where some of the decisions are made.

These events are following a now familiar pattern. We have only to think about the public services that have been handled so badly during the past five years or more. First, they have been under-funded, then under-equipped and then morale has been undermined through the introduction of new systems of grading and pay. Such actions provoke some form of industrial dispute, patience gives out, the service declines, and someone says, "We must privatise the service to make it efficient."

One of the most terrible aspects of the dispute is the leaked information that the Government intend to privatise the major part of the ambulance service—the so-called non-emergency service. That process has been applied to our railways, our teachers—who do not even have a negotiating machinery—our nurses, our midwives, and our doctors; and, dare I mention it, the Government have even tangled with the lawyers. The process is worthy of old Nick himself; it is satanic because it removes trust, confidence, skill and all those abstract qualities that make up the quality of life. In referring to old Nick, I do not specifically mean the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, although he is more than capable of thinking out a sequence that has, alas, been so effective.

The problem is that the Government and all who sail in it have no concept of public service. It is a concept which was to be found within the Conservative party with which I grew up. I disagreed with it about the extent to which service and matters of commerce, production and exchange should be publicly owned, but we could have a reasonable argument about it. The Victorians built many of our town halls. The Victorian heritage in many of our cities is enormous. Many of the Victorians were Conservatives. The old style Conservatives at least said, "If it is to be public, let us make it good." I have no doubt that Grantham public library was very good. At least certain people wanted it to be better than it was.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is a pity that they did not read more in it.

Mr. Spearing: Indeed, there is a great lack of understanding in that respect and a great deal of ignorance, particularly about the non-emergency ambulance service, which it is the Government's intention to privatise. If they have changed their mind, I should be glad if the Minister will tell us when he replies.

A circular has gone out from the South West Thames regional health authority under the terms of the White Paper. One would not have thought from the White Paper that the Government were going to privatise the non-emergency ambulance service. However, its broad terminology covers that.

I talked about ignorance, which is massive in Whitehall and in the Government. My ambulance crews in Plaistow have hit it on the nail. They have said, "The non-emergency service requires a great deal of skill and effort. A high proportion of those we take to hospital or

clinics are elderly, frail, ill—by definition—and probably frightened. They are worried, in particular, about how they will get home." In addition, the skills required to get them out of bed and their home into the so-called non-emergency ambulance—perhaps fitted with a tail lift if there are enough available—are not always easy. Imagine getting a 15-stone man out of a bedroom and down narrow stairs. In too many tower blocks in Newham, the lifts sometimes do not work.

What about the lady with the frame who shuffles down the garden path and is then guided on to the platform which raises her into the ambulance? What about people who need stretchers? The so-called front-line ambulances are used at times to take people for treatment who need to be moved lying flat on a stretcher. The Government do not understand the skill and risk lifting people. It is done by many who work in hospitals, and it is a difficult and skilled operation, particularly if the people they lift suffer from distressful conditions or have dressings which must be treated with care.

By cutting the non-emergency service three or four years ago by 40 per cent., the Government and the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South caused enormous distress. Many people have been taken to hospital and have not been able to get home. Sometimes they have called minicabs and have not arrived home until 1 o'clock in the morning.

The number of ambulances has not been increased. We all know about hospital closures and the need to travel further. We all know about transfers from one hospital to another. We all know about traffic conditions, particularly in London. All those factors put a greater demand on ambulance mileage and crew time. Crews and vehicles have not been increased pro rata.

What does the Secretary for Health say? He reminds me of Marie Antoinette. He says, "Let them use taxis." He has no knowledge of the service. If he had, he would not say what he says.

The Government say that we should have choice. As a citizen, I want the choice to pay taxes to stop people having to take taxis. The Government will not allow me to exercise that choice. They apply choice, as a philosophy, in a highly selective manner. While I am talking about manners, I make no apology for making some comments about the Secretary of State. I expected him to be here tonight.

Mr. Corbyn: He should be.

Mr. Spearing: I have no compuction about saying things in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's absence.

On 7 November, the right hon. and learned Gentleman accused ambulance crews in London of "pretending" to be available for service. On 24 October, I asked him to check his allegations about the use of radio. Time and again he implied or stated that the crews would not use the radio, but, later, he had to admit that they were using them in a particular manner. The arguments are difficult to follow, but it is accepted that it is important that radio contact should be maintained. It was. The Secretary of State used phrases to suggest that that was not so. It is, of course, the last refuge of political scoundrels to use what my hon. Friend the former Member for Bow and Poplar, Mr. Ian Mikardo, aptly described as

"verbal veritas sed suggestio falsi".

In other words, they use true words from which false impressions and false conclusions can be drawn by the listener.

The Secretary of State has behaved in a boorish, rude and overbearing manner. He has questioned people's motives, and his manner has often been officiously offensive. Such behaviour is unbecoming and unacceptable from a Secretary of State and a member of the Cabinet.

The Secretary of State is a Queen's counsel, a professional. A professional is someone who is paid an adequate return for his services and then gives what is required. We try to do that here. It is the wish of ambulance crews throughout the country to do just that. One cannot undertake a time-and-motion study or a productivity study on ambulance crews and the Secretary of State, as a professional in the law, should know that. In my view, his behaviour is reminiscent of those who have been at the other sort of bar rather than at the legal one. I say that with some reluctance in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's absence, but anyone who has observed his behaviour here and elsewhere would say that it is broadly correct. I would go as far as saying that, now, he is one of the most disliked men in the country.

At root, the problem is a philosophical or a theological one. The ambulance crews and their equipment are corporate Samaritans. In that way they act on our behalf. I should have thought that even the Prime Minister would agree with that. I recall her comments on that parable. "Ah," she said, "the good Samaritan had to have the money to pay the innkeeper first." She forgot that, when the Samaritan went to the innkeeper, he gave him some money, but said, "If the needs of this man are greater, I shall come back later and pay you what I owe." In other words, his actions were demand-led; that is one of the important lessons from that parable. The Prime Minister claims that she understands such things.

In 1988 the right hon. Lady went to Scotland for the annual assembly of the Church of Scotland. She read them what has become known as "The epistle to the Caledonians." She claimed that our civilisation and many of our cherished traditions had a Judaeo-Christian basis. I do not detect any such basis in the way that the Government are handling this matter. Are not those principles of Judaeo-Christianity which the Prime Minister professes to hold made literally incarnate by the ambulance service? I shall not go further, or I shall be tempted to preach a sermon, and I finished doing that many years ago. The money is available—there is a £12,000 million surplus. The Government have at least £130,000 million which they have conned from people by selling them their own property. Therefore, there is no lack of resources for this matter.

Such questionable political morality would have been almost unbelievable 10 years ago. The Government must test their conduct in this matter against some of their professed principles. There is need for conciliation. The Government will not go to ACAS, because in doing so they will be seen to be climbing down. I have said some harsh things about the Secretary of State tonight. I have known him for a long time, and underneath that somewhat bullish exterior there are many redeeming features. It is not beyond his ingenuity to think of some method whereby something could happen so that both he and the Prime Minister could get off the hook and do something to bring this terrible, sad dispute to an end.

[Mr. Spearing]

When the history books are written, this dispute will be featured as part of the demise of what, in this decade, we have called Thatcherism.

2.52 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I start by declaring two interests in this dispute. First, I am proud to be a member of the National Union of Public Employees and to be sponsored by in this House. Most of the ambulance workers who are in dispute and have been so abominably treated by the Government are members of my organisation. Secondly, I live, and am happy to live, in London and am concerned about the future of emergency services there and the very safety of residents.

The dispute has shown who are concerned about ordinary people's safety and who are not. Ambulance workers who undertake a workers-controlled and workers-run 999 service have shown that they have at heart a concern for the ordinary people throughout the country. Those who are not concerned are those who have brought in the Army and the police, and heaped abuse on ambulance workers in an attempt to break their resolve and end the dispute so that they settle for the poverty pay to which they have long been accustomed.

It is disgraceful that the Secrertary of State is not here. He makes the decisions and the running, and appears on television all the time. He abuses the ambulance workers, but now he cannot be bothered to be here tonight to answer to the House. My hon. Friends' speeches have also shown the type of work that ambulance staff do and the pressures they fare.

Can people understand the pressures of trying to drive through London traffic, deal with an emergency such as picking up elderly people or people from car, train or air crashes and then go straight back out on the road? I was talking to a group of ambulance workers in an ambulance station about this. I compared their experiences to those of rail workers. If a train driver faces a fatal accident in which a passenger or, more likely, someone else steps onto the track and commits suicide in front of him, he is righty counselled afterwards. They are given considerable leave to try to get over the shock and trauma, and given whatever support is available.

I talked to a group of ambulance drivers who had spent two hours trying to help people get out from under a train crash. They had to spend the last half hour of a man's life talking to him because it was impossible to get him out. When they had finished that task, and the crash had been cleared up, they went straight out on other emergency calls. Ambulance workers suffer such trauma and tension all the time, yet they are told by the Secretary of State that they are no better than unskilled taxi drivers. These are the people who deal with care and concern with every patient —the drunk picked up off the pavement on a Saturday night and the child in a road accident are treated with equal compassion.

Continual abuse is heaped on the ambulance workers. It used not to be heaped on them when they were not complaining about their low wages—everything was fine then. As soon as they said that they were not prepared to accept such low wages, all that changed. Something must be done about low wages, however; they are one of the major causes of the problem.

Young ambulance workers in London, which I know best, have to travel enormous distances to get to work. Unless they are very high priority, virtually homeless people, they have no chance of council accommodation anywhere in inner or central London. No ambulance worker could buy a flat there on the wages he is paid. The minimum price of a small flat in the area is £60,000, so they live further and further away, or in bad and overcrowded conditions.

If we want to maintain decent public services in London, the housing problem must be resolved, and public servants such as ambulance workers, who do such a valuable job, must be given reasonable rates of pay.

On Thursday 14 December, I asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to list the pay of leading firemen and police constables for each year since 1974. I asked for the answers in 1989 prices, but he said that that was impossible—the calculation was obviously beyond the Home Office. In 1974, leading firemen and women were paid £2,913 a year; by 1980 that had risen to £6,715, and by 1989, to £14,055. Police constables in the corresponding periods were paid in the range of £1,632 to £2,636, £4,956 to £7,848 and £9,900 to £16,521. The equivalent salaries for ambulance workers were: basic pay of £1,981, £3,994 —and what the Secretary of State for Health describes as a final offer of £11,001.

This shows where the money has gone—not to the ambulance workers, who have clearly lost out. The police, fire and ambulance services all attend major accidents, but is a policeman worth twice as much as an ambulance worker? Is a fireman worth more? Ambulance workers are valuable members of a team and should be paid properly for the job.

The background to the dispute is one of continual underpayment and the continual imposition of new management methods. There has been continual cutting back on the service, a continual use of hospital cars and a continual threat of privatisation. People who take pride in their jobs could use their skills to fulfil that pride, but they are prevented from doing so by sharp-suited management brought in to introduce the methods of the supermarket to the service. That is not the proper way to run an emergency service. The right way is to use people's skills and dedication properly.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr Spearing) pointed out in a debate at this time of morning two years ago, London's heavy traffic was, as now, slowing response times, and there was also a major lack of vehicles. They remain significant factors.

When the ambulance workers refused the latest pay offer, there was widespead consternation, with the management aghast that the workers should dare to decline it. The ambulance men took a democratic decision, and ever since they have conducted their dispute with enormous dignity.

Every morning, at ambulance stations all over London, and in many other parts of the country, ambulance men arrive to work a shift. They receive a phone call asking whether they are willing to work according to the management's demands—and when they refuse, they are stood down.

The management know perfectly well that the ambulance men will not leave their stations but will remain to respond to emergencies—as they have already done hundreds of times. Had they not done so, many people

would have received no attention because the Army and police are incapable of doing the job. They do not want to do it, and they are not qualified to do it.

The Secretary of State for Health is happy to rely on the good will of the ambulance station staff to undertake 999 duties, even when they have been stood down.

One morning when I was talking to workers at a Fulham ambulance station, a police car drew up outside and a nervous young constable got out and asked, "Are there any ambulance workers here?"—which was a pretty stupid question, as it was fairly obvious that there were, in uniform. The constable said, "We have a problem because we have been told to pick up someone with a back injury and do not know how to lift him." That policeman did the right thing in coming to the people qualified to deal with that situation. The ambulance workers' immediate response was to go to the scene of the accident and do what was necessary.

Last night, I was with a group of Camden ambulance workers, who described how they came across the crew of an Army ambulance picking up someone off the street who was in a bad state and vomiting. The crew laid the man out flat on a stretcher, where he could have choked. Fortunately, qualified ambulance workers happened to be at the scene and put the patient into the proper recovery position—then explained to the soldiers how to look after anyone they found in similar circumstances.

On a wet and miserable night, I was walking home along Stroud Green road in my own constituency when I saw an Army ambulance and two soldiers trying to carry someone out of a house on a stretcher, while the driver was scrutinising an "A to Z" by the dim light of a torch, trying to locate the nearest hospital. Is that a proper service? Is that safe? Is that the way that the public should be treated in this day and age? No.

The public know that the ambulance workers are on the public's side, which is why they are donating so much money to them. A month ago, the Secretary of State for Health told me that I was one of the few people in the country who supported the ambulance workers' pay claim —but last Friday, a petition of 4.5 million signatures was presented to the House, and goodness knows how many people have shown their support for the ambulance men by putting money into their buckets.

I have with me a list of the telephone numbers for all the ambulance stations around London, which are now providing a 999 service. They are well publicised, so the public can phone for a real ambulance when they need one, rather than suffer a lengthy wait for a police or Army ambulance.

There is popular support for the ambulance workers because the public realise that the Government are hellbent on destroying them with abuse. They recognise which side the abmulance workers are on: they recognise that those workers have shown their dedication to the community, the service and the people who rely on that service. That is why the ambulance men have received such enormous support throughout the country, and throughout industry and the service sector.

Every march that I have joined starts off with a few hundred participants, but grows and grows until a mass of people are showing their determination to support the ambulance workers. The Government will rue the day that they took them on, for I believe that the time will come very soon when they will be forced to settle the claim in full.

3.5 am

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on securing the debate, and on the vigorous and forceful way in which he introduced this important topic.

All my hon. Friends who have spoken so far have referred to the absence of the Secretary of State, and I shall not echo their observations; I shall content myself with saying that I am pleased that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is to reply, as I have always found him more thoughtful and candid than his right hon. and learned Friend. This is the first opportunity that he has had to comment on the ambulance dispute, and I look forward to hearing, when he rises in 10 minutes' time, his answer to a question that is, I think, at the back of the minds not only of hon Members who are present tonight, but of the whole nation: what is the Government's present strategy to secure a settlement?

The more often we listen to Ministers discussing how they think the dispute will be resolved, the clearer it becomes that they believe that the only solution is for the union side to surrender. The Secretary of State made it plain that there was no room for any meaningful negotiations on a new offer, because there would never be any more money on the table: he is willing to meet the unions—or, rather, for his management to meet them—only to accept their sword in surrender.

The problem with seeing that as the end of the dispute is that, to put it bluntly, the staff side and its members are in no mood to surrender. Any doubt about that was removed this afternoon, when the Association of Professional Ambulance Personal revealed the result of its ballot following negotiations with the Secretary of State's nominees—phantom negotiations with a phantom union, but negotiations that none the less produced a real and resounding no. The offer was rejected by 68 per cent. to 32 per cent.—a pretty convincing two-to-one majority.

Mr. Corbyn: Close!

Mr. Cook: Of course, it probably was much closer than it would have been had the ballot been held before the many hundreds of resignations took place. What we were left with was a two-to-one rejection by the rump that did not resign when the negotiations started.

If the Secretary of State really believes that the dispute will be resolved only by the surrender of the union side, he will have to wait a long time; in the meantime, the people who will suffer are the members of the public who have cause to call on the ambulance service. I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate immediately before the seven days round Christmas and the subsequent seven round the new year, which are the busiest days of the year for the ambulance men. It is customary for the London service to receive 300 calls per hour over Christmas and the new year; at present, 50 police vehicles and 50 Army vehicles are available to them. How can they hope to deal with 300 calls per hour with such resources?

Not only must the ambulance men rely on such rudimentary resources, but, regrettably, the management appear to have done everything possible to frustrate the efforts of the staff side to maintain an emergency service even while suspended.

My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East and one or two of his colleagues from the midlands have drawn attention to—we should be quite blunt about it—

[Mr. Cook]

acts of sabotage to destroy the telephone links to ambulance stations. There is no other adequate description. It was vandalism intended to sabotage attempts to provide emergency cover. There have been similar attempts to prevent the London ambulance service from receiving emergency calls that people want to put through to it.

Last Friday, my attention was drawn to what happened outside a private hospital, as it happened, in central London. The staff at that clinic were aware, as all the public in London were aware, that ambulance staff had taken the trouble to advertise the direct lines of their stations and were welcoming calls made on those numbers. Outside the private clinic, a window cleaner fell three floors to the ground below. He fractured his spine, a leg, his forearm, his pelvis and his ribs. The staff of the private clinic attempted to make a 999 call and were told to wait in the queue. They summoned two policemen from nearby and asked them for the number of the nearest ambulance station so that they could dial direct. The police officers advised the staff that they were under instructions on the highest authority not to release those numbers.

Is this the policy of the Government and the management side? If so, they are deliberately setting out to frustrate the service that could be available to the public when they have access to a police officer, who may frequently be on the scene of an accident and who would be able to summon skilled professional help. I do not think that it fair to force police officers to say, "No, we are not allowed to divulge this information." It took two hours and 10 minutes for an Army ambulance to attend to that patient, who was in great pain and had serious orthopaedic injuries. When it arrived, the people driving it were incapable of performing the skilled and proper lifting of the patient. That is serious because the improper lifting of a patient with a broken spine could result in paralysis for life.

The nation wants to hear the Government's strategy for resolving the dispute, and must increasingly view their intransigence with incomprehension. I shall give just two reasons for that. The first concerns the cost of maintaining the best professional ambulance service that we can hope to have. Three weeks ago, the Association of London Authorities produced figures which show that in the first three weeks of the dispute, the additional cost of police cover was £1·25 million. Another three weeks have passed, so we can double that figure. The police vehicles alone have cost £2·5 million. There are also the Army vehicles, so we can double the £2.5 million. The additional cost of emergency cover in London for the past six weeks is therefore £5 million—all to avoid a settlement that would cost only £10 million. The Government have spent almost as much on providing emergency cover as they would need to settle the dispute.

The second reason why the public must regard the Government's stance with incomprehension is the political cost to the Government. The Minister, who is a sensitive and thoughtful man, must be aware of that. The truth is that the ambulance staff have received overwhelming support. My hon. Friend referred to the petition presented to the House on Friday. It is the largest petition ever presented to the House. I understand that 5 million signatures have been collected—including those presented last week and those collected since then. Every week, support for the ambulance staff grows, while support for the Government's case becomes weaker.

Ministers may be concerned about the political damage that they will suffer if they are seen to be defeated, but that will be as nothing compared with the political damage that will be caused to the Government if they are seen to defeat and humiliate the ambulance staff.

This is not the place to negotiate the dispute. I would not expect the Minister to attempt to negotiate the dispute and announce a settlement tonight, but I urge him and the Secretary of State to get round the table and negotiate directly with the ambulance staff, not through intermediaries who have no room for manoeuvre. If the Secretary of State continues to refuse to do that, the nation is likely to conclude that the Government are not interested in resolving the dispute but wish to play it through to the bitter end. I believe that that is a dereliction of their duty for which the nation will not forgive them.

3.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr Spearing) gave me quite an introduction when he said that he regretted the absence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State as he thought that the Minister who was to reply to the debate was too junior to take any decisions. I shall try to answer some of the points that have been made and I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will recognise that even the most junior Minister at the Department of Health shares responsibility with his Secretary of State for resolving such problems.

I share the view of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that in any industrial dispute it is important to avoid humiliation. Cool heads and patience are needed on both sides to resolve what is essentially an industrial dispute. It is unfortunate that in this case, unlike many other industrial disputes, the people who are suffering are the patients. They are people like the hon. Gentleman and myself. That is why it is particularly important for cool heads to prevail in encouraging further constructive discussion between the two sides.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) said that no ambulance man or woman was on strike. He said that they had been locked out. On reflection, he will have to agree that the trade unions involved in the dispute promised to maintain emergency services throughout the country. That was a clear commitment.

Mr. Corbyn: That is what they are doing.

Mr. Freeman: If the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who intervened from a sedentary position, reflects further, he will recall that that was not and is not the case in London. Some men and women in the London ambulance service have not agreed to operate normal radio procedures.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Freeman: No. I wish to finish the point I was making. I have some 11 minutes to answer the points made in the debate.

Mr. Corbyn: Name one station.

Mr. Freeman: Let me explain what I mean. When an ambulance service is provided for a region or a metropolis, it needs to be properly co-ordinated and run. An ambulance service cannot be run by individual crews from individual stations. It has to be properly co-ordinated, and it needs a control room with management who can use flexibly the crews at disposal.

Where that is not the case—where normal radio contact is not being operated and ambulance men and women are not prepared to work with qualified ambulance men and women from other stations—the service breaks down. Outside London, some crews in some places have taken patients requiring emergency treatment not to the right hospital but to the nearest accident and emergency department—not to where they were directed but where they wished to take the patient.

In that situation, the normal emergency service breaks down. It cannot be controlled properly from a central location and one has anarchy, in the organisational sense that individual ambulance crews may be willing to operate a service as they define it, but it is not properly run and co-ordinated.

That is what an emergency service is, and in certain parts of the country it is not being offered. That is why the police, Army and voluntary organisations are providing that emergency service. I regret it, but that is the position.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East also asked about the pay formula; by inference he wished the ambulance men and women, the unions, to have a pay formula linked to the fire fighters, and presumably to the fifth-year fire fighters. That was rejected by Clegg, as the hon. Gentleman will recall, and I have not heard the hon. Member for Livingston commit a future Labour Government to a pay formula that would link ambulance men and women to fire fighters.

Mr. Cook: I am happy to take this opportunity to make it clear that we have said, and are on record as saying, that we would accept the case for a mechanism which would provide for guaranteed annual increases for the ambulance service along the same lines as was resolved in the fire fighters' dispute. Whether that would provide a precise link with fifth-year firemen or with something else is a matter on which we have an open mind and about which we would wish to negotiate when we are in the Minister's position. But there is no doubt about our commitment to a mechanism, and I am sure that were the present Government to make the same commitment, the dispute could be resolved in time for Christmas.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman will admit that that is not quite pay comparability using the fire fighters or the police as comparators. The hon. Gentleman spoke about some form of mechanism, but he did not commit a future Labour Government to the request of the unions involved for strict pay comparability through some kind of formula with the fire fighters.

The hon. Member for Newham, South said that the ambulance service was demand-led. The hon. Member for Livingstone, I am sure, accepts that the hospital and community health services are—and have been since the Labour Government of 1976—cash-limited, and that the pay and other operating costs of the ambulance service would be cash-limited in the sense that they would be funded from that part of the Vote which was cash-limited.

Hence, the argument of the hon. Member for Newham, South is not consistent with the position that the hon. Member for Livingston has taken and would be likely to take if he were responsible for the Health Service. It cannot be financed as a demand-led service such as unemployment benefit or the prescription of drugs by the family practitioner service. It is cash-limited because it is part of the hospital and community health services and a judgment must be made about the relative priorities within the Vote.

The hon. Member for Newham, South asked about privatisation. The Government have made no comment about policy towards privatising all or part of the ambulance service. But I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Northumberland service. I think that he will agree that, where the non-emergency portion of the service there is provided by a private company under contract, it appears to work satisfactorily. I am not aware of any criticisms being advanced tonight about that service. There is a similar service in another district in England.

Mr. Spearing: Leaving aside the non-emergency service, surely the emergency service must be demand-led. The Orcon standards have been set by the Department and sufficient vehicles and personnel must be provided so that those standards are implemented. The same applies to the fire-fighting service.

The Minister has talked about privatisation. Is he telling us that what might work in largely rural Northumberland might be applicable to London? I take it that the hon. Gentleman is not denying that there are moves towards privatisation. South West Thames regional health authority has already sent out circulars, and he knows that it has done so on the basis of the White Paper.

Mr. Freeman: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Health Service is not managed by the Department of Health. It is managed by—

Mr. Spearing: Mr. Nichol.

Mr. Freeman: No. It is managed by individual constituent units of the National Health Service. The hon. Gentleman knows that as well as I do.

The hon. Member for Livingston asked about the Government's strategy. In the few minutes that remain for this debate, I shall deal briefly with the pay offer that is on the table and our strategy. The hon. Gentleman is familiar with the offer made by Mr. Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the NHS management executive. The offer has been rejected so far. The offer that emergency crews will be on full pay if they work to trade union guidelines over Christmas has been rejected.

It is said that there has been no new offer, so what is the strategy? The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government have moved significantly on pay since the 6·5 per cent. offer, which was accepted buy NUPE during the summer. It was agreed to by NUPE negotiators for 150,000 NHS staff and subsequently rejected by their members. Since the negotiations in the summer, there has been a significant movement by the Government and none in recent months by Mr. Poole, who is still asking, as I understand it, for 11 per cent. and a pay formula.

The improved pay offer, which is on the table, would increase rates of pay from 1 April 1989 by between 9 per cent. and 16·3 per cent. with an extra £500 for paramedics.

[Mr. Freeman]

It includes an agreement to negotiate by 28 February a national framework for paying the intermediate paramedics. These are the main elements of the improved offer. Other elements include the consolidation of standby allowances into one rate, a joint review of the 1986 salary structure in the light of three years' experience of its operation and new London pay rates, which would give increases of between 10·9 per cent. and 16·3 per cent, resulting in increases in overtime rates of over 22 per cent.

The hon. Member for Livingston concluded by referring to public attitudes. I have to agree with him—I have seen this in my constituency and I am sure that other hon. Members have seen it in theirs—that the British public value the ambulance service. They regard it, rightly, as I do, as possibly a lifeline when someone is struck down and there is an emergency, or when someone has to move as an out-patient from one part of the hospital service to another.

I understand the public's attitude, but the Government have a responsibility. It is important that no NHS pay group is negotiated with on such different terms from others that they disadvantage other parts of the service. We employ 1 million people in the Health Service and it is important to remember that the majority of the staff have already settled for this year. The exceptions are the ambulance men and women.

I agree with the hon. Member for Livingston—I am trying to be constructive—that humiliation is an important consideration. The way to settle the dispute is not to put the ambulance men in a humiliating position but to get them back round the table, to negotiate properly and to do what we all want—care for patients properly.

Welsh Economy

3.29 am

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): May I say what a pleasure it is to have you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Chair, albeit at 3.29 am?

I am reminded of a fairly recent political event in the United States that appeared on C Span, the channel that covers Congress. After the session had finished, a member carried on speaking to the empty house. He berated his opponents and asked why there was no reply from them. Tip O'Neill, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, was so enraged that he demanded that the cameras should pan the empty chamber to show that the member was speaking to himself. Four hon. Members are present to debate the economy of Wales.

I welcomed the chance to debate the past 10 years because the Government have an excellent story to tell. Let us remember the situation in 1979. The coal, iron and steel and tinplate industries in Wales were heavily dependent on Government subsidy and were all chronically inefficent. The steel strike in 1980 led to a marked and dramatic reduction in employees in the industry. Within a short time, Llanwern, with half the labour force, stopped making a loss and doubled its production.

As a result of the Scargill strike of 1984-85, there was a dramatic reduction in the number of pits in Wales. However, they were not quite as dramatic as the reductions made under the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). The coal and steel industries in Wales have emerged from the recession fitter, leaner and profitable, and now produce at a price that the consumer is prepared to pay.

We have seen an end to one of the problems that has beset Wales over the past 100 years—dependence on two or three basic industries, which meant that in the past it was very prone to structural unemployment.

Those days have passed, and now the Welsh economy is broadly based. It has diversified into many industries and is confident and strong. It will be able to face up to whatever is thrown at it in the future. Although we have experienced much hardship in Wales over the past 10 years, we have passed the worst by a long way and we are seeing considerable improvements throughout its economy.

We shall hear from the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), whom I am pleased to describe as a friend outside the House, the usual Labour party gloom-and-doom speech about everything that is wrong with the economy. Before he speaks, it is worth remembering what some of his predecessors on the Labour Front Bench have said. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr Marek) said:

"The Government have massaged the figures. True unemployment is well over 4 million and may be approaching 5 million."—[*Official Report*, 28 February 1984; Vol. 55, c. 165.]

The then hon. Member for Carmarthen, who spoke for the Labour party on Welsh matters, said:

"registered unemployment is expected to stay at 3 million well into the last quarter of this decade, the pace of growth for this year falls to just over half of that during the previous year."—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 102.]

In fact, the pace of growth increased that year and in the succeeding year.

Having not learnt anything from that wrong prediction in 1986, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside said:

"There is no doubt that the Government have been massaging the unemployment figures downwards over successive months."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1987; Vol. III, c. 612.]

When summing up the Welsh day debate, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), quoting the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), said:

"The Government were clearly reconciled to the fact that mass unemployment in Wales would continue for years."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1987; Vol. III, c. 673.]

We know exactly what happened to unemployment in Wales. As those hon. Members were speaking, it was falling, and it has continued to do so for 42 consecutive months. The current figure is 6·9 per cent. of the working population in Wales—the lowest level since July 1980.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of people employed in the Welsh economy. There has also been a larger increase in Wales than anywhere else in the United Kingdom in the number of people who have "got on their bikes", to quote my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and become self-employed. Those people are responsible for the increase in investment and business in Wales.

When I was elected in 1987, unemployment in my constituency was 7,381. A year later, it had fallen to 6,232. When I spoke in the Welsh day debate in the House at the beginning of this year, the unemployment figure for my constituency was 4,899. The latest figures—issued only last week by the Welsh Office—show that unemployment in my constituency has fallen to 3,366. It has more than halved in the two and a half years that I have had the honour to represent the constituency. Although I can claim no credit for that fall, I am proud to have supported the Government, who have encouraged that fall and enabled it to happen. Although the figures are still far too high, I recognise that the Government have the right policies to ensure that unemployment continues to fall over succeeding years.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, leading for the Opposition, said in 1984:

"Well before the end of the century I should like to see a reconstituted economy in Wales. I should like to see Wales regenerate and modernise her industries, diversify her economic base, and become successful and banish large scale unemployment."

I am sure that all hon. Members would say, "Hear, hear," to that. That is this Government's policy. As soon as Labour Members face a difficult challenge—pit closures or steel closures—they forget their grand words.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, in that same debate, said:

"The closure of any pit in Wales, certainly in the south-east Wales coalfield, will wipe out the gains of new industry in the south Wales economy."—[*Official Report*, 28 February 1984; vol. 55, c. 168-9.]

In 1987, the hon. Member for Newport, East quoted the *Western Mail*, and said:

"Wales' economic future continues to look as bleak as a derelict coal mine or an abandoned steelworks."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1987; vol. 111, c. 672.]

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, earlier this year in the Welsh day debate, when challenged about his policy, said:

"On these Benches we say no to a free market."—*[Official Report 1 March 1989; Vol. 148; c.309]*

It is no use the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside saying that he wants a reconstituted economy and, when the difficult decisions have to be taken and pits have to be closed and when new industries have to be encouraged, turn his face against the free market. It is the free market which has helped Wales over the past few years to revitalise.

The free market has been assisted by the Government. A former Member for Pembroke and Secretary of State for Wales, now Lord Crickhowell, started the process in 1979, and it has been continued and expanded by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

The figures for regional assistance in 1987 show a promise of 28,000 new jobs. In 1988, the figure was 32,200 new jobs. To October this year, the figure had increased by 15,200 new jobs. In 1979-80 to 1989-90, the urban programme has meant more than £203·5 million for Wales, and that has safegurded and created 37,000 jobs. Urban development grants since 1982 have led to £37 million of grant, and investment of £173 million.

The Government have been active in encouraging existing and new businesses to take advantage of the opportunites created by the transformed Welsh economy. In 1988-89, the level of assistance to Welsh industry was increased by 39 per cent.—an extra £54 million—over the prevous plans, taking the total figure to £194 million, and a further increase to £212 million has been taking place during the present financial year.

The Welsh Development Agency has been part of the focus for the Government's programme and for ensuring that their policies are spearheaded. It was created in 1966, but only under this Government and in the past few years the WDA has taken on a major role in transforming the economy of Wales. It has adopted new efficient business principles for its own operation and it has been out into the marketplace to attract new business.

In 1987-88, nearly 2·5 million sq ft of floor space was let. That is equivalent to 7,000 new jobs. In 1988-89, there were 2·4 million sq ft of lettings, leading to more than 7,000 jobs and the budget for this year is another £130 million, which is 15 per cent. more than even last year. Total WDA investment in factory building in 1988-89 was £20 million, and it is expected to be £66 million over the three years of the programme. That is even more than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State forecast when he set up the programme.

The WDA has been at the forefront of ensuring that the Welsh economy should be improved. It is encouraging that at its head is a dynamic young chairman, Dr. Gwyn Jones, who is leading the way and has been out to get new business in other parts of the United Kingdom and, even more important, from abroad. In his chairman's statement in the annual report for this year, he said:

"The Wales for the 1990s will be a dynamic country. 'Dynamism' is an unusual attribute to apply to a country, but the current level of activity in the Welsh economy makes it particularly apt."

How different that is from what the chairman of the WDA said in the final year of the Labour Government:

"In a year in which the United Kingdom continued to be beset by economic problems, the work of the WDA, as a body concerned with stimulating industrial expansion, was inevitably constrained."

That was said in 1979, the last year in which the Labour party was in power. Now we see what has been achieved by the WDA.

The present chairman's statement continues:

"The success that Wales has achieved in continuing to attract inward investment is quite remarkable, and WINvest has played its full part in this. We consistently gain some 20 per cent. of all the inward investment that comes to the UK

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

whilst we have only 5 per cent. of the population. Such names as Ford with its £275 million investment—a record for the automotive industry in the UK".

It goes on to refer to Bluebird Toys, Star Micronics, the financial services initiative, NPI and Rothschilds.

Any Government would be proud of that record of achievement, but the work does not end there. WINvest is continuing under its new name to go out and look for new investment. In the current year, 98 projects were announced, with a capital investment of £1·12 billion and the possibility of nearly 14,000 more jobs.

Why is Wales attracting all that investment? We have a Government who believe in business. President Coolidge said:

"The business of America is business",

and the business of this Government is to get business. It is certainly not to run it, and they have been determined not to do that. They have been creating the climate of opportunity which has enabled business to grow and expand in Wales.

As members of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, the hon. Member for Torfaen and I remember a quotation from our first report which was published in 1988-89. In its report on inward investment into Wales and its interaction with regional EEC policies issued in February of this year, the Select Committee said:

"We were told they concentrated upon 'the entire business package'"—

talking of overseas companies—

"encompassing the size and growth of the UK market and the ease of access to Europe from Britain, political and economic stability, the large size and rapid growth of the UK market, labour issues, (high productivity, relatively low costs, good industrial relations), a favourable tax regime, financial incentives, the welcome by government and the regions, the living environment and English as 'the international business language'."

Many of those qualifications would not be available under a Labour Government. We certainly would not have a favourable tax regime, good industrial relations, or economic stability. As a result of the climate which the Government have created, inward investment has increased at a tremendous rate. In 1988, Wales attracted 22 per cent. of all jobs in the United Kingdom which came from foreign investment. About 250 foreign-owned companies in Wales have created about 48,000 jobs.

It is rather ironic that, when the country has been investing heavily abroad to the benefit of our balance of payments, some people are opposed to foreign investment doing the same in this country and creating work. We live in an interdependent world economy, so how much better that each of us should have a stake in each other's economies and so make the prospect of war less likely. It is time that some of the little Britons who have argued in the past against foreign investment changed their policy. Since 1983, about £2 billion of inward investment has been secured—and at a steadily increasing rate.

Wales is now a first-class location for the financial as well as the industrial sector. The TSB Trust is embarking on a multi-million pound office development in Newport, and 500 jobs will come as National Provident Institution enlarges its Cardiff operation.

As I have said, this change could only have been brought about by a Government who believe in business and who have created the right climate. Part of the Government's role in the past 10 years has been to ensure that the infrastructure—or as we normal people tend to call it, the roads and railways—has been improved to allow better communications. In Wales, the Government have undertaken 47 major motorway and trunk road schemes; 140 miles of roads have been provided.

Spending on new capital schemes of structural renewal and maintenance has exceeded £1 billion since 1979. Sixteen bypasses have been completed; four are in place and 25 more are programmed for the 1990s; and 16 miles of road are presently under construction, costing £270 million.

Perhaps the most remarkable development at the moment is the Conwy tunnel and the associated works on the A55. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State is keen on that. I recently went to speak in Bangor and drove there at 4 o'clock in the morning. I have to admit that I was astonished to see such a road cutting right across north Wales. Indeed, I had to cut my estimate of my arrival time by about 45 minutes as a result of travelling for the first time on the modernised A55. I only hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind the pleas to uprate the A477 that I made to him in an Adjournment debate earlier in the year. We should like a similar road to go to west Wales.

Not only have we seen an improvement in the infrastructure; we have also seen an improvement in our tax regime. When the Government came to power, we had punitive tax rates, which have now all been reduced. We have also seen a proactive role in those areas where both Government money and private money have been necessary.

Perhaps the best example of that has been the valleys programme—a programme for the people—which was launched by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in June 1988. Not only has my right hon. Friend launched the valleys programme, but we now have the north Wales initiative and exciting developments throughout Wales, such as the Cardiff bay scheme, the Newport barrage, and the Swansea marina. Wherever one goes in Wales, one sees a Wales that is growing, modernising and improving.

I am proud that this Government should have been the Government who got Wales moving at last towards the 21st century. Part of that achievement has been because the Government have also recognised that Governments can do only a limited amount and that it is important that we encourage business by creating the right climate. The Government themselves are not the right force to choose the winners. The Government are not capable of running business. Business is too important to be left to Governments. It should be run by business men. The Government's attitude under my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has certainly paid off.

Before considering the future, I turn to two sectors of business that are of particular concern to my constituents. The first is agriculture. Representing as I do a rural constituency in west Wales, I am most concerned to see an improvement in the agricultural industry. I use the word "industry" deliberately because we often forget that we are talking about business men, people who have to make a profit and try to generate growth.

In the past few years, there has been a dramatic fall in farm incomes. There have been both major bankruptcies and smaller bankruptcies among family farms. I hope that the worst is over. It certainly looks as though it is in the dairy industry in west Wales.

I should be wrong not to mention my two major concerns for farmers in this debate on the economy. The first relates to interest rates. It is no use denying that interest rates hurt a lot. Indeed, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, "If they are not hurting, it isn't working." I only hope that we shall turn the corner very soon and be able to reduce interest rates, because I fear that, if we do not balance the economy properly, we shall end up with the economy in recession. We are all looking to my right hon. Friend to ensure that that fine tuning and balance is maintained.

The second issue is that of the green pound. Earlier this year, the green pound was moving towards parity, but marked gaps have now appeared. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will take note of a recent letter from the president of the National Farmers Union, Simon Gourlay. There is a clear and pressing need to tackle the green pound gap during the next few months.

The other industry in my constituency, apart from light engineering, is tourism, in which also a major transformation has taken place. Until a dozen years ago, tourism in Wales was hidebound. The market had disappeared to Spain, Portugal and the Italian riviera. At last, there has been a major change in the industry. It has had to recognise that the days of the day tripper and the two weeks beside the seaside are over. Instead, there has been a massive growth in the second and third holiday market of two or three days. That is partly because of the increase in prosperity, but also as a result of the changing demands of clients as they wish to see more of their own country as well as touring abroad.

What do the tourists want? First—in parts of Wales this is very important—they want proper wet weather facilities. That is not something about which the tourist industry, until recently, has been concerned. It is no use providing third-rate tatty entertainment, because today's customer is used to high-quality entertainment and leisure facilities. Anyone who produces only third-rate facilities will soon go out of business. They want variety; they want, when visiting Wales, not to be told that there is only one attraction on offer. They want to see a range of attractions, covering not only good scenery and history but entertainment and other forms of leisure. They want to stay in good hotels.

I welcome the fact that in recent years it has been a deliberate policy of the Wales tourist board to improve the quality of the hotel accommodation. If we do not improve that quality, we will lose the customers. It is important, especially in my part of the world that relies so much on tourism, that we should be aware of the importace of providing value for money and good quality accommodation.

That is why I welcome the LEAD initiative of the Wales tourist board and the fact that Wales still has section 4 grants, unlike the remainder of the United Kingdom. As a result of an announcement earlier this year and in co-operation with the South Pembrokeshire district council, a £1 million project has begun in Tenby. The total value, with the £1 million from the Wales tourist board, will be £14 million. That is the sort of pump priming and local assistance of which I approve. It allows local authorities to put taxpayers' money where their mouths are, with private finance, and the Government to give a shove with a grant from the Wales tourist board.

It will be important to consider how we will tackle the problems that lie ahead. Governments can prime the pump and create the conditions, but at the end of the day it will be for business to make the decisions and to use its judgment.

The Government have done a tremendous amount for the people of Wales in ensuring that business has the right climate. We have deregulated in all sorts of spheres. We have taken Government off the backs of industry and business. We have reformed the trade unions so that there is a new air of realism. When members of the Welsh Select Committee went to Japan last year, we found that labour relations were placed high on the agenda as a good quality of the work force in Wales.

We have reduced inflation from its 28 per cent. level under the Labour Government. It is still far too high, but this Government put at the top of their agenda the priority of getting it down. We have increased competition; we have encouraged inward investment; we have reduced Government spending; we are paying off the national debt. We no longer have a public sector borrowing requirement, that we had for so many years. We are tackling inflation in a way that ensures that the economy continues to prosper without going into recession.

Business has its role to play. It must remember that it must produce at the right price and quality and produce the goods on time if it wants to stay in business and compete with the rest of the world.

I am optimistic that we are witnessing a revitalisation of the economy of Wales. We have a good story to tell over the past decade, and under this Government it will continue. However, I am worried about what would happen if the party of the hon. Member for Torfaen came to power.

The hon. Member is a moderate, reasonable and intelligent man. He must wince sometimes when he sees the contradictory promises that are made by his hon. Friends. He will have to answer four crucial questions if he is to have credibility. How do Labour plan to control inflation? How many taxpayers will lose out under Labour's tax plans? How much does Labour want to add to public spending and where will the money come from? How will Labour create an environment in which British business has the confidence to create wealth and jobs?

My constituents want to know the answer to those four crucial questions. The hon. Member for Torfaen will have to answer them is he is to have any chance of convincing the electorate at the next election. I fear that he will have a slim chance. Already we have seen massive contradictions from the Labour party. We have had the ring of honesty from the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about credit controls. When asked about them by the Press Association in June 1989, he said:

> "There is no way you can control credit except by controlling the price of credit and the price of credit is the Bank Rate."

He described the Labour party's policy as "rubbish".

On the question of home owners and mortgages, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)—who has been moved to greener pastures where he is less likely to put his foot in it—has argued for mortgage controls which could affect young couples on the bottom of the mortgage ladder and couples who plan to trade up, by making it difficult for people to move on to their second home.

In "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change" the Labour party argued for several new taxes. The hon. Member for Torfaen could perhaps tell us a little more about them.

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

Perhaps he could tell us about the new tax, which will probably be set at 9 per cent., on investment income in excess of £3,000, or £5,000 for pensioners.

The Labour party would force all new businesses to pay a new training tax, which will be set at 0.5 per cent. of all payroll costs. The tax bill of, for example, British Airways, would increase by £5 million, enough to employ another 200 staff.

The Labour party plan to abolish the national insurance upper earnings limit, which would add another 9 per cent. to the marginal rates of all those earning £16,900 or more. It plans to phase out the married man's tax allowance, which is currently worth £1,590 a year. It also plans to increase the top rate of income tax. It has promised that it will be only 50 per cent. We cannot believe that when we listen to the promises of the Labour party in every Budget debate since 1987. It constantly advocates strike action in support of pay rises yet votes against reducing the workers' tax bill at every opportunity and in every Budget. That is a strange contradiction. In spite of all its new glossy policies and packaging, it still has not learned that it must cost its programme to ensure that it obtains value for money and that the taxpayer is not penally taxed out of existence.

I finish with a quotation from the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). It sums up what many Conservative Members think about the Labour party's economic policies and what they might do for Wales. He said in *The Guardian* of 2 October 1989:

"We have to say now what we are going to spend and where the money is going to come from."

That is the challenge facing the hon. Member for Torfaen. If he wants to convince the people of Wales that he would run the economy better than the Government, he had better answer those questions.

3.58 am

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Having a debate on this important subject at 4 am hardly does justice to the subject or to Wales. The fact that only four hon. Members are present out of the 38 who represent Wales is a reflection on the time rather than a lack of interest in the subject. This underlines the need for more prime time for important Welsh debates. Is this an adequate way for Wales to be governed?

I congratulate the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on securing this debate, although I should have congratulated him more warmly if he had secured it at a sensible time, but I know that that is well outside his control.

It will not be any surprise to the hon. Gentleman to learn that I disagree with his highly subjective and selective analysis of the Welsh economy. I am tempted to suggest that his contribution tonight is the first draft of his election speech for the next general election. I suspect a hint of desperation in what he said tonight. He cannot fool all the people all the time and the people of Pembroke, in common with the rest of the Welsh people, will know that reality in Wales is more mixed than the hon. Gentleman suggested.

There are some areas where the signs are hopeful and suggest that things are going in the right direction. No one would play down those successes but, my goodness, we still have enormous problems to overcome. We must quantify those problems and develop an action programme to overcome them. The hon. Gentleman rightly paid tribute to the work that is done by the Welsh Development Agency. I realise that he was not in the House when his colleagues voted against its establishment. I am only glad that it still survives.

Those of us who try to describe the Welsh economy are in danger of being caught in a Catch 22. If we refer to the blacker aspects of our economy we are accused of talking Wales down—the last thing that we want to do. But if we ignore those blacker aspects, we are not addressing ourselves to the serious problems, nor are we setting the right agenda.

We welcome the successes, particularly the inward overseas investment from which Wales has done notably well. Unfortunately, not all Welsh areas have benefited as much as others, and I hope that the investment spread will be more even in the future.

We debate the Welsh economy against the background of massive structural changes. It is incredible to think that in 1925 250,000 people were employed in the coal mining industry—one in three of the working population. Now, fewer than 10,000 people are employed in coal mining. Any economy that has faced such change will inevitably have had difficulties. The question is whether we have succeeded in establishing in Wales a new, alternative economic and industrial base to face the next century, or whether we still have a great deal to do.

There is an enormous challenge. We should pitch our targets to compare with the most successful countries. We should not say that, because things were even worse a few years ago, they must be good now. The unemployment rate in Switzerland is 0.5 per cent., in Sweden it is 1.5 per cent., in Luxembourg it is 1.3 per cent. and in Norway it is 5 per cent. Those unemployment levels make us realise that we still have a long way to go. In the United Kingdom in the south-east unemployment is 2.1 per cent. in Berkshire, 2.2 per cent. in Buckinghamshire and 1.7 per cent. in West Sussex. We should pitch similar unemployment targets in Wales.

Unemployment in Wales is falling and that is welcome, but merely adjusting the base in which that number is calculated does not overcome the problem for the unemployed. Yet another base is now being used that can knock between 1 and 2 per cent. off the recorded number. I accept that any Government would want to dress up the figures as best they can, but that is not good enough.

The truth about unemployment in Wales is recorded in the December 1989 *Employment Gazette*. In my constituency, Pwllheli has the highest unemployment of any travel-to-work area in Wales at 14·3 per cent. In Aberdare unemployment is 13·4 per cent., in Holyhead it is 12·7 per cent., in Cardigan it is 11·4 per cent., in Bangor and Caernarfon it is 11 per cent., and in South Pembrokeshire it is 10·4 per cent. Those problems are scattered across Wales, not concentrated in one corner. In the north-west, the south-west and the old industrial valleys of the south-east we see the same problems of persistent, residual unemployment which is not going away. We have an awful lot of work to do if we are to overcome them.

I sympathise with the Minister at having to stay awake at this time of night. The time has surely come now, with some of the successes—which we welcome—to reconsider the way in which the assisted area map for Wales is drawn. The difference between the intermediate areas and the

development areas has almost disappeared—8 per cent. for the intermediate areas and 8·9 per cent. for the development areas. Some development areas have lower unemployment rates than some intermediate ones. It is high time to look at that matter again.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) painted a rosy picture of the position as it has developed in his home area. Looking through my pile of cuttings I find that it was only last year, in 1988, that the *Western Mail* carried a story entitled "Wales's jobless capital". It starts:

"Pembroke is the jobless capital of Wales."

It continues:

"In that area of south Pembrokeshire District there is a total population of 1,637, of whom 524 are registered as out of work."

I accept that those figures will have decreased since that report was drawn up. Nonetheless, there has been a serious problem in south Pembrokeshire and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to ignore or contradict that.

Not long ago I saw a report in which the EC pinpointed the decline, decay and neglect in Wales. The report drew out the fact that between May 1981 and 1987, more than 22,000 factory jobs had disappeared in south Wales and only 6,000 new ones had been created. We welcome the 6,000 new ones, but the loss of 22,000 has hit many communities hard. It was reported at the same time that 152 manufacturing firms had opened in south Wales, about which we hear a lot. However, at the same time 250 manufacturing firms closed. There is a credit side and there are successes, but set against those are the victims. People have suffered as a result of the Government's free-for-all economic policies which have hit some manufacturing companies particularly hard.

My former company, Hoover in Merthyr Tydfil, is an example of a company that has suffered. About 470 jobs were lost, according to a *Financial Times* report of only a couple of months ago. The total number working there now is less than 2,000 compared with 5,500 working there when I left in 1974. I realise that some of those jobs losses are due to automation but many are caused by the difficulty, in the present economic climate, for such companies to attack the marketplace. Interest rates have a critical effect on companies making manufactured goods such as washing machines.

Only a couple of months ago, there was a shock in Gwynedd, in the Minister's constituency, when it was announced that 100 jobs were to be lost in the Austin Taylor company which deals with telecommunications equipment. That meant that 100 out of the 450 work force in the Bangor area would lose jobs.

These are serious losses and we cannot paint a rosy picture of the Government's economic policy when that very policy leads to such a crisis. Only this October, the Liverpool *Daily Post* had a large headline,

"Gloominess infecting all of industry."

It referred to the way in which the Confederation of British Industry was reacting to the then Chancellor's economic policies.

The CBI's report on quarterly trends in Wales makes bleak reading. We should counterbalance what the hon. Member for Pembroke said. I accept that there are many good points, but we should counterbalance them. The report starts:

"Business confidence has fallen . . . There has been a marked decline in total new orders and manufacturing output with further falls expected during the next four months . . . Investment intentions have weakened . . . Employment in Welsh manufacturing industry has fallen for the first time since October 1986 and a further decline is expected into the fourth quarter of 1989."

Those are not Plaid Cymru comments: they are CBI comments. What is causing this? The Government should deal with the problem.

Only 5 per cent. of the companies surveyed were more optimistic than four months before; 44 per cent. were less optimistic. So there is a serious decline in the confidence of industry, and it is hitting Welsh industry just as it is hitting the prospects of other areas.

Between 1980 and 1987 total production in Wales increased by 2·1 per cent., but total production in the UK generally increased by 12·6 per cent. Although we started from a lower base, our success has been less than that of other parts of the country. That shows how far we have to go.

The most recent issue of "Welsh Economic Review" contains disturbing information about the formation of new firms. Three of the eight Welsh counties are in the bottom sector—between 54 and 63 in the ranking throughout the UK. Regrettably, they include Dyfed, the county of the hon. Member for Pembroke, and my county of Gwynedd. I am sure that we should both like our counties to be at the top of the league table, not the bottom. That, too, underlines how far we have to go. Much more work needs to be done.

What effect has this had on the people? Gross domestic product in Wales per head of population was 86·9 per cent. of that of the rest of the country in 1977. Ten years later, it had fallen to 82·4 per cent. As a result, personal disposable income fell from 94 per cent. of the United Kingdom average in 1977, to 90·6 per cent. in 1985, to 87·4 per cent. in 1986, and to 86·2 per cent. in 1987—a persistent decline. There may be reasons for that, but the success about which we heard from the hon. Member for Pembroke has not worked through to the spending power of the people of Wales.

As the hon. Member for Pembroke rightly said, tourism offers a substantial amount of new employment, but the problem in our areas is that so much of the work is seasonal. We need year-round work. There are ways of overcoming the problem, but immense injections of cash are needed to develop facilities that are attractive all year round. I welcome Butlin's announcement of a £20 million investment in my constituency to meet this challenge, but if tourism is to become the base of the economy, it will need tremendous investment. I sometimes wonder whether we can base our economy in some parts of Wales only on tourism. It has a part to play, but it must be alongside a strong manufacturing sector.

One problem in areas such as mine is housing. House prices in our part of Wales, as in other areas of the United Kingdom, have risen so far that it is extremely difficult for young people to buy houses. Available rental stock has declined—we discussed that earlier today in the Welsh Office—and that means that waiting lists for houses have increased incredibly. In Arfon borough the figure rose from 800 to 1,400 in two years, and I know that other areas have similar problems.

Agriculture, the base of the Welsh economy in so many areas, is going through a time of considerable uncertainty and insecurity. If interest rates remain high, the effect on rural areas will be serious. The Welsh Development Agency must act, not just to bring work to the M4 corridor

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

in the south and to the north-east of Wales—to areas of potential growth such as Clywd and Deeside—but to areas beyond such as Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd. The WDA, for understandable reasons, has not yet succeeded in doing enough in that respect.

An effort must also be made to reduce high interest rates, which are caning not only individual families with mortgages but small businesses, which will not invest further until rates are at a more acceptable level. Many projects are simply not viable at present rates of interest.

If a successful economy is to be built up in the 1990s and into the next millennium, an attempt must be made to improve the skills of the young in Wales, and that poses a challenge to the schools and colleges. The infrastructure must also be improved. As hon. Members have said, the A55 will have a major effect on north Wales. We want to ensure that it is a positive effect, enabling the creation of new manufacturing and employment opportunities, and that it does not simply serve people who want to travel across the border to buy goods, at the expense of local shopkeepers.

The railway to south Wales should also be improved, and the line from Crewe to Holyhead electrified. That would help to secure the basis of Wales's infrastructure. Down the years, there has also been the challenge of encouraging more enterprise among the young people of Wales, as the figures that I quoted earlier on the number of new firms being created amply testify.

The challenge of 1992 is also before us. If Wales is to meet that challenge, it must develop greater dynamics than it has at present. I hope that things are moving in the right direction. In Gwynedd and in many other parts of Wales, the proof of the pudding has yet to appear—and it must do soon if Wales is to be ready and fit in 1992 to meet the challenge of Europe. It is in that context that we must take a balanced view of the Welsh economy—and against that background, build for the future.

4.16 am

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I echo the sentiments expressed by all hon. Members about the timing of this debate. Given that the responsibilities of Welsh Office Ministers and of shadow Cabinet spokesmen do not extend to the British economy as a whole, I shall not accept the challenge of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) to comment on the economy generally. However, I shall be happy to do so when the next general election is drawing much closer, and I shall repeat my performance of some months ago at Pembroke Dock, when I addressed much wider issues than those before the House today.

Much of what has been said by the hon. Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Pembroke is welcome. If one removes the beginning and the end of the speech of the hon. Member for Pembroke, and then extracts much of what he said in the middle, I would find little with which to disagree. On inward investment, for example, all would agree that the inward investment made in the Principality over the past few years has been good for the areas concerned. Whenever the Welsh Grand Committee has investigated that aspect over the past year or so, its members have commented that Wales has done better than other regions in Britain. No one would be churlish enough to deny that that is the case.

Similarly, I accept the comments of the hon. Member for Pembroke about tourism. A considerable improvement must be made in the way tourism is developed in the Principality and elsewhere in Britain. On other matters, however, there is not so much agreement—although I concur with the hon. Member for Caernarfon that a balanced view must be taken of the Welsh economy, which must be set against a number of other factors.

We must remember also that there are major differences within the Principality. Wales cannot be considered as a single economic unit. There are major distinctions to be drawn between north and south Wales, between rural and urban areas, and between the tops of the valley areas and the valleys which border the M4. There are great pockets of unemployment and deprivation, which my right hon. and hon. Friends and I believe are not being tackled adequately by the Government.

Perhaps the most accurate of all the indicators is the view taken by the people of Wales themselves of the Government's economic record in the Principality. Over the past three or four years, the people of Wales have said, with overwhelming conviction, that Conservative government is not working. Their inability to deal with the Welsh economy lost the Conservatives a seat in Wales that they had held for a quarter of a century or more, and reduced the party to a rump in the Principality. The Conservatives' fortunes are worsening, not simply because of the national situation, but because of what the Welsh people think about the Welsh Conservative party and about the Conservative Government's performance in Wales.

I accept wholeheatedly that unemployment has fallen, but in my view we must look at the figures relating to people in work as well as those relating to the unemployed. In Wales today, 118,000 fewer people are employed than were employed a decade ago. That is a remarkable statistic, and the sort of statistic that the Welsh people consider when they judge the Government's record.

Unemployment in Wales is 45 per cent. higher than it was in 1979. It has fallen, yes, but it has fallen less than it has in Yorkshire and Humberside, the east midlands, the south-west, the west midlands, the south-east and East Anglia, and it is still the fourth highest in the regions of Britain. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon pointed out, there are pockets in Wales where unemployment is even worse, such as Pwllheli—perhaps one of the worst black spots in the country—Cardigan, Holyhead and, of course, South Pembrokeshire, as well as parts of my constituency.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) mentioned self-employment. Wales has experienced the lowest increase in self-employment in Britain; since 1979 it has increased by 18 per cent., compared with 103 per cent. in the south-west of England. That is a pretty poor record. At the same time, there has been a considerable increase in the number of part-time workers, especially women. While some of those jobs are decently paid, many are poorly paid and provide little job security and unsatisfactory working conditions.

The coal industry had its problems all those years ago, and no one is suggesting a return to the worst aspects—the loss of life, and the other problems that men encountered when they worked in the pits. I come from a mining family and a mining constituency, but I am the first to acknowledge that I should prefer people to go into jobs that did not involve such risks. But in Gwent and in Monmouthshire—once a great coal-mining centre—not one pit remains, and this year we have seen the last of our

pits at Oakdale, Marine colliery and Cwm Ebbw Vale. They have closed, with the loss of hundreds of jobs. Jobs in coal and steel were difficult, but they paid well and provided young men with good opportunities. Now, in many instances, they have been replaced by jobs which are poorly paid by comparison, as well as being part-time or temporary, often non-unionised and generally unwelcome to the people of Wales.

We must also remember that many of the unemployment figures have been fiddled. People put into training schemes have been taken off the unemployment registers, bringing the numbers down; but we in Wales know in our heart of hearts that people are still out of work, particularly young people. Investment in manufacturing industry has declined by some 56 per cent. since 1979, and Government assistance to Welsh industry has been cut by 51 per cent. since that year.

I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Pembroke refer in glowing terms to the Welsh Development Agency, and to its first-class chairman, whom I knew many years ago at ICL. He was right to say that a Labour Government set it up, although he qualified that later. It was the Welsh equivalent of the National Enterprise Board.

The Conservative Government were more than willing to let the Welsh Development Agency stay, but I believe that the high rents that it sometimes charges in parts of Wales ought to be changed because they make business men in south Wales and elsewhere suffer. The regional development grants have gone. Their automaticity has disappeared. Although I welcome the fact that selective grants remain, some companies are suffering because they relied on the regional development assistance that had existed for a long time.

I also believe that the Government have under-valued the work of local authorities, particularly district councils. I hope that the Minister will comment on their excellent work in industrial development.

In any analysis of the economy, we must consider what people are paid in Wales. The Welsh are at the botton of the British earnings league table. Between 1987 and 1988, average earnings in Wales increased by 7·1 per cent., which was the lowest increase in Britain. The north of England came next, with an 8·6 per cent. increase. In 1988, the average white collar worker in Wales earned £13,200 a year. In the City of London, the figure was twice that. According to a recent jobcentre survey in south Wales, only 9 per cent. of the jobs available offered wages of more than £135 a week and 12 per cent. offered only £80 per week to people prepared to accept such a ridiculously low wage. One in five women in full-time work earn less than £100 a week, and one in four men earn less than £150 a week. If we are examining the economy, we must consider wages, and in Wales they are among the lowest in Great Britain.

The Minister has responsibility for infrastrucure. I agree with the hon. Member for Pembroke that it is an appalling word, but we both know what it means. We have already had one debate about the Severn bridge, but since then things have got worse. Tolls have doubled and the problems of getting across have intensified the nearer we come to Christmas. I hope that lifeline will be improved.

The hon. Member for Caernarvon mentioned north Wales. We all welcome the A55 and what it has done for the economy of the north. I am sure that much will be said about it in the Welsh Grand Committee debate after Christmas. In the south, the M4 comes to a pretty awful grinding halt when it approaches Port Talbot. Something must be done about the gap between Port Talbot and Swansea in Baglan. The problems in south-west Wales will get worse, unless that important lifeline between the rest of Wales and England and London is improved substantially by improving the M4 and closing the gap in the Baglan area.

The business rate is looming ahead of us. It has been universally condemned by the business community in Britain, especially in Wales. It has been condemned by the Confederation of British Industry, the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses and others who represent all manner of industry and business in Wales. There is a valid reason for their opposition. The revaluation, which I assume will happen at the turn of the year, will represent an increase of eight times. We already know from a statement made in a written answer that the rate poundage for businesses in Wales will be 38p, which is 2p higher than in England.

When we put those facts together, we know that at least 70,000 of the 100,000 business properties in Wales will be worse off as a direct result of the introduction of the business rate in the Principality on 1 April next year. Many of those will be small businesses which are the lifeline of business communites in many of our smaller towns in rural areas and in the south Wales valleys. Ironically it will also hit many of our business parks and high-tech industries on the M4 corridor. Those are the last industries that we want to be knocked heavily by that tax, but unfortunately that will be the case. I hope that there is still time for the Government to rethink some of their policies with regard to the business rate in Wales as I believe that its effect on business life in Wales could be calamitous.

I conclude by welcoming the opportunity to discuss such an important matter. Like the hon. Member for Caernarfon I hope that we shall have a better opportunity to discuss it later in the Session when more right hon. and hon. Members are present. I hope that the Minister will consider setting up a Welsh economic development council, as has been urged upon him by the Welsh TUC and others, as that would be an important forum in which to discuss Welsh economic matters. I hope that he will encourage local authorities, and, above all, I hope that he realises that the final test as to how the Welsh economy is performing will be the next general election. I have no doubt that the verdict of the Welsh people will be to support the Labour candidates in that election.

4.31 am

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) has correctly drawn attention to the range of hard facts which clearly show the revitalisation that has taken place in Wales under the present Government. Our economy in Wales is now much more diversified than it was over a decade ago—and is therefore more stable and secure.

I am glad to say that the outmoded perception of Wales as dominated by coal and steel is fast disappearing. Present-day Wales has excellent communications, a skilled and flexible work force, a range of splendid sites for industry and commerce and an enviable partnership between the public and private sectors, all working together to ensure that a strong economy is securely in place as we face up to the challenges of the 1990s and move

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

forward to the next century. I am glad to pay tribute to the role that the local authorities have played and are playing in that.

Unemployment continues to fall throughout all areas of Wales. The total has fallen for 42 consecutive months and in the last year by a staggering 30,500. The November 1989 unemployment total was 86,400, with a rate of 6·9 per cent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke said, that is the lowest total and rate since July 1980. The fall of 30,500 in the past 12 months represents 26 per cent. of the unemployed and since May 1986 we have seen a reduction of nearly 50 per cent. in the numbers. I am sure that the House will welcome in particular the reduction of more than 10,000 in unemployment in the south Wales valleys since the launch of the Secretary of State's initiative.

To put into perspective the measure of our success in combating unemployment, if we can achieve the same reduction in 1990 as we have achieved in the past year, unemployment in Wales will be lower than the current level in south-east England.

Wales already has an unemployment rate far lower than many regions of the United Kingdom and is maintaining its position among the regions with the highest reductions in unemployment. Furthermore, the current rate of 6·9 per cent. for Wales is certainly lower than the EC average and for many of our main European competitors.

The fall in unemployment has been matched closely by the growth in the numbers of people in paid employment in Wales. Between June 1986 and June 1989, the number of employees in employment in Wales grew by 78,000 to 965,000, despite the loss of about 10,000 jobs in the energy, mainly coal, sector.

Male employment, predominantly full-time, went up by 23,000; female full-time employment went up by 33,000; and female part-time employment went up by 22,000. Those figures speak for themselves and totally dismiss the Opposition allegations that the jobs being created in Wales are primarily female part-time. Indeed, 72 per cent. of the employment growth since 1986 has been in full-time jobs.

In addition, the growth is not confined to the service sector. Since 1986, service employment has grown by 10 per cent., but that is dwarfed by the 14 per cent. growth in manufacturing, the 33 per cent. growth in metal goods, engineering and vehicles, and the 20 per cent. growth in financial services.

Since the beginning of 1979, 675 new manufacturing plants, which are still in production, opened in Wales and now employ 44,500 people—in employment terms, some 20 per cent. of all manufacturing employment in Wales.

Since 1980, the stock of business in Wales has increased by 16 per cent. to nearly 82,000, and the net increase 1987 to 1988 was 4·1 per cent., only marginally less than the figure for the UK as a whole, which was 4·2 per cent., but higher than for any other region except the south-east, East Anglia and south-west.

The number of self-employed in Wales has grown from 115,000 in 1981 to 151,000 in 1989, an increase of 31 per cent. I noted what the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) said on that point. I counter his statement by saying that one would not expect self-employment to grow quickly in Wales, bearing in mind our tradition of dependence on our major industries, but the spirit of enterprise is certainly alive and flourishing in Wales, as the facts demonstrate.

Local enterprise agencies are well-established, covering virtually all the industrial areas, and there are plans to extend provision to the rural hinterlands not already covered. There are now 23 agencies either approved or seeking approval in Wales. They are spearheading the private-sector-led co-operation at local level and playing a vital role in assisting small businesses and in enterprise generation and job creation.

The regeneration of the Welsh economy is a reality. The Government have revitalised the economic and industrial base of Wales, and that process is continuing. Output figures on industrial production clearly show the advance being made. The latest figures for the second quarter of this year show that over the year, output in Wales grew by 4·1 per cent. against the comparable figure for the United Kingdom of 0·1 per cent. Since 1985, manufacturing output in Wales has grown by 33 per cent.

We have heard much about the Welsh Development Agency, which is a far different agency from the one on which we legislated during the period of the previous Labour Government. Factory lettings by the Welsh Development Agency are at record levels. In the last financial year, some 2·4 million sq ft of industrial floor space was taken up, matching the record levels of 1987-88; and with the projected lettings in the current year, agency premises will have accommodated some 20,000 jobs over the three-year period.

The Government have committed significant financial resources to ensure that the agency can keep pace with the demand for industrial premises throughout Wales. For the next year, the agency's gross budget has been increased to £150 million, up 15 per cent., and this level of provision will be maintained. That will enable the agency to plan for the future, expand its property development programme by the provision of additional floor space for industrial expansion and to continue the progress in bringing back into productive use land that has for so long borne the scars of our industrial past.

Upon completion of the latest land reclamation programme, over 15,000 acres of derelict land will have been reclaimed since May 1979—one of the largest and most sustained programmes of its kind in Europe.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister has referred to the WDA's success in filling advance factories. Does he accept that the success has been much greater in some areas than in others, and that in some, including parts of his constituency and mine, there is still unacceptable unemployent? Will he undertake to have discussions within the Welsh Office and with other Departments about the boundaries of assisted areas to ascertain whether they can be adjusted to reflect the reality and to fill factories in areas where they are needed?

Mr. Roberts: I noted the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks about assisted areas. The Government have made it clear that there will be no review of the assisted areas map during the lifetime of this Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman referred to his constituency and to mine. I am sure that he will have noted from a document which the Welsh Office has produced, entitled "The A55 —The Road of Opportunity", that the WDA will be investing about £25 million in north Wales, which the

chairman estimates will generate additional private sector investment of at least £100 million and create more than 3,000 jobs within the next two or three years. It is to be hoped that some of the jobs will be quite well paid, and they will enable the hon. Gentleman's constituents and mine to buy homes of their own.

Inflation is the greatest threat to our long-term prosperity. United Kingdom inflation performance over the whole period of this Government is far better than during the period 1974-79, which saw the highest United Kingdom inflation experienced this century. We are not taking lectures from the Opposition on this subject. I do not think that any of us wants to return to the period between March 1974 and April 1979, during which the average increase in the retail price index was 15·5 per cent., with a high of 26·9 per cent. Compare that with the Government's performance since June 1983, when the average increase has been 5·2 per cent. with the highest figure at 8·3 per cent.

Even so, we regard the present level of inflation as too high and we are determined to counter the damage that unchecked inflation will cause to national economic performance. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made it clear that the main priority is, and will continue to be, the reduction of inflation. This action is working through high interest rates, and Wales will share in the benefits that will stem from the Government's firm control of the situation.

Against a background of falling unemployment and substantial factory lettings by the WDA, we have the details on regional aid further to underline the economic diversity that is taking place in Wales.

In 1988, regional aid was associated with capital investment of nearly £1 billion and some 32,200 jobs. To the end of November 1989, the figures are £1·3 billion and 15,500 jobs. There can be no doubt about the effectiveness of regional selective assistance as a forceful measure to provide for the expansion of indigenous industry and to attract new industrial investment and jobs to Wales. In 1988-89, grant acceptances for regional selective assistance in Wales amounted to £81 million, which is 30 per cent. up on the previous year, and one third of the Great Britain grant total.

We have heard much about inward investment. We remain increasingly confident about the future of the Welsh economy. One reason for that is the very large share of United Kingdom inward investment taken by Wales. It is consistently about 20 per cent. of the total, and was 22 per cent. in 1988. This is a record to be proud of when we have only 5 per cent. of the United Kingdom population. Since April 1983, 500 mobile industrial investment projects have been secured for Wales, involving £2·5 billion of capital investment.

In the past year, Ford announced a £750 million investment at its Bridgend plant; Toyota is to build a £300 million engine plant at Shotton; and West German Robert Bosch is investing £100 million in a new plant near Cardiff. All the jobs associated with those plants have yet to come on stream, but they will help in our commitment to reduce unemployment still further.

There are over 250 foreign-owned companies in Wales providing employment for about 50,000 people. We have the greatest concentration of Japanese companies in western Europe. Those overseas concerns cover a broad range of industrial activities and have undoubtedly made an important contribution to the restructuring of the Welsh economy.

Further evidence of the broadening base of the economy of Wales can be seen from the more recent emergence of the growth in the financial services sector. Based on the percentage growth achieved over the past 10 years, I forecast that, by the mid-1990s, more than 100,000 people will be employed in the financial services sector in Wales. More recent developments include the Trustee Savings Bank deciding to relocate its insurance work to Newport, and National Provident Institution establishing a major part of its work in Cardiff. Those follow decisions by Chemical bank, Rothschilds and Banque Nationale de Paris to relocate functions to south-east Wales, which is now firmly established as a growing force in the financial services sector of the UK. Quite simply, this reflects the growth of the Welsh economy and a demand for financial services which the market is increasingly recognising.

The hon. Member for Torfaen referred to earnings in Wales. Between 1988 and 1989, average weekly earnings of adult full-time workers in Wales increased by 9·9 per cent., which was greater than six of the other nine regions in Great Britain. The average increase for Great Britain was 9·8 per cent., which was bettered by all the Welsh counties save West Glamorgan and Gwent.

Under the previous Labour Administration, average weekly earnings in Wales increased in real terms by 6·1 per cent. between 1974 and 1979. Since 1984, the comparable increase in real terms is 12·2 per cent.—exactly double the increase under the Labour Administration—and we have cut the basic rate of income tax from 33 per cent. to 25 per cent. as well as increasing main personal allowances by over 25 per cent. in real terms.

A key part of the Government's strategy of regenerating Welsh economic life is the massive investment in Wales to improve road communications. Since 1979-80 some £800 million has been spent on providing 140 miles of new and improved motorway and trunk roads, and over £200 million has been spent on maintenance and renewal.

In south Wales it is clear that the M4, and the major improvements on links to it, has stimulated significant economic development and the Government, through their commitment to the second Severn crossing, clearly intend to stimulate further economic activity.

I am well aware of the problems of the Baglan-Lonlas section of the M4. We are taking steps to improve the roundabouts on that stretch of road. We intend to dual the whole section between Baglan and Lonlas and we hope to start on the Earlswood section early next year.

The completion of the A55 in north Wales will provide opportunities to increase the prosperity of the area. It was for this reason that I undertook on behalf of the Secretary of State to consult a wide range of interests in north Wales to seek their views on how best to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the £550 million investment in upgrading the A55 from Bangor to Chester. I was very impressed by the plans that the local authorities at district and borough level had already worked out in that regard by way of anticipated development.

On 6 December, the Government published their document which sets out a framework for a range of policies and proposals that can further benefit north Wales. We have already seen the impact that the expressway is having within the context of the

[Mr. Roberts]

Government's successful implementation of their economic policies. The future for north Wales lies in harnessing the enterprise and initiative which clearly exists. In addition to inward investors, we want to encourage the indigenous people, the native people, to develop businesses. The Government will continue to encourage a positive approach from the public and private sectors to ensure that the A55 is used to enhance the economic, social and cultural life of north Wales. We look forward to a full debate on the document in the Welsh Grand Committee early next year.

The hon. Member for Torfaen mentioned business rates. Business and commerce will benefit from the certainty and stability which the new system of uniform business rates will bring. The results of the revaluation will be known shortly. It will have the effect of redistributing tax burdens, not increasing the overall burden on business, which will remain at about 20 per cent. of local authority costs. In general, revaluation and the uniform business rate together will reduce the burden on industrial property, particularly in the valley areas of south Wales—a further boost to reinvigorating the valleys economy.

The Secretary of State has met his commitment to ensure that Welsh business contributes no more in real terms in 1990-91 than it will in 1989-90. The total take from business—£443 million—is £10 million less than predicted. Hon. Members have mentioned the impact on small businesses. The transitional arrangements are designed to give both enhanced protection to small businesses facing increases and quicker reductions to small businesses entitled to them. More than 80 per cent. of all properties in Wales are "small" for that purpose.

There can be no doubt that one of the requirements of a thriving economy is a skilled and well-trained work force and a spirit of enterprise. Across the Principality, there is a growing realisation of how vital training and enterprise are to our future success. I do not think that the hon. Member for Torfaen intended to cast any aspersion on training when he referred to the number of young people currently being trained. He might take an opportunity at a later date to emphasise, as I hope to do now, the key importance of training in providing a skilled work force, which is essential to our future success.

The development of training and enterprise councils will be a key factor in fostering those qualities in the future. Local employer-led councils will have responsibility for determining the nature of training provision and of enterprise suppport which are appropriate for their areas.

There has been a warm reception for the concept of TECs and a magnificent response from employers and others with an interest in education, training and business enterprise. They are working together to develop councils in their areas. Earlier this week, I was very pleased to be able to present a certificate of development funding to the chairman of the north-east Wales group, and I was able to hear agan at first hand the interest being shown in TECs.

The north-east Wales group was the third group to receive development funding of nearly £100,000, following on from the others in Mid Glamorgan and west Wales. Development funding applications have also been approved recently for TECs in South Glamorgan and in north-west Wales. A bid from Gwent is under consideration, and good progress is being made with discussions on arrangements for Powys.

Early in the new year, the whole of Wales should be covered by TECs in a development phase, and all are expected to start active operations during 1990. All that has been achieved well in advance of the three to four years that we originally envisaged. TECs will make a real impact on economic growth in their localities. They will help to provide the answer to many of the black spots where unemployment percentages are high but the figures may not be all that great.

TECs will bring together the two strands of training and enterprise into single strategies for their areas, liaising fully with the other bodies involved. They will work to stimulate enterprise and the local economy; they will help businesses to develop training suited to present and future needs; and they will provide support to inward investment activities by responding rapidly to new requirements. TECs are poised to make a real contribution to the economic growth of Wales in the 1990s.

Glancing at Wales as a whole, north Wales offers striking evidence of the transformation. Delyn is a particularly good example of what can be achieved if the Government, local authorities and the public sector co-operate effectively together. There has been substantial investment in the Delyn enterprise zone, with about 1,300 new jobs being created since designation in 1983, and remarkable progress is being maintained through the development of the Greenfield business park.

We are also seeing increased demand for factory floorspace across north Wales into Gwynedd as companies —including possible foreign ventures—anticipate the improved communications and infrastructure benefits which the A55 will bring.

Within mid-Wales, the Development Board for Rural Wales expects 1989-90 to be a record year for factory allocations—some 350,000 sq ft will be allocated.

Further south, we can see clear signs of development being drawn westward. Camford Engineering has taken over the Austin Rover plant at Llanelli and the buy-out of Llanelli Radiators by the Japanese company Calsonic has secured the existing jobs and involves massive new investment. The Ministry of Defence will be creating 250 new jobs at Llangennech.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke will know, we have invested substantial resources in the Milford Haven enterprise zone and the major deep water facility at Pembroke dock was supported by funds from the Welsh Office.

I could go on to cover the remaining parts of Wales, but fear that I may not. A new Wales is emerging, and we can confidently look forward to continuing success while this Government remain in office.

School Buses (Safety)

5 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): This debate has arisen from a tragedy from which we hope that we can achieve a better result. In my constituency some time ago, a boy called Lee Kelly died when he alighted from a school bus. He crossed the road as he was allowed to do by the rules—everyone involved was following the rules—and was killed by a car passing the bus. He was so badly damaged that his internal organs could not be used for transplant although, being a sensitive and intelligent boy, he had requested, obtained and filled in a donor card only a week or so before.

That accident is not the only accident to have had such tragic results in the United Kingdom. I quote from a paper sent to me by the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations:

"A five year old boy got off the school bus, returning home as usual with his 11 year old sister. His mother was not at the stop as normal, because she was unable to cross the road due to traffic. The boy, excited to see her, went behind the bus and started to cross the road himself. He didn't see the lorry coming. His mother frantically shouted to him to stop. He froze in the middle of the road and was killed by the lorry as it sped by the school bus."

Shortly after Lee Kelly's death and a little further away from my constituency, but near my own village, three children got off a school bus and tried to cross the road. Again, a lorry came past. The driver slammed on the brakes to avoid the girl but hit both boys, one of whom suffered severe brain injury.

Of course, this is not a problem in Devon alone, where school transport vehicles were involved in about 11 accidents last year—it affects every part of the United Kingdom. In Northern Ireland, for example, eight children under 15 have been killed since 1984 after alighting from a school bus.

My own efforts have been spurred on and stimulated by Lee Kelly's mother, Kathy Kelly, a remarkable woman, determined that her own tragedy shall be turned into something more positive and that anything that she can do to ensure that other mothers will not suffer her loss will indeed be done. Spurred on and urged by her, I sought a meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister and I am most grateful for his ready, speedy and intelligent response. I also sought a meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, who reacted in the same way.

Some immediate action was taken in Devon in the area in which Lee Kelly was killed. I propose that we should establish a pilot scheme significantly to identify school buses for oncoming traffic. Both the car driver and the lorry driver involved in the recent accidents in Devon—the one in my constituency and the one just outside it—said afterwards that they did not know that the vehicle was a school bus. I believe that that is at the heart of the problem. I therefore propose that my hon. Friend the Minister should take Devon as a pilot area and authorise Devon not just to put signs at the back and front of buses, but to illuminate them with flashing lights.

Thanks to our county engineer, Mr Michael Hawkins, and perhaps to the fact that our new chief executive, Mr. Richard Clark, came from an education background—he was chief education officer for Hampshire—Devon county, encouraged by the local county councillor Honoria Broad, has taken immediate action and a pilot scheme starts in January.

I have tabled an early-day motion and I pay tribute to my colleagues on both sides of the House—45 to date—who have shown their support, not just by signing the early-day motion but by writing to me asking what else they can do to help. I have puzzled about the best that we can achieve, because it is a tough problem. Although I have quoted some sad cases, nevertheless every day thousands of children are transported—23,000 in Devon alone—and reach home and school safely.

I thought that one of the first things to do would be to establish how many children were killed or injured in that way, I tabled a parliamentary question asking the Secretary of State for Transport

"how many children of school age have been injured in traffic accidents involving designated school buses in the last 12 months; and how many have been killed."

The Minister replied:

"The information requested is not available."—[*Official Report*. 6 December 1989; Vol. 163, c.*219.*]

The NCPTA, which cannot find the figures either, points out that the highest casualty rate for pedestrians killed or injured is among the 10-to-14 age group, followed by the five to nines. Some 20 per cent. of pedestrian casualties among children aged five to nine years and 39 per cent. of casualties aged 10 to 16 were on journeys to and from school. I must make it clear that those are not accidents on buses. They occurred while the children were on their way to school—not on buses, but just walking. We cannot find the figures that we seek, and I urge my hon. Friend to obtain and analyse them for the future.

It is of interest and concern to discover from the Bus and Coach Council that less stringent standards are applied to the operation and use of school buses than are applied to public service vehicles. The director general says:

"There are about 66,000 school buses . . . owned and operated by local authorities. Many of those are involved in the carriage of school children. PSVs . . . number about 71,000."

Certain requirements are needed for class VI public service vehicles but not for school buses. School buses do not have to specify the number and position of the emergency exits or the fuel tank location relevant to the doors specified. There do not have to be first aid kits on board. The gangway dimensions and the minimum seat dimensions do not have to be specified. Passenger communication with the driver is not restricted. Passenger protection measures are not specified and neither is the driver's accommodation.

Instruction of the driver is not restricted or the carriage of inflammable or dangerous substances prohibited. The marking of exits and emergency exits does not have to be specified nor the access to emergency exits. The steps, platforms and stairs do not have to be specified. The driver does not require a public service vehicle vocational licence. Crew and passenger conduct regulations do not have to apply. Vehicle fuelling with passengers on board is permitted and drivers are not subject to drivers' hours regulations. In addition, the annual inspection for school buses covers less than one third of the items for public service vehicles.

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

Could that be the reason why school buses going around the United Kingdom are often aging vehicles, almost rusting, which appear to have gone out of service in the 1950s and been resurrected for school runs?

The Kent newspaper, the Ashford and district *Kentish Express*, reported on Thursday 30 November 1989:

"An explosion aboard a crowded school bus which injured eight children has sparked off a protest campaign by frightened parents . . . a rear tyre exploded sending wheel-arch debris into the downstairs compartment. . . . One pupil of 14 is being treated at the specialist eye unit. . . . 'It looked as though she'd been hit in the face with shotgun pellets', said one pupil. . . . Youngsters sitting above the wheel-arch were thrown from their seats . . . as an aluminium panel smashed into their legs.

Angry and worried parents bombarded the school and the coach firm with telephone calls."

One of the more worrying comments highlighted in the report of that event, and one which is not unusual in the United Kingdom, was made by the head teacher, who said:

"In future we will look carefully at the procedures on the school buses,. At the present time there is no proof of overloading with 80 to 90 children on board. It was within the law."

I suggest that that is a good reason why the present rule whereby three children are allowed to sit in two adults' seats and to stand in the gangways should be revoked. Despite the fact that we do not have sufficient buses to offer a seat to every child, we should make every effort to obtain that necessary result.

The quality of minibuses also causes anxiety. There is a move towards minibuses, perhaps because the quality of the larger buses is so poor. The medical officers of the Schools Association have written to me:

"It was good to read your excellent letter in *The Times* . . . You made so many good and wise comments . . . send me any replies you get from Transport or Education. May I say that our Association has been very concerned about the use of minibuses for transporting schoolchildren, often overcrowded and ill-equipped. As you say, I am sure that they should have radio links or mobile telephones. Would you also agree they need fire-extinguishers and comprehensive first-aid kits? . . . It does seem that the authorities have been dragging their feet for years and, I am delighted to learn that you are pressing Her Majesty's Government on these vital, life-saving matters."

Another head teacher wrote to me from Essex about the problems of dangerous driving:

"Although the route is not heavily used by traffic it is very narrow and winding, there have been numerous occasions when children have been flung off seats due to sudden braking or swerving unexpectedly. Many of the small children cannot touch the floor when they sit on the seats properly. I am sure you will appreciate my concern not only in regard for traffic dangers but also to "stranger dangers." The bus drivers are not always interested and a child could easily be enticed off the bus with a stranger without the driver realising the significance."

I do not suggest for one moment that all the problems are one-sided and lie with the authorities or, indeed, with the drivers. The children sometimes behave in a difficult manner. I have received a letter from a constituent saying: "the general public do not appreciate the level of service provided—free transport to and from school for the majority of children every day—and in return the driver has to endure foul language, abuse and unruly behaviour, and the operator has to suffer vandalism to his vehicle".

That was from one of the coach operators operating school runs.

A couple of weeks ago, the *North Devon Journal* reported:

"A leading coach operator is all set to scrap one of his regular school journeys because of an escalating wave of disturbance and foul language among pupils.

The trouble is so alarming that adult passengers . . . in the centre of Barnstaple have rushed off in disgust before it pulls away, even sacrificing their fares, to avoid the barrage of four-letter words."

The travel operator

"has thrown down a challenge to parents: 'Travel with your children and see for yourselves. You'll find it a real eye-opener.'"

Comment has also been made about drugs. I do not have substantiated figures, but I know that there is cause for concern among the police. I believe strongly that parental responsibility for children's behaviour on buses is of extreme importance.

I have amassed more material of the same type as I have already quoted. Parents have written to me from all over the country since I put one letter in *The Times* two and a half weeks ago. Head teachers, parent-teachers associations, doctors, bus drivers—everyone has written, and the letters keep pouring in. I shall pass them all to the Minister. I feel confident that I shall be meeting him again, as I know that he is as determined as I am to try to find the best solutions.

I ask the Minister to consider a 10-point code of good practice. First, all buses should carry distinctive signs, front and back, warning motorists that children are boarding and alighting. That was the first point that my hon. Friend and I discussed, which he accepted in principle, and which is to be put into practice in a pilot scheme. Secondly, school buses should be illuminated with flashing lights to make the vehicles more visible to motorists. Even in the short while since I put that point to the Minister, comment has come back from other parents proposing another idea. They suggest that flashing lights may be difficult in darkness and that it would be better to have an illuminated light which is switched on when dusk falls. I commend that thought to the Minister.

My natural third point is that no standing should be permitted on school buses. I do not believe it right that children should be allowed to stand in the gangway, and they should be told to sit down if they do so. I understand that standing is permitted under current legislation. I urge the Minister to move towards redesigning or redesignating the seating capacity so that, eventually, we get away from three children being counted as two passengers. Would my hon. Friend want his child to be on a bus with 79 other children and no other adult? I would not want any of my nieces or nephews to travel in such conditions.

My fourth point is that seat belts should be made compulsory on all school buses. The Minister knows that we in Devon feel strongly about this. I understand my hon. Friend when he says how difficult it is for Britain, that he is negotiating in Europe, but that it is tough for us to act alone. I urge him to be most fluent and energetic in his negotiations with our European partners. I cannot understand why they do not wish to introduce such seat belts.

Fifthly, first-aid training should be compulsory for all school bus drivers and schoolchildren. Perhaps the saddest and most miserable part of the inquest transcript that I read of Lee Kelly's death was the fact that the bus driver, poor man, had no first-aid training. He did not know what to do and, incidentally, no more did the van driver. The

schoolchildren got off the bus with their coats and looked for a mirror to see whether Lee was breathing, which he still was.

Surely it is not too much to ask that all school bus drivers should have a certificate in first aid. St John Ambulance staff, or our ambulance drivers—the men and women who know so much about first aid—in a short lesson could teach school bus drivers how to offer simple first aid and give them a certificate. Will the Minister urge his colleagues in the Department of Education and Science to provide in the national curriculum that, at some time during a child's time at school, there should be one compulsory lesson in first aid, and professional ambulance men and women should be called in to give the lesson?

The most difficult suggestion that I have to make is that all traffic should be halted when children board or alight from school buses. That is commonplace in the United States of America and Canada. The Alberta code of conduct is fierce, and the same sort of code applies in the United States. I appreciate the smallness of this island, the overcrowding that we suffer in terms of people and traffic, and the congestion in our major cities. Nonetheless, is their no possibility of the Minister looking at this suggestion most carefully, even if it were put into practice only in rural areas? The accidents that I described, which took place in rural areas, would not have happened if the traffic behind had had to halt.

It will be interesting to see whether the pilot scheme being carried out in the Hatherleigh area from January will have a beneficial effect on traffic so that cars coming behind buses slow down or even halt when their drivers see the sign and note the flashing lights. The police will be monitoring this, and Richard Clark, the chief executive, told me from county hall that, in the spring, once the scheme is up and running, he will be most willing to produce a video and full records of what happens. I had a lengthy talk with him this weekend. He is as concerned as I am that we should get this right. I urge the Minister to see whether there is any way in which, in country areas, traffic could be halted when children board or alight.

I have requested that when school buses make regular stops, particularly in the country, there should be signs saying "School bus stop" of the same colour as the signs on the back and front of the bus. I do not know why we do not have those already. There should be adult supervision, in addition to the driver, on crowded routes to ensure that proper safety procedures are followed. Not every route needs that—some are not crowded and I hope that not too many buses have 80 children on board. How can we expect a bus driver to cope under the conditions which I have accurately described from particular cases, and which are not unusual, without another grown-up on the bus?

School buses should be equiped with radio links or mobile telephones for use in emergencies. In Devon, it can take a long time for the ambulance to come, not because the ambulance does not move fast, but because it has a long way to go. It takes me two and a half hours to cross from one end of my constituency to another, and I drive rapidly. The ambulances cannot come as fast as a small, ordinary passenger car and need to be alerted at once. If a bus has to stop in a remote area—such places exist—a radio link or mobile telephone is needed in order to summon help.

If we were able to adopt the 10-point code of practice, it would avert other tragedies. I cannot help but think, as I read the material that pours in daily as a result of the campaign, that there is a much larger tragedy waiting in the wings. We mourn Lee Kelly and the other children. Let us, for heaven's sake, not need to mourn more deaths and injuries. I urge the Minister to discuss the code with his colleagues and to push for its early adoption.

5.24 am

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): It is my pleasant task at this ghastly hour of the morning highly to commend the work of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). She has without doubt raised an important matter before the House and country, and the public response that she has described bears testimony to that.

When I wanted to find something pertinent to say in the debate, I did what I suppose many Members of Parliament do: I asked my research assistant to contact the Library. That was instructive, because almost everything that the Library sent to me emanated from the work of the hon. Lady herself. It also appears from some of the replies that she has had in the House that she has been pushing at an open door. I hope that the Minister will follow that through today and give us even more positive information.

As the hon. Lady said, she is trying to introduce this code of practice because of the tragic death of one of her constituents. One death is one too many, but having looked at the available material, I share her concern that we do not know the extent of the problem. We do not know how many children are being injured in these circumstances, or how many killed. The hon. Lady rightly pointed out that the statistics of teenage pedestrian casualties are abnormally high compared with those of our European partners.

Many families are so worried about road safety that they do not allow their children to be on the roads except when that is unavoidable, so the statistics may relate to accidents that occur when children travel to and from school. That is very worrying; I hope that the Minister will confirm that he is taking steps to deal with the problem of our lack of knowledge, and that he will produce new advice for his Department or for local authorities about the gathering of statistics, the better to ascertain the extent of the problem.

The Opposition share the hon. Lady's concern about the general standard of public service vehicles. We have pressed repeatedly for improvements in those standards, which we believe have deteriorated because of the Government's policy of deregulating bus services.

I have observed in London and around the country that very strange vehicles are carrying schoolchildren to and from school. We do not see such buses transporting anything else, and that is worrying, too. It is a fact, not just a lay person's opinion, that standards are lower, and that increases our anxiety.

Safety must be paramount in any form of public service, especially for children. In the main, we support the hon. Lady's 10-point plan; we are keen to see the experiments supported, and if it is found practicable, we hope that most of the plan will be implemented quickly.

ILEA would certainly support the idea of clear signs on the fronts and backs of buses. The hon. Lady's idea of illuminated signs instead of flashing lights would find widespread support.

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

It seems absolutely obvious that children should not stand on buses, and we are amazed to find that it is common practice and permitted by law. Most adults are very worried about that, and it could be changed quickly. We hope that it will be. The same applies to three children being regarded as two for seating purposes. We support the idea of compulsory seat belts on buses and of first-aid training.

We also look forward to hearing more from the Minister on halting traffic. The experimental scheme in Devon may produce information that will help in making a judgment. However, the problem does not exist only in rural areas. I have lived in a number of urban areas, when I constantly saw children in hazardous situations—such as alighting from a bus and then walking to the back of it, close to passing traffic. London's one way streets pose an additional danger. School buses having only one exit are often obliged to allow children to alight from the side of the bus that traffic is passing. There is a clear case for arguing that the other vehicles should halt in those circumstances.

The standard colouring and marking of school buses, as is done in the United States, should be pursued. Standardisation would clearly help the motorist, and we are keen to learn the Minister's response on that aspect. Whatever proposals for improving safety standards he may put before the House, we hope that he will make it clear that local authorities will not be expected to find further sums from their restricted budgets to meet any additional cost involved in implementing those measures. Safety is a national responsibility whose costs should be met by the Government, not passed on to fare-paying passengers—although that hardly applies in this instance —or to local authorities.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has consistently pressed the Department to consider the compulsory fitting of reversing alarms not just on school buses but on public service vehicles in general. That request is relevant to the debate, and perhaps the Minister can say whether his Department is giving it further consideration.

The debate has been interesting and worth while, despite the lateness of the hour.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): The earlyness of the hour, the hon. Lady means.

Ms. Ruddock: The Minister corrects me. As a comparatively new Member, I am not sure whether this debate is taking place in the latest hours of the previous day, or in the earliest hours of the next.

Whichever day it is, the debate has been valuable, and I commend the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West on her comprehensive presentation, which I know will produce good results that will secure the support of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House —and that of the public at large.

5.33 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on raising the subject of school bus safety in the same manner as she has adopted in dealing with me on many previous occasions. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) adopted the same style—albeit that she is not nearly as new a Member of Parliament as she would like us to believe.

Since becoming Minister for Roads and Traffic, I have met many people who have experienced grief, tragedy and other problems associated with road accidents of one form or another. Only yesterday, I was concerned with the case of a Mrs. Stone, whose 17-year-old daughter was killed in a road accident. I have involved myself in the campaign against drink driving, and mothers and fathers have told me about the loss of their loved ones of all ages through drink-driving and the effects of those tragedies on them. The death of one of my hon. Friend's constituents is a case in point. Often such a tragedy is required for anything to happen, but one of my objectives is to avoid that. Tragedies inevitably spotlight particular problems—and this is one of them—but they should not be required to bring about a response from Government.

I know a good deal about this subject from personal experience. My two young children, aged 13 and 10—the 13-year-old probably would not like to be described as young—use the school bus every morning. They travel some 16 miles from my home to their school in Blackpool, and I am only too well aware of the problems. I congratulate my hon. Friend on the way in which she presented those problems, and trust that her campaign will go from strength to strength, because it is helping me—and my officials—to bring about changes that we hope will prevent accidents in the future.

I am happy to put it on the record that, since I came to the Department in June, I have been immensely impressed by the dedication of my officials in dealing with the problem of road safety. The Department's good record is, I think, generally accepted, and I know that my officials have welcomed the opportunity of my hon. Friend's campaign to do what many have wanted to do for a long time.

I shall consider much of what my hon. Friend has said in considerable detail. She has been able to raise the issue in the public prints, on the Floor of the House and by asking questions, and the response that she has received is all grist to the mill. I was particularly pleased that we were able to agree to a pilot scheme in Devon. It is a big county, with both rural and urban problems, and we shall learn a lot. I shall examine the results with considerable interest, and I am delighted that my hon. Friend has encouraged the chief executive to let me have the information in due course.

I should add that I have a slight constituency interest in buses and coaches. As my constituency contains the Leyland bus company, I have been closely associated during my time in Parliament with both general and specific matters relating to bus and coach safety.

I have been negotiating closely with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, who has a real interest in these matters. She has learnt —I am sure that she knew already—that to a large extent they are the concern of the local education authorities, and, through them, the DES.

I shall be considering in some depth the 10-point code that my hon. Friend mentioned to the House. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) drew attention to the variety of buses and coaches used by education authorities; as she said towards the end of her

speech, the costs to the authorities are substantial, and they therefore opt for more economically priced vehicles then they might otherwise.

Ms. Ruddock: Cheaper.

Mr. Atkins: "Cheaper" is indeed the word. As has already been said, it is early in the morning.

It would cost a great deal to introduce specialised buses for use on school trips, such as the fleet of bright yellow buses used in the United States, and the education authorities would have to pay. The authorities that have been consulted by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science have said in no uncertain terms that they are unhappy about the likely cost of some of the proposals that my hon. Friend and I have considered.

They are worried about the three-into-two argument, for example, and the no-standing argument. More modern buses are safer and tend to be more luxurious, but they also cost more. There are factors here which are important but in respect of which I cannot supply answers straight away.

We are already involved with signs in the pilot scheme. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for that. We shall see what comes of it, and I look forward to finding out. Considering the advantages of a flashing light or a permanent light is a jolly good idea. There has to be a highly visible sign of some sort. Flashing signs attract attention where a fully illuminated one might not. There is scope for study here. I urge my hon. Friend to encourage Devon county council to try both forms to see which is preferable. In the summer, a fully illuminated sign might not be noticeable, whereas a flashing sign would attract attention.

I share the House's view about no standing. It is dangerous and a practice that is worth considering. I have already said, however, that local education authorities say that it will cost a lot of money if the result of having no standing is that more buses are required. My hon. Friends in the Department of Education and Science may also have views on the enormous increase that would be required in their travel budget. It is nevertheless a fair suggestion, as is redesignating the seating arrangements.

We have to be realistic about this. On modern and some older coaches, which are quite large, there is room for three children on a seat designed for two people. That does not really answer my hon. Friend's question. If, as I hope, we shall have a seat belt for every seat, three children would not be able to use a seat for two. That may be the point at which we make a change.

I feel strongly about the provision of seat belts, and we are doing some work on that. Our objective is to have them fitted on all seats in minibuses and coaches. I recently had a meeting with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders at which I talked in general terms about the possibility of seat belts on coaches. I cannot make their provision mandatory for reasons which I think the House understands—they involve the European Commission—but I can at least encourage the option to be made available. Seat belts are available from one or two manufacturers, and I hope that all will get the message from this debate that they should be made available. Education authorities could then specify them if they had the necessary resources.

First-aid training is an excellent suggestion. I was surprised, as was my hon. Friend, to learn that none is necessary. I suspect that it is one of those things that has gone almost by default. It, too, is a matter for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Education and Science, but I shall add my weight to the idea.

It has been recognised that the most difficult area is whether traffic should be halted when a school bus is taking on or dropping passengers. Halting traffic would cause traffic congestion in cities. In the morning at least, school buses travel at the same time as everyone else, and I suspect that stopping traffic would cause great difficulties. Rural areas may be able to follow this suggestion, but even there there may be a problem with narrow winding lanes. I cannot give a specific answer now.

My instincts tell me that it would cause congestion and create difficulties in keeping the traffic moving, which is a contributory factor to road safety and casualty reduction. However, we are considering it. Devon county council may have some views on that and I look forward to hearing them. It may be possible to specify certain areas where it would help, and if that is the case I shall consider the matter in detail.

It is easy to have a bus stop outside a school as that is where the children will be, but picking them up is not so easy. My own children's bus picks up where people hail it or where children find it convenient. That would not be necessarily the same spot every day, and if it were, there would be so many pick-up points that having bus stops dotted round would affect sensibilities, create excessive street furniture and perhaps be counter-productive. However, there may be some merit in having special brightly coloured bus stops outside schools in busier areas. I hope that that will be revealed by the pilot scheme. Perhaps Devon county council will use a brightly coloured, highly visible temporary bus stop. I should be interested to hear the results of any experiments, but it is not quite as easy as it sounds.

The same applies to supervision by adults. I am not an education specialist—although everyone who has been to school always thinks that they are—but the problems that schools have getting teachers to do extra work would apply. I suspect that it will be difficult to persuade teachers—especially in rural areas. For example, teachers who live in Blackpool will not be frightfully keen to take the bus 16 miles out to where I live. The supervision does not have to be done by teachers; the parents may volunteer.

As my hon. Friend is aware, although children in her constituency and my children especially are extraordinarily well behaved and never in any way offend against the discipline of the parent or teacher who is in charge, some children are not quite so open to disciplinary action. I shall not be drawn on what I would do in the circumstances, as it might provoke rather than pacify. Nonetheless, in those circumstances, parents might not be able to control the children. In some instances we are dealing with third, fourth and fifth-form youngsters who rightly have their own minds and their own views and do not take kindly to discipline from teachers, let alone from someone else's mother or father. As it is thought to be rather bad form to give them a clump around the head, I suspect that the disciplinary factor needs greater consideration. Again, that is a serious point that we recognise.

Radio links are a very good idea, as they are no longer as expensive as they used to be. A personal radio which can

[Mr. Atkins]

be carried should be encouraged, and I shall certainly pursue that point. I suspect that such radios are beginning to be available. Their use depends on the personal whim of the driver or the school rather than regulation, but the suggestion has much merit.

The 10-point plan that my hon. Friend has presented to the House has considerable merit. There are differences of nuance that we can pursue, and certainly the most difficult one is the halting of traffic.

My hon. Friend suggested painting the bus a special colour. My hon. Friend and the House will recognise that that means specifying a large number of buses which effectively cannot be used for anything else. That poses problems in the marketplace for bus and coach operation generally. I do not think that a bus or coach which is made for the general public is less safe because it is carrying children, provided that the substance of my hon. Friend's 10-point plan is taken into account—that is, the introduction of seat belts, special stopping arrangements and perhaps flashing lights which can be removed for the purposes of reconverting the bus or coach for conventional use. That would mean existing vehicles could be used. I suspect that designating special buses would be so horrendously expensive that it would prove difficult. As the hon. Member for Deptford rightly said, my Department is familiar with all those topics and I have learnt that they are very important.

My hon. Friend is pushing at a wide open door. I shall continue to look at this matter with considerable attention to ensure that the points that have been made in the debate and other matters relating to child safety are kept very much in mind. I could delay the House by talking at length about what we are doing on child safety. I can say, from my experience and because of the importance of the subject, that our record on road casualtlies is as good as anywhere in Europe, but on child safety we have a long way to go. That is true of any casualty, and so long as one child is injured or killed, our record will not be good enough.

I have taken a great deal of trouble with child safety in a wide variety of areas—en route to and from school by bus or coach, on foot, by pedal cycle or in cars—and I am devoting much attention to it. The House expects me to do that, and I pledge to continue to do so. As part of giving attention to road safety for children, I assure the House that the points that have been made in the campaign by my hon. Friend are well received, and I am grateful to her for raising them.

I thank the participants in the debate on both sides, and especially my hon. Friend. The matters that she raises are important. I hope that the memorial to Lee Kelly will be a scheme which will ensure that people, and parents in particular, do not have to experience the grief of bereavement resulting from the sort of tragedy that my hon. Friend's constituents have experienced, for it is unacceptable that that should be the case.

I have experienced bereavement in my family and I know the problems that ensue. I am determined that, with the support of the House and the public, we encourage drivers, and road users generally, to recognise that children above all are our most vulnerable citizens. Anything that can be done to improve matters for them must be our priority and objective. I give that assurance to the House.

Rain Forests (Trade)

5.52 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): When the topic of the international trade in birds, fish and rain forest reptiles was drawn in the ballot, there was a certain curiosity among parliamentary colleagues as to who would answer the debate.

One of my hon. Friends said that it was a matter for the Treasury because it controlled Customs and Excise. No, said another colleague. He thought it was a matter for the Foreign Office because, he said, one had to tackle action by the Governments of rain forest countries at source. In any event, as I was told yesterday in reply to a parliamentary question, it is a matter for Community directives.

Another opinion was that it was a matter for the Overseas Development Administration because it was really about habitat and the provision of habitat for rain forest birds.

The Department of Trade and Industry telephoned me —assuming that it was its responsibility—wanting to know what I would say in the debate. The Secretary of State's private secretary said that it was a matter of trade, so she wanted to know what I intended to ask because it would probably be dealt with by the DTI.

By that time I had already telephoned the private secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. But another colleague had the feeling that the Department of the Environment was probably involved, since it was responsible for CITES.

No, said one of my hon. Friends, who thought it was for the Department of Transport, since the wretched animals came in by air, and, in any case, it was a matter for International Air Transport Association regulations.

A senior colleague was definite in his opinion. He thought it was for the Home Office, which had animal welfare responsibilities. Yet another colleague thought it was a matter for the Department of Health, which was responsible for the quarantine regulations.

An irreverent Conservative Member, a friend of mine whose name will not be dragged from me, commented, "The answer is for you to get the Government Whips to tell the Prime Minister to come to the House to answer your debate at about half-past five in the morning." But I fear that even the daunting presence of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) on the Government Whips Bench, combined with the forces of the Opposition Chief Whip—both of whom have done me the courtesy of being present—would not be wholly persuasive in getting the Prime Minister out of her bed to answer my debate.

I think that Whitehall is very good at dealing wth matters that come within the orbit of one or two Departments, but when a subject comes between 10 Departments there tends often to be a falling between stools. My first request is that it is established which is the lead Department to deal with the problem which I have chosen to raise. I am not silly enough to suggest that there should be a Minister devoted especiclly to it, but it is important that there should be a lead Department and clear responsibilities.

Incidentally, although I am not an uncritical admirer of the Prime Minister, I believe that she cares about rain forests. I acknowledge that £100 million has been earmarked. We wait with great interest to learn how that will be spread and used, but that is a slightly different subject.

I decided that I would approach the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as soon as I learned that I had been successful in the ballot, partly because I think that MAFF is an extremely effective Department and partly because I was extremely well received by the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) when he was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry. After I went to Whitehall court, he took great trouble to follow up our meeting and to pursue the matter as best he could.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), the Parliamentary Secretary, is on the Government Front Bench, because he is a Scot and he knows the Highlands. In all my discussions in Brasilia and with other foreigners who are interested in rain forests, I begin with the same few sentences. I say that I come from a country where we have cut down a great deal of our ancient Caledonian forest. I explain that we still have problems at Abernethy, as the Minister knows, with the Mondhvie wood. I acknowledge that we are not in a position to lecture others, especially when we are destroying our peat bogs rapidly to provide garden peat.

Although there is a world problem, I do not think that it serves great purpose to go through the awful and powerful stories that have appeared in the newspapers, especially—to their credit—the tabloids. I shall quote Sian James of *Today*, however. The article of 31 October reads:

> "The beautiful young bird screeches in pain as its wings are severed with a machete before hunters nail it to a stake in the forest floor.
>
> Its pitiful shrieks ring through the trees. The cries attract others in the flock who fly to investigate and are themselves trapped.
>
> This stomach-churning brutality is an everyday scene".

I do not know whether that is an exaggeration. I can say only that when I was at the Altimera conference I saw parrots for sale. I asked about the position and I was told, rather movingly, "The man who is selling the parrots has seven children to feed." We must be extremely careful about making moral judgments. Many of those who do the trapping undertake it for a pittance, but considerable sums are made elsewhere.

I refer to a powerful article that appeared in last Sunday's edition of *The Observer*. It was written by Peter Beaumont and Polly Ghazi. It seems to show that there is an action plan in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I may be doubly fortunate in securing the debate because I take the opportunity of saying—I have given warning of this—that I would like to know whether the story in *The Observer* is accurate. I hope that it is.

I should add that scientists such as Peter Furley and Jim Raffa—who are distinguished Edinburgh university professors as well as professors at Brazilian universities and have taken part in the Maraca project—confirm much of the difficulty with the Amazon.

I gave notice to the private secretary to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that I was to make a glancing reference to the problem of the Yanomami. The new Brazilian President was the guest of the Government and many hon. Members met him. I do not know how tactful it is to make a plea about the Yanomami, but I shall read the all-party motion that will be tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer). It reads:

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"That this House expresses its grave concern for the Indian people of Brazil and in particular the Yanomami people; notes that the Brazilian Constitution requires Indian land to be demarcated; is encouraged that on 22 October the Brazilian Federal Court gave legal protection to all Yanomami lands; notes with concern however that the Yanomami's future is threatened by the invasion of their land by mineral prospectors, approximately 45,000 of whom have begun prospecting since 1987; notes with concern that these developments have led to the introduction of diseases such as an epidemic increase of malaria cases, flu, venereal diseases, and respiratory diseases, as well as large scale pollution of the environment by mercury poisoning of rivers and deforestation which have serious and detrimental impact on the livelihood of the Yanomami through crop devastation and the disappearance of fish and game; urges Her Majesty's Government to work with and encourage other Governments and international agencies to support the Brazilian Government in its efforts to demarcate Indian lands and to enforce the removal of prospectors from Yanomami lands and in particular looks forward to the day when the Yanomami people are able to live in peace and the environment in which they live is protected and restored."

I pay tribute to Roy Trevidy and his colleagues at Oxfam for taking an intense interest in the problem. I pay tribute also to our excellent embassy in Brazil, which is led by the ambassador Michael Newington. It has sent Mr. Morris and other senior colleagues to the Yanomami lands. I make no criticism of the British embassy.

The problem is not only Brazil. Last week, I was the guest of the Association of South-East Asian Nations high commissioners. I asked a parliamentary question about what studies had been

"made of the situation of indigenous peoples of the rain forests of Sarawak; what were the results of such studies"?

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs replied:

"We have noted reports of the arrest of nomadic Penan tribespeople for blockading logging roads. The Malaysian authorities are aware of international interest in the effects of deforestation on the global environment and on tribespeople. We have expressed concern to the Malaysian authorities, who state that their aim is to resettle the Penans and provide education, health care and an improved quality of life."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. *497*.]

I met some Penans, who are very primitive people, in Borneo, in the 1960s. They may want to continue their own way of life. It may be to the advantage of the world if they do so, because they may be the best guardians of the forest. I say that to show that it is not simply a south American problem.

I am greatly indebted to Tony Juniper and Christoph Imboden of the International Council for Bird Preservation, which is primarily concerned with the conservation of species. It is therefore of great concern that they have learnt that the number of birds dying in each consignment entering Britain continually averages between 13 and 20 per cent. In answer, I think that the Minister gave a figure of 13·7 per cent. The recent consignment of birds from Tanzanian en route through Heathrow to Miami is a good example of the scale of the problem.

Just one consignment totalled over 8,700 birds, but over 1,200 individuals died. That is within the percentage loss that appears to be generally accepted by the authorities and importers, not only in Britain but worldwide. In the United States, the figures for deaths range from 14 to 24 per cent. Current public feeling to animals must not accept that figure. If it were dogs, cats or horses in trade, such figures would be totally unacceptable.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food figures, compiled through its quarantine regulations, show that, in 1987, almost 170,000 birds other than poultry were imported into Britain. Almost all those birds will be destined for the commercial trade. United States figures show that over 99 per cent. of all birds imported are used in the pet shop and commercial trade. There is no reason to suspect different figures for this country.

While detailed figures are available on this trade in other countries, there are no comparative figures available in this country. For example, in the United States in 1985, over 18,000 grey parrots were imported and almost 2,700 died. No such specific comparable figures are available in the United Kingdom.

Birds are not the only animal commodity traded in such numbers. Tropical fish, both marine and freshwater, imported into Britain alone total over 400 million. The trade generally accepts a mortality figure of around 5 per cent. to 10 per cent., but that accounts for 40 million individuals.

Obviously a total ban on the trade in animals for commercial trade is ideal, but the present climate would never accept such a measure. However, limiting the trade to those individuals which are captive bred will certainly reduce the trade and the mortality figures. Interim measures which could be easily implemented include a stronger resolve by Governments to get to grips with this problem and to implement the CITES checklist scheme.

The problem experienced by the International Air Transport Association is very important. It is vital that the dialogue between the CITES secretariat, through the standing committee, and the live animals board of the International Air Transport Association, the Animal Air Transport Association and the International Office of Epizootics be continued; that applicants for export permits or re-export certificates should be notified that, as a condition of issuance, they are required to prepare and ship live specimens in accordance with IATA live animals regulations for the transport of live specimens by air and the CITES guidelines for transport of live specimens for marine or terrestrial shipments; that to assist enforcement officers, CITES export permits or re-export certificates should be accompanied by a crating check list to be signed immediately prior to shipment by a person designated by a CITES management authority, the person so designated being familiar with the live animals regualtions; that where parties to the convention have designated ports of entry and exit, animal holding facilities should be provided; that parties be encouraged to gather information on mortality occurring during transport and to note obvious causes of such mortality; that to the extent possible, parties should ensure that animal holding facilities are open for inspection of shipments, with the concurrence of the transport company, by CITES-designated enforcement personnel or designated observers; and that any documented information be made available to the appropriate authorities and transport companies.

Those are all matters for the Department of Transport. I hope that officials at that Department will read the *Hansard* record of this debate and will write to me at their convenience about it. As soon as I knew that I was to have this opportunity to raise the subject, I phoned the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to inform the officials

there of the matters that I considered to be their responsibilities. I hope that the Minister will be able to respond to my points.

I am greatly indebted to Mark Love, the senior legal adviser to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; to Gerry Lloyd, the RSPCA's parliamentary liaison officer; and to the RSPCA chief inspector at the sharp end, Andy Foxcroft, for helping me to formulate my questions.

First, what criteria are applied by the Ministry in granting licences under the Importation of Birds, Poultry and Hatching Eggs Order 1979? For example, does the Minister take note of any relevant previous convictions for importation offences? It seems to me that those convicted of habitual and repeated offences should not be allowed to continue in trade.

Secondly, is there any liaison between the Department of the Environment and MAFF when an individual applies to import protected species of birds and seeks the necessary licences from the respective DOE and MAFF departments? Specifically, is it the case that MAFF says, "We are interested only in hygiene," and that the DOE says, "We are interested only in the convention in CITES"? That is my impression. If I am wrong, I am sure that I will be told.

Thirdly, does the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food require production of the relevant Department of the Environment licence for protected species of birds before issuing an import licence under the Importation of Birds, Poultry and Hatching Eggs Order 1979?

Fourthly, are there any controls or checks to prevent dealers from importing protected species of birds by multiple applications for import licences for family pet birds? I am concerned about this matter. There are dealers who, under the guise of family import, bring in up to six birds—that is their entitlement—and are making multi applications. That is an abuse of the system. It is what happens particularly in relation to valuable birds. Some birds and parrots are extremely valuable—we are talking about thousands of pounds.

Fifthly, when protected species of birds are imported through the animal quarantine station at Heathrow, who checks that the necessary Department of the Environment licence has been granted and complied with? At present, there is only a MAFF licence.

Sixthly, what inquiries and checks are made that imports of protected species of fauna under zoo licences are for zoological study rather than for import into the commercial trade? The zoo directors and Roger Wheater in Edinburgh in particular are concerned about this matter. People should not be deprived of pets, but they should be captive-bred. Captive-bred parrots make much better pets.

Seventhly, on how many occasions in 1987, 1988 and 1989 have officials from Customs and Excise asked to see the relevant documentation supporting protected species in transit through the United Kingdom to a third non-EEC country, as provided by article 5.4 of EEC regulation 3626/82?

Eighthly, in the recent transit flight involving protected species of birds, in which over 1,200 flamingos died—it is greedy to bring in that number of birds; it is disgraceful—did any officer of the animal quarantine station ask to see all the relevant CITES export documents, as provided in 5.4 of EEC regulation 3626/82? Why did the animal quarantine station not call in Customs to check the relevant CITES paperwork?

Ninthly, what inquiries and checks are made to ensure that protected species of birds that are imported as captive-bred birds are captive-bred? I suspect that there is a great deal of labelling that birds are captive-bred when they are nothing of the kind because they were brought in and, therefore, supposed to be cheaper. That will not do.

Tenthly, why are family pet birds that are the subject of CITES protection imported in ports other than Heathrow? On 13 December in a question, which was answered on 18 December, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer I asked: "what are the implications for the enforcement of regulations concerning the Wildlife Trade and the implementation of CITES of the effect on specialist skills, including intelligence gathering and criminal identifications, resulting from the proposed move of the Custom and Excise Endangered Species Branch from London to Southend."

I am not at all happy about the Economic Secretary's answer. He said:

"There is no reason to suppose that the proposed relocation from London to Southend of the small group of Customs and Excise HQ staff dealing with import and export controls on endangered species will have any significant effect on the level of enforcement".—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. *28*.]

That may be a technically correct answer, but like the rest of us, the Customs officials have families. It is a question of moving, and it may not be easy for them. I do not know what their personal circumstances are—whether they have mortgages, or kids at school, or whatever. However, for one reason or another, justified or unjustified, the unit seems to be being broken up. That is a tragedy, because comparatively few people have the expertise to make the decisions that are so necessary. Possibly that matter could be taken up.

Lastly, I cannot resist returning to a subject that I raised with the Scottish Office at 3.15 this afternoon. Why has the Scottish Office refused the eminently reasonable request of the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) for an independent chairman of the Science Co-ordinating Committee? I am profoundly unhappy about the break-up of the Nature Conservancy Council. That is a matter for the green Bill and for debate elsewhere, but those who go about breaking up the NCC and its expertise should think, and think again, about the effect of that on the subject that I have raised. I thank the Whips, my Chief Whip and the Minister for their presence.

6.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has done well to raise a subject of great concern to the House. Clearly, it is a matter on which he is campaigning most ardently and with an impressive depth of knowledge. I thank him for his customary kindness and courtesy to me and to those others who have been present at this hour of the morning to listen and respond to his debate.

I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman made at the start of his speech—that responsibility for this problem, depending on which aspect is of greatest concern, could cross many departmental boundaries. I assure him that there is considerable liaison between the various Departments depending on whether the problem at the time relates to welfare or transport or is a Foreign Office responsibility. The hon. Gentleman, who has considerable

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experience of the machinery of government and how it works, will appreciate that it is not possible on any one subject to designate one Department as being in the lead on all occasions. It depends on the problem being highlighted at the time.

I am delighted that on this occasion not just the buck but the African Gray stops here and I have the chance to respond to the hon. Gentleman. I am pleased to respond to him for another reason, which is entirely unrelated to his debate. The last time the hon. Gentleman and I met properly in a debate in the House was on a Committee when as a Back Bencher I decided to rise to support a new Government initiative allowing grants to be given for dry stone walls. It must have been five or six years ago—

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, I remember.

Mr. Maclean: I made my little speech on the importance of dry stone walls and the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to jump to his feet immediately after me and to stress that I was absolutely right and that dry stone walls—or dry stone "dykes" as he said—were vital to the rural economy. The hon. Gentleman spent five minutes making sensible and erudite points to back up what I had said, much to consternation of all my hon. Friends, who were surprised to see the hon. Member for Linlithgow entirely agreeing with everything that I said. They told me that my promotion prospects were ruined for ever. Thankfully, that was not the case, and the hon. Gentleman and I have both gone on to greater things.

I should like to make our position quite clear on the import trade in wild-caught birds. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made clear in *The Observer* newspaper at the weekend, we are not happy that large numbers of birds should have to die —whether on capture, during handling and transport or after arrival in this country—for no better reason than to make money or to be a status symbol for the owner who buys them. I question the morality of the whole trade. If it is necessary for birds of exotic species to be caged in this country, it is surely better that they should have been bred in captivity, as the hon. Gentleman said. In that way, the mortality would be reduced and wild birds could continue to adorn their natural habitat. As the hon. Gentleman suggested, and it is also my understanding, captive-bred birds are much more likely to provide responsive and amenable pets.

The hon. Member referred to the details of a study conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food into mortalities of imported birds, which was made available yesterday. The figures cover all birds arriving at post-import quarantine premises during 1988. They are not capable of separation into birds that were captured in the wild and any other categories, but the statistics are divided into birds dead on arrival at quarantine premises and those which die during the statutory quarantine period.

I understand that the study provides the first comprehensive survey of its type, and as such it will be an important basis for deciding on any subsequent measures. It reveals that of 185,000 birds, 5,000 were dead on arrival and a further 21,000 died during quarantine. The overall average mortality rate was 13·7 per cent. Those losses are in addition to unquantified deaths during capture and subsequent handling and transport in the country of origin, for which we have no figures. Clearly losses are higher for certain bird species and for certain individual countries than for others. There can be no doubt that there is a major problem and the unfortunate cargo of flamingoes and other birds that recently transited Heathrow en route to Miami further highlighted the problem. I shall refer to that incident later.

The natural initial reaction of anyone confronted with the problem is to ask for a unilateral ban on imports of these birds. However, as the hon. Gentleman said, that simple remedy is not open to us. We would immediately run foul of our international obligations both as members of the Community and under the general agreement on tariffs and trade. Nor are there powers to restrict the imports of birds on welfare grounds, either under the EC regulation 3626/82, which implements CITES within the Community, or under the Endangered Species (Import/ Export) Act 1976, which is, of course, Department of the Environment legislation.

As the hon. Member is fully aware, my Department is responsible both for ensuring appropriate disease protection arrangements and for safeguarding the welfare of birds, and indeed all animals, during transport and on landing. Taking disease protection first, the Importation of Birds, Poultry and Hatching Eggs Order 1979 is designed to reduce the risk of certain bird diseases, especially Newcastle disease, being introduced into the country by way of imported birds or poultry. Applicants for licences under the order must confirm the availability of appropriate quarantine premises which, except for pet birds, have to be inspected and approved by MAFF veterinary staff before licences are issued.

Mr. Dalyell: Quite often pigeons from France bring Newcastle disease.

Mr. Maclean: That is a fair point. However, we must ensure that it does not enter the country through birds going through the quarantine regulations.

Applicants must nominate the means of transport from points of landing to the quarantine premises and provide the names of local veterinary inspectors to supervise those quarantine premises. Applicants must also undertake to comply with our import conditions which, among other things, include a requirement that imported birds are accompanied by the prescribed health certificate signed by an official veterinarian in the exporting country. In those circumstances, there is no power to refuse to issue a licence as long as those criteria are met.

Liaison between the Ministry and the Department of the Environment in relation to individual import licences is not normally required, but all applicants for a licence under the 1979 order are told that they should contact the DoE in case a licence is required by that Department. Licences issue under the 1979 order make it clear that they provide no exemption from the need to obtain a DoE licence if appropriate, but there is no requirement for the issue of a MAFF licence to be conditional upon the production of a DoE licence.

All applications for import licences under the 1979 order, including those for pet birds, are carefully scrutinised. Checks are made to ensure, as far as possible, that multiple applications for pet bird licences do not contravene the rules for such imports, which are less stringent than those governing other type of imports. The

hon. Gentleman referred to that in his speech. If he or the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has any evidence that the pet bird import rules are being abused, I shall be pleased to receive it and I undertake to arrange for the appropriate investigations to be made. We shall be pleased to do that.

Imports into zoological collections must undergo quarantine in approved premises and are subject to official supervision. Birds are released from quarantine only once a MAFF veterinary officer is satisfied of their health status.

Turning now to my Department's welfare responsibilities, I return to the deaths of flamingos and other birds in transit from Tanzania to the USA via Amsterdam. On 9 December, staff at the animal quarantine station at Heathrow became aware of problems with the consignment. Sorting of the birds revealed the extent of the mortalities and the transport condition. Approximately 1,250 birds, including flamingos, were dead on arrival.

My right hon. Friend the Minister was able to speak promptly to Mr. Gerrit Braks, his Dutch counterpart, about the need for prompt and close co-operation in investigating this case and exploring particular lessons to be learned. Ministry vets also offered their assistance to the AQS. It is operated by the City of London corporation and it has the powers of enforcement under the Animal Health Act 1981. I understand that it is considering whether to take proceedings in this particular case under the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973. Since that is pending consideration, it would be unwise for me to say more about that specific incident.

Mr. Dalyell: Some of us were deeply shocked and angered when, on the different subject of orchids, the Customs and Excise went to enormous trouble to bring a prosecution against a plant dealer, which was overturned by the courts. That was disheartening for them. I should like to put on record my strong support for the Customs and Excise in this matter.

Mr. Maclean: I am grateful for the support that the hon. Gentleman has expressed for Customs and Excise and say other Government Departments or authorities charged with responsibility for prosecuting those who may have offended against regulations. I can only repeat that the authority responsible for operating the animal quarantine station, the City of London corporation, is considering at this precise moment what action it should take under the Transit of Animal (General) Order 1973.

Mr. Dalyell: There is a feeling that the courts treat offences involving animals and plants differently from other offences. They are equally offences.

Mr. Maclean: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman that they are equally offences. I hope that the courts do not make that distinction. I, and all hon. Members who are in the Chamber at this hour in the morning have the strongest regard for animal welfare legislation. The Government have made clear their commitment in other cases. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Ministry laid charges against those responsible for the export of beagles in the case of a few weeks ago. We take the dimmest possible view of any breach of any animal health and welfare regulations, and the courts would take a similar view.

I can make it clear it general terms that those involved in transporting birds or animals must know and should know that causing suffering is a very serious matter. Necessary steps will be taken by the local authorities enforcement officers or ourselves against offenders. I can also say that, as a direct result of the incident involving birds in transit from Tanzania to the United States, my officials are drawing up a general import licence which, among other things, will require advance notice to be given to my Department of consignments transiting this country so that they may be inspected on arrival here. I hope that those new arrangements will be in place early in the new year.

Mr. Dalyell: Good.

Mr. Maclean: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that welcome.

The hon. Gentleman will know full well that the law covering the welfare of birds in transit to and from this country is set out in the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973, as amended in 1988. It is underpinned by general provisions in the Protection of Animals Act 1911. Offenders can be, and are, prosecuted under this legislation. I have just given one such exammple. But we think the European Community as a whole should take a close look into the health and welfare aspects of the captive bird trade. That is why I made it clear, in a reply to the hon. Gentleman yesterday, that we will raise this matter in the Council of Ministers at an early opportunity.

On the specific points to which the hon. Gentleman sought a response, he will know the important fact that all commercial imports entering this country must be routed through the animal quarantine station. Staff there are particularly knowledgeable in the transport of exotic species of birds and have taken important steps not only to prosecute, but warn and advise airlines on transport conditions and practices. However, when the birds first enter the country, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise make the checks that the Department of the Environment's endangered species controls are properly met. Unfortunately the Customs and Excise department does not hold, centrally, information which would enable me to say how often its officers have checked the documentation for those species transitting this country. Nor have we been able to determine whether the relevant CITES document was inspected in the case of the recent flamingo consignment.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, certain protected species may be imported for a limited and clearly defined range of circumstances. For example, species are allowed for zoological study, and to be imported if they are captive-bred. The Department of the Environment will not issue the relevant import permits unless it is fully satisfied with the evidence submitted in support of the import applications. The nature of the information sought varies according to the circumstances of each import. I understand that some follow-up checks are made.

Family pet birds need not enter this country via Heathrow or Gatwick even though the species are subject to CITES protection. The Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Designation of Ports of Entry) Regulations 1985 do not apply where a person imports two birds or fewer and accompanies them. This exemption does not, however, apply to diurnal birds of prey—in other words, daytime raptors such as eagles, hawks and falcons.

[Mr. Maclean]

I have referred to the study on mortality in imported birds, the results of which have been placed in the Library of the House. That study provides a basis for considering what further measures need to be taken.

Our existing arrangements relating to the import of captive birds have been strikingly successful in dealing with the disease risks which such imports would otherwise constitute. But in the light of the results of the survey, I shall be taking further steps to ensure that our requirements are being fulfilled. I cannot, of course, comment on the speculation in *The Observer* newspaper at the weekend, but the hon. Gentleman asked me for our action plan and I shall give it.

My officials will be visiting major exporting countries to determine how effectively they fulfil our import requirements and impress upon them the importance of following the International Air Transport Association standards for shipment to the United Kingdom. These visits will enable us to decide whether it is necessary to impose additional conditions and whether there are any countries from which imports should no longer be accepted on health grounds. I will also review the conditions that are imposed after birds reach the United Kingdom, including stocking rates in quarantine premises, which my officials are already examining, and the possibility of requiring post-import prophylactic treatment for certain important diseases. Officials will be meeting representatives of the bird trade to discuss the implications of the results of the survey and the possibility of a code of practice. I will be contacting the airlines to emphasise how much importance I attach to compliance with satisfactory practice in transporting birds, and will be considering whether any further welfare safeguards are needed.

Dealing with the high mortality found among imported birds is not, however, fundamentally a problem which can be tackled at a national level alone. I therefore propose to raise this matter in the Council of Ministers at an early opportunity. I would welcome the hon. Gentleman's views about other possible avenues. Representatives of the trade will also wish to comment. We would also be interested in any proposals from organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Environmental Investigation Agency, the International Council for the Preservation of Birds and the RSPCA.

Mr. Dalyell: There is one urgent matter. There is soon to be a new Government in Brazil. It is important that they should be talked to quietly and privately. As I emphasised in my speech, there should be no sense of lecturing. There should be a discussion of the problem as between partners.

Mr. Maclean: Since this debate has touched a wide variety of Departments, I shall ensure that today's *Hansard* is drawn to the attention of all of them, including the Foreign Office.

At this time of year, our thoughts run particularly to the keeping and love of animals. I have in mind, for example, the excellent campaign and slogan, "A dog is for life, not just for Christmas". Many children have their own pets and are encouraged to think and remember that, if they get a pet such as a puppy, they must consider how they will look after it and what they will do with it when it grows up and becomes much larger.

I am in correspondence with hundreds and hundreds of colleagues who are desperately concerned about the treatment and welfare of horses and ponies after 1992. While many people are concerned—children are writing to me because they are worried about it—I would place a little of the responsibility on them. The next time some young girl pesters her daddy to get her a pony, she should remember that one day that pony will be a bit older and perhaps, when her interest turns to teenage boys rather than ponies, someone will have to look after that animal or dispose of it when it is older.

People who buy an animal as a pet, or whatever, must consider the consequences. The examples that I gave are relevant to this. I urge everyone who sees a captive bird in a pet shop to think of its origins, when it was perhaps flying free in the Amazon rain forest, and the many birds of that species which have died on capture on or on transit in order to supply one live bird in captivity. They should think of the sierra parakeets, 50 per cent. of which die before arriving in this country; of the red-fronted macaws, 30 per cent. of which die; and the same applies to peach-faced lovebirds. Next time anyone goes to a pet shop and wants to buy a blue-headed parrot, let him remember that for every parrot bought here another has perished on the journey—and those figures do not include deaths during capture and while awaiting export. People who buy such birds must remember that, however well they may look after them, horrendous losses have occurred to get the birds into the shops in this country.

The Government will do all that they can to protect these species. We shall tighten up the transit rules whenever possible. We shall enforce the IATA regulations strictly. We shall raise the matter in the EC and the Council of Ministers, and we shall not hesitate to prosecute offenders.

Ultimately, however, what will have the most profound effect on this trade will be a change of attitude and perceptions. So long as people want to possess these birds in cages, there will be those who are willing to supply them at any price, regardless of the death and suffering caused. But if people decide that keeping these wild birds causes unacceptable losses or suffering and that they will have no more of it, demand for the birds will end and so will their suffering.

Charities

6.42 am

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): It is always a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), who represents the Department to which I had the privilege of being special adviser. The last debate was initiated by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), a gentleman in every sense of the word, who raised a matter of considerable importance with which many of us have a great deal of sympathy. My role this morning is to move to a somewhat different subject, but one that is appropriate to the time of year, and I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) has risen from his bed and come hotfoot to the Chamber to answer this debate on charities.

Christmas is a time of maximum indulgence for most of us, but it is also a time when the gap between those who cannot join in—not always for lack of funds—and those who enjoy Christmas is most clearly to be seen. One of the roles of charities is to bridge that gap. It is remarkable and to the credit of our people that so many of them muck in and help in charitable activities by giving money or time at Christmas. One of my early political mentors, Iain Macleod, was closely involved with the charity Crisis at Christmas, which does the kind of work that many of us will be doing in our constituencies this Christmas.

I speak as a member of, but not on behalf of, the all-party working party on charity law. The group spans both Houses and has been useful, I hope, to the Home Office in the deliberations leading up to the White Paper published in May. I trust, too, that it will continue to be useful as we move to legislation on this subject.

I should declare an interest as president of the Perry Foundation, a private and endowed agricultural trust working in agricultural research and organised, as so many charities now are, as a company limited by guarantee. It has a substantial income. Later, I shall advert to trends and changes in the pattern of charitable activity.

It is remarkable that this House pays little attention to charities unless there is a particular failure and something goes wrong. Even in respect of our work on the all-party group, the other place is livelier and more forthcoming. On 30 November, it had a most interesting and distinguished debate, which demonstrated the expertise that many noble Lords have in the subject. The other place often concerns itself with matters of law, which are of great importance but in which I have no professional qualification. Nevertheless, it is right for right hon. and hon. Members to turn their thoughts increasingly to the subject of charity as we move towards legislating on it in the year ahead.

The White Paper touches on the size of charitable activity in this country, but that aspect is insufficiently understood. The White Paper quotes a turnover of £13 billion per year, and charities have a number of implications for the public purse—in the form of commensurate tax relief on that income and the direct structure of Government grant aid. If one adds together the value of that grant aid and indirect Government support—such as employment training and personal social services—they total about £2 billion. Another £500 million comes from tax relief. That adds up to big business, and it supports an even bigger business—private charity.

Government assistance to the voluntary sector has been subject to separate scrutiny, which I welcome. I understand that that study is now in the hands of Ministers, and I trust that the House will have an opportunity to debate it and other charity matters when right hon. and hon. Members return from the Christmas Recess. The Government face a difficult task. If we are spending public money, we are entitled in this House to seek value. In our role as the protectors of the public interest, we are entitled also to establish arrangements to ensure that private moneys given for charitable purposes are also spent properly.

There will always be the hard cases, and when they arise there will always be calls for draconian legislation, still further controls, and a tightening up of the whole sector. Perhaps that is inevitable. However, there is an equal and opposite danger in the form of excessive control. My hon. Friend will be aware of the phrase "a light touch" in the context of his Department's regulatory responsibilities in broadcasting, and it is probably appropriate in respect of regulating charities too.

It is a matter of record that the Home Office takes a relatively low profile in the control function, and rightly. I shall comment on the Charity Commissioners later. Before I do so, I may warn the House that whatever is done in this place, we must not muddy the wheels of charity. If someone feels that it is really important to donate money to the indigent children of left-handed taxidermists—and although you, Mr. Speaker, and I may not share that sentiment—it is extremely important that he should have the opportuniy to express his generosity in that way.

I recently found that my own charity, which I felt should be whiter than white, had slipped up on a technicality. Many trustees of smaller charities may not be as aware of their duties as they should be, but it is nevertheless unreasonable to impose on them huge burdens of regulatory competence with which they cannot deal. My charity is not the only one that has had to smarten itself up in certain technical respects; many of the greatest in the land have run into problems, as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations would no doubt readily admit.

We cannot have a system in which the best is the enemy of the good, and trustees find themselves harassed by onerous and unreasonable prescriptions and requirements. Whatever we do must be realistic, and I welcome the White Paper's proposal for certain bands of compliance in relation to the size of the charity. We need regulation, but we must not scare off those who wish to give.

I pay tribute to the assistance that my group has received from Robin Guthrie and the Charity Commission. The commission has not always had a good press in this place, although that has not always been the fault of its members. For a start, it is an unusual body —it could almost have been said to be the first next steps agency when it was set up many years ago, in that it has a regulatory function but is also an arm of the High Court. It is both a compromise and, in a sense, ahead of the field. It is well known and, I think, hardly controversial that the commission operated with extremely limited resources in the past, and was therefore unable to do the job as it should. We need proper regulation or no regulation at all —there is no case for semi-regulation or inadequate regulation of charities.

The new arrangements are exemplified by the move of some of the London activities out to Taunton, and by the

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

new team which includes part-time commissioners to supplement the work of the full-timers. Given those arrangements, I see a good prospect of improvement in the present position. In a single step we are moving from the danger of being wrapped in some Victorian cocoon—the sad world of Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce—to the use of information technology and the most modern systems to keep abreast. This is a major task for the commission. The White Paper makes the reasonable point that some 4,000 charities a year—or one for every half-hour of the working day—are added to the register. It is rather like the correspondence with which Members of Parliament have to deal—it never seems to diminish very much, and the problems that it involves are constantly increasing.

We should, I think, consider a charge for registration, as recommended by the White Paper. I have reservations about whether we should also charge an annual fee for the filing of accounts, because I am not sure that it would be cost-effective. The registration arrangement for new charities, however, would at least give the commissioners an opportunity to discuss whether the introduction of a new charity was absolutely necessary or desirable, or whether it would be possible to achieve the relevant objectives through association with an existing charity.

Again, our maxim must be that, if people want to give, they should be encouraged to do so, and in the way that they choose; clearly, however, it is a good idea to provide a hoop through which they must go, to engage in serious examination of their motives and the machinery that they are setting up. There is great scope for model clauses, codes of practice and accounts to try to simplify the task and to make trustees' lives easier.

It is remarkable, although perhaps it is not so remarkable in the middle of this somewhat archaically structured debate, that the source of this business lies in the preamble to the Elizabethan Act of 1601, where we still find definitions, as glossed by Lord Macnaghten in a judgment in the last century, that are applicable today. It describes the four basic heads of charity as the advancement of religion, education, the relief of poverty and any other public purpose. It is interesting to note that, although the White Paper says that the statute of 1601 is being repealed, some of the purposes and how they are set out—the relief of aged, impotent and poor people, the maintenance of sick and maimed soldiers and mariners, schools of learning, free schools and scholars in universities, the repair of bridges, ports, havens, causeways and churches and others—still continue to be referred to.

We have new motorway construction work in my area. The Department of Transport is unwilling to pay for some bridge guarding on a side road because, it says, that is outside its specification. The provisions that I have just mentioned struck a chord with me in that context. I have not entirely abandoned the possibility of public funding, but at least there is a possibility of telling local people, "If you really believe that it is as important as you think it is, why do you not get together and raise the money to do it?"

We have perhaps forgotten the great tradition of charity. People and communities were bound together for public purposes such as the maintenance of roads and the turnpikes. That may be an area in which more happens in the future. There is clearly a shift in the charitable world, which I welcome, from the more traditional endowed charities, which were set up by the Victorian industrialist who felt that he should give something back to his community, and the old, poor and bread charities, to new charities often with no capital at all, which depend entirely on current fund raising from the public. I think that that is a good thing, because no institution can flourish when it depends solely on the generosity of the dead. It must depend on the enthusiasm of the living as well.

That change has been accompanied by a democratic or demotic shift towards much wider involvement with charity. I welcome that, as many have been put off because they regard charity as the dowager launching some great activity. God bless the dowagers in what they can do and continue to do, but activity should go wider than that. People's generosity is not confined by their social background or by their income. I welcome the way in which Telethon, Children in Need and the rest are opening up the possibilities of charity to the general public.

Anyone who has anything to do with young people or young electors knows that they are extremely generous. They have powerful concerns for the public good. We may not always agree with them, but surely it is right that they should be brought in and should organise events such as the red-nose day. They also take an interest in how the money is spent. That is a positive change, although, as the Minister will know it has some regulatory implications as the provisions of the Charities Act 1960 are basically relevant to the old endowed charities.

It should not be thought that because I introduced the notion of the democratisation of charity I wanted to underplay or diminish the role of the traditional endowed charities, as they have a great deal to offer. We first need to find out who they are, so the restructuring of charitable registration and the White Paper will be relevant. I do not criticise the White Paper, but the experience of the working panel reveals the need to put greater emphasis on local reviews of charities.

We heard evidence from two counties—Wiltshire and Devon—and discussed their attitude to local reviews. Money has to be spent on that—it has to come either from the local authority or from the commission—but it is extremely well spent. I understand that the review of local charities in Devon unearthed some 4,000 local charities, of which 30 per cent. had not previously been registered, with an annual income exceeding £10 million.

In addition, I would emphasise the importance of keeping a local register. Devon has a database up and running which I hope it will develop wider in conjunction with the Charity Commissioners, but it must be extremely useful in dealing with the traditional relief of poverty through the county's social services as help is immediately accessible and available through the county computer network in public libraries and sub-post offices. I hope that such schemes will be set up in every county. When that has been developed in conjunction with the central register of the Charity Commission, we shall maintain it so that there is an effective local point of access and reference.

My next point is very close to the heart of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) who has been in and out of the Chamber during the debate but, sadly, is not here now. He is concerned that moneys raised for public purposes are left in small sums—in penny packets—in various bank accounts and are eventually centralised by the bank but are not really applied to charitable purposes because the charities have failed or are

no longer active. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will have discussions with banks about whether some of those moneys can be applied to effective purposes.

That brings me to what is essentially a legal point—the so-called cy-pres doctrine. If one charity is no longer applicable or appropriate, the activity can be transferred to another. It is important that we interpret that widely and make the very best use of those funds. Just as over-regulation is a danger, slack money that is not being used is an insult to the donors and the rest of society.

There are certain philosophical points in relation to charities. In the experience of our all-party group, and more generally, interest in charities cuts across party lines and is in no sense a matter of ideology between us. There might be few occasions on which I would wish to share a platform with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but a charitable occasion might bring us together. We have many things in common in the House, and charities are among the strongest. We pay into and encourage our local charities, and that is an important part of our role as parliamentarians.

Equally, we share an interest in avoiding fraud on private funds that are given, or public funds that are added, to charity. Part of the area of fraud is street collections, but it is unfair to use that as a stick to beat the commissioners because local authorities often authorise collections, and the police should deal with local offences of people collecting money. It is particularly offensive when money is given by the generosity of ordinary people and is then pinched. It is important for us to take steps to regulate that area.

I could have discussed other aspects of abuse in relation to the structure of charities, but I will mention only two points of concern. The first is political activities. That area is well set out in the White Paper, and there is a reasonably acceptable balance. There will be areas of controversy, and they will appear when we see the scrutiny report. I regard the structure and approach that is set out—it is also included by the commissioners in their notes of guidance —as sensible.

The second aspect is that of certain kinds of religious cults. That is better treated by administrative means than by up-ending the whole system of the definition of charities. We could have done more in the past, in effect by saying that they are breaking the trusts for which they have been established. That should be explored before we use the sledgehammer of defining the unacceptable in legislation. The danger of defining the unacceptable is that we may also exclude some of the acceptable.

In terms of the role of charities, which is strictly the subject of this debate, it is clear that, however generous Government provision is and however important is the welfare state and the social budget, charities still have a role. There are few voices, even on the Left of politics, who now say that charities are in some sense a blot on the welfare state or are inappropriate in a modern society.

Charities score by their greater flexibility. Anything we do and anything that is set out in legislation for implementation by officials must be done by defined rules, and that is now increasingly subject to judicial review. A Minister's decision, even if made with the best of intentions, which tends to favour one citizen over another, is almost bound to be flawed. It is better in cases of discretion to use the charitable vehicle, where the trustees can make their decisions quietly and responsibly on the basis of their judgment.

It is significant, although there are no external charitable funds available to the trust, to record that in the aid to haemophiliacs, which I welcome, the Government have chosen the discretionary vehicle of the independent Macfarlane Trust rather than trying to hold it within the decisions of Government.

The most important point about charity is that it taps generosity well beyond taxpayer funding. Taxpayers may resent paying more, but few citizens are not prepared to put their hands in their pockets to some extent. Although it will be a matter for debate later, perhaps after the Budget, the more that the Government can be seen to encourage this the better. If the Government put in a bit by various means and if that is added to by the private citizen, the available resources will be increased.

It should be remembered that the contribution of the individual citizen is not restricted to cash. Anyone with experience of charities of all sorts realised that. To use the words of Christian stewardship, we are talking about time, talents and abilities. People are contributing the sweat of their brow for nothing, and that is extremely important.

That brings me to the final argument for charity, which is that it is as good for the donor as it is for the donee. It is good for people not to think that they have discharged their obligations when they have paid their taxes and kept the law, but to see what else they can do for the public good. As a Conservative, I believe that there is no clash between private enterprise, the coming together of individuals for their own profit but, because of the market system, serving the public, and what they do by means of private enterprise for the public good through charitable and public activities. I believe that people can identify much more readily with something in which they participate as volunteers and in which they have played a part rather than by being pressed men through the tax system or Government regulation.

An area of controversy—I have the privilege of being a member of the Committee that is considering the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, and I shall raise the matter in the Committee when it is appropriate to do so—is that we are bringing back to the Health Service the support of charitable fund raising and charitable activities generally. In my locality we have seen the acceleration of an accident and emergency department, which has been paid for by local fund raising. The cost has been about £600,000. In Northampton, which is on another edge of my constituency, a scanner has been provided at a slightly higher cost. These efforts have very much involved the local communities. My only concern is that in some sense NHS activities of this sort displace other funding. All of us with experience of these matters know that from time to time charities over-harvest the ground and there is no more. It is sometimes better to wait until another time or for another purpose.

In charity, we define our own view of humanity. We say something about ourselves as well as the people who we are trying to help. I do not think that it is appropriate for us in this Chamber to examine the motives of individual donors or to be sure what they could have been many centuries before. We all have mixed motives. Perhaps we are all uncertain about where we are going. It would seem that, in the activity of charity, which is of central importance, and growing importance, we bring together two great factors. There is human need, which continues, and human potential, which is great. We can fuse them and

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

meet the need through the potential that then exists. That is the true message of charity, and I think that it goes somewhere towards being the true message of Christmas.

7.9 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): With the leave of the House, I shall respond.

I greatly enjoyed listening to the wide-ranging and thought-provoking speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell). He has a distinguished interest in charity matters, and as chairman of the all-party group on charity law he, with other members of the group, has given considerable advice and help to the Home Office and to others who are interested in charity law and its reform. My hon. Friend has ranged over the nature of charity, value for money and new forms of charity, and I intend to deal with as many of these as I can.

Whatever Government are in power, I see their role not as trying to control or direct charitable endeavour but as providing a framework for it and, by the giving of taxpayers' money, helping the voluntary sector.

The Government recognise the diversity and spontaneity of the charitable and voluntary sectors. We greatly welcome their ability to respond in a flexible and innovative way. We are certainly committed to encouraging the good work of charities in this country.

It is my firm belief, which is hardening quite quickly, that entrepreneurship should not be confined to business and commerce and that it is extremely important to the charitable sector. It is vital in giving help to the community generally.

Although there certainly are services that only the statutory agencies can provide, the state cannot be expected to provide everything. It is extremely important that the different sectors work together in an effective partnership in which each complements the other's skills and experience.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry referred to the scrutiny of the voluntary sector. It will be published —in the immortal ministerial phrase—in due course. I am sure that in due course there will be a debate on it in the House, but that is a matter for the business managers. My hon. Friend's interest is noted, and I know that his voice will be heard when the scrutiny is published.

The voluntary sector can extend the scope of existing provision. It can spot gaps that had not been seen previously and it certainly can improve standards, in not only the charitable but in the state sector—in local government and central Government—by experimenting, innovating and introducing new techniques that sometimes those in the bureaucracies had not thought about. We learn much from the voluntary sector, and it learns from us.

The voluntary sector and the charitable world can move quickly to meet new needs or problems that escalate too quickly for bureaucracies to respond. That is particularly so with the close contact that charities have with the local communities which they serve. What closer contact could there be than that illustrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry, who spoke of the need to guard a new bridge a little way away from new development by the M40, which I hope in my lifetime will reach Oxford and complete the link to London? My hon. Friend suggested that his community may be able to help with that. That is a very good example of the obviously close link between my hon. Friend and his constituents.

The Government do not regard the charitable world and voluntary services as an opportunity for providing a cheap alternative to public services. I said earlier that I felt that sometimes charities are good at spotting gaps, but there is a world of difference between that and their being used for gap-filling. I see the role of charities as adding value to the community by giving and volunteering and endlessly extending in ways that perhaps even a few years ago we should not have thought possible.

The charities White Paper formed some part of my hon. Friend's speech. He referred to it in a number of ways. The approach of the charities White Paper and, I guess, the overall approach of Government, is to modernise the existing machinery, to make greater efforts to curb abuse for the sector as a whole and to return a measure of responsibility to trustees, which is very important.

We certainly want to protect funds and property given and held in this country for charitable purposes. We recognise that charities need the freedom to move with the times. We want to weed out the fraudulent and the ill-intentioned who feed off or betray the public's generosity and make life difficult for the charitable sector as a whole. We must also ensure that the charitable impulse is not suffocated by rules and regulations. That is very important. The Government's proposals in the White Paper attempt to balance those concerns; they are particularly important for smaller charities, which may become bigger charities in the fulness of time. The hope is that graduated requirements, for example concerning smaller charities, will minimise unnecessary burdens. Graduated requirements for charity accounts would make it very much easier for smaller charities to develop and grow.

The British are terrific at disaster giving. Whenever there is a charitable apeal, no country in western Europe is more generous than this. However, we need revised public collection legislation which should be easier to understand and simpler to operate. At the same time, we must respond to new forms of fund raising which, a decade ago, were unknown in this country or were only developing. In that respect I can think of telephone campaigns and telethons.

We should be looking towards self-regulation. The charitable world, above all else, is concerned with helping people to help other people and self-regulation is the best way to provide a framework for those helping other people. If legislation is necessary, the Government will respond.

The White Paper has been generally welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House and that is good. Many of the proposals are, to put it mildly, technical. The cognoscenti, like my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry, will be able to appreciate some of the nuances which perhaps the generality of those concerned with charities—the foot soldiers of the charitable world, those who stick their hands in their pockets—will not be able to understand. None the less, it is critical that the technicalities are dealt with so that we can get things right in the 1990s.

I will bear in mind my hon. Friend's injunction to the Home Office to use a light touch. From time to time, Home Office Ministers have to encourage, exhort or provide a framework for others in society, like the police, to use a

necessarily heavy touch. Using a light touch is perhaps something which the Home Ofice cannot do very often and for which it is not widely known. Any opportunities that Home Ofice Ministers can find to use a light touch should be grasped gratefully. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's injunction to copy the light touch model of the Government's broadcasting proposals.

With regard to the resources for the Charity Commission, I had never thoght of the commission as a next steps agency, but perhaps it may be one in its overall form. It is rather a good model for us to follow in many ways. We are certainly helping the commission with more resources. It was given £7 million last year, and it will receive £11 million this year and £16 million next year. Those considerable increases in resources are, rightly, devoted to the Charity Commission because it needs the extra cash to move towards new technology. For example, a computerised register is very important.

As the Charity Commission expands monitoring and carries out investigations, we hope that the service offered to charities and to the public will be improved. Although resources are an important element, the commission also needs new powers. I assume that it would be very happy to get rid of some of its present tasks and our new legislation should achieve that.

In passing, I should refer to the need to re-appraise and relaunch ancient charities. My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry properly referred to the small sums of money which sometimes languish in bank accounts for small charities and which could be put to better use. I shall take into account what he says about the need to talk to the banks about that.

I note my hon. Friend's point about registration. I was particularly interested in his theme—I had not thought of it in that way before—about the shift to new forms of giving being a way of democratising charity in a way that, perhaps, charity had not been democratised 100 years ago.

Which groups of people give money in this country? Such data as exist, from the charities household survey and the charities aid fund—I praise the work of some of the bodies involved in collating those data—show a close link between charitable giving, socio-economic position, level of disposable income, and age. It is sad but true that young people contribute less than older people. That is a pity. They also offer less time to charitable and voluntary activity.

One estimate shows that nearly 80 per cent. of the adult population gives something to charity. However, although some people are very generous, on average, individual donations are about £2 a month. There seems to be a big difference between the British people's generosity in disaster giving—a famine revealed on the television screen or a lifeboat which turns over tragically at sea while trying to rescue people in trouble—and regular giving: that drip, drip from individuals of small sums of money which compound into large sums. We are better at the first than at the second.

People cannot be told to give more to charity, and it would be wrong for Ministers to exhort people to do so. We can create the right climate and encourage people to think about whether they can afford to give more, and provide tax-efficient and appealing mechanisms through which more money can be given. Payroll giving is an example of the mechanism through which sums up to £480 a year can be donated with tax reliefs.

At the end of the day, it is for charities to promote their own causes. I have already referred to entrepreneurship. It is very important that charities enter into a form of coalition with employers and the Government to promote payroll giving. That is critical. I am not one of those people who look at the accounts of a charitable body and then say, "Oh, between 6 per cent. and 9 per cent. is given over to administration. Surely all the money should go to those in need." I entirely agree that money should not be spent on unnecessary bureaucracy in charity, any more than in local or national government. I would not mind charities spending quite a bit of money for a few years trying to promote their activities and on advertising to get more money to make the charitable giving cake grow larger. That is a perfectly proper use of charitable receipts, provided that the advertising and promotional activity produces, substantially greater sums than have been expended. That must be carefully considered, but charities need to be just as entrepreneurial as business men or anyone involved in commerce.

My hon. Friend had an excellent maxim, which I believe I took down correctly. No doubt *Hansard* will correct me tomorrow with its commendable accuracy if I got it wrong. He said that, if they want to give, people must be encouraged to do so. I entirely agree with that maxim.

The new forms of charitable giving concern advertising, telethons and other forms of promotional activity. Charities have been able to advertise on television and radio since September this year as a result of changes in the code of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, about which the Government were consulted. It is right that charities should themselves decide whether to advertise. This is not something that any charity will undertake lightly, given the substantial resources needed in terms of planning and costs. The content, tone and style of the advertising will be governed by IBA rules. There are safeguards against abuse, and the IBA is monitoring developments.

This is an interesting area. I understand and appreciate the fears in the charitable sector that the big charities with the financial muscle will be able to expend the money and thus generate more money. It will be easier to raise money for children than for confused elderly people. Those arguments are well made and we must bear such fears in mind at the same time as recognising that any techniques which increase the amount of charitable giving in this country should be considered and promoted.

Telethons have caused some concern as well as gaining a broad welcome. We agree that telethons and other public appeals should be more publicly accountable. It is especially important to find out what happens to the money that is donated to telethons. We need much more information to be made available by the broadcasting authorities about exactly what happens to the money coming from telethons, where it goes, in what sums and how quickly. We need to be able to question, "Has it been spent?" Those points have to be closely considered on behalf of the generous people who have raised phenomenal sums of money, watching television through the night. I am glad that I have the agreement of my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry on this point.

Having said that, we shall look first to self-regulation as the best and most flexible way of dealing with this and other new forms of fundraising. I am encouraged to learn

[Mr. John Patten]

that the organisations involved in television appeals are already looking to set common standards. I encourage them to do so as quickly as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry has put his finger on an important point. The face of charitable giving and volunteering is changing fast. We have seen in the past decade, and I guess that we shall see in the next decade, more rapid changes in the charitable world than have been seen since probably the 16th and 17th centuries. It is a time of substantial change. The directions that the change will take were more than sketched out in my hon. Friend's admirable speech. I congratulate him on his fortune in obtaining the debate and on the admirable and succinct way in which he made his contribution.

City Grant

7.34 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am grateful for the opportunity of initiating what must of necessity be a curtailed debate and therefore my remarks will be brief. I know that in some respects the Minister may not be able to answer them as fully as he might wish, because negotiations are currently taking place.

City grant replaces urban development grant and urban regeneration grant. Paragraph 2.8 of the guidance notes published by the Department of the Environment states:

"Most schemes will use derelict land or empty buildings."

Paragraph 2.12 states:

"By ensuring that derelict land is reused or buildings brought back into use schemes should improve the appearance of a rundown area and help to generate confidence."

There is therefore a general concentration of city grant on derelict land improvements.

According to information supplied by the Library, up to 13 June 1989 the largest grant appeared to be in Southwark, at the Alaska works. The grant was for £4·1 million to Charterhouse Estates Ltd. Currently discussions are taking place about a grant request for about £40 million for what is termed Bradford's west end scheme. Department of the Environment officials, Bradford local authority officials and the developers have been engaged in talks. That was confirmed in a parliamentary answer on 27 June and again on 12 December. The reply stated:

"Advice given to the developers and local authorities regarding any application for city grant is the standard guidance contained in the city grant guidance notes. For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not our practice to comment on individual city grant proposals."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. *543-44*.]

More information should be available about discussions behind closed doors. Three parties are involved—the Department of the Environment, the local authority and the developers. We should be given information about the essential tenor and nature of those discussions. Between those two parliamentary questions, I suspect that there was a change in the negotiations because originally the main developers were a firm called Arrowcroft, but the current developers are a firm called 3Ds Limited.

I should like £30 million or £40 million extra for Bradford. Indeed, Bradford has asked for almost £30 million for capital expenditure in schools. The announcement yesterday, or today—I am not sure, but I think that in parliamentary terms it is still today—is for only £9·7 million. The Conservative ruling party has said that there is a great need for capital expenditure.

I can tell the Minister what sort of capital expenditure I want. I should like some replacements for the 600 temporary classrooms in Bradford. I have said on many occasions that the Buttershaw first school has had to close temporary classrooms because they were so old and worn out that they were unfit for use. The local authority is providing three new temporary classrooms, but a permanent extension is clearly required—indeed, it has been required for the past 14 years. They are also needed at Wibsey and the Queensbury upper and middle schools.

We are discussing the background of city grant to finance a lavish development scheme, yet, in the 20th century, Bradford is actually building an outside toilet block to service outside classrooms because the permanent school does not have adequate provision.

On the Woodside estate in my constituency—not an inner but an outer-urban area—there is great need for window replacement. The local authority admits that there is no insulation value in the current windows. However, with the present rate of replacement, it will take 15 years to complete that project. Capital is required for private street works. Some of them are mediaeval in character. More than 2,000 private street works are required throughout the metropolitan district, yet no capital is available. There is confirmation of that from the local authority.

City grant is designed to make an area more attractive to residents and businesses. However, in a recent local authority discussion, when Labour councillors tried to ensure that there would be low admission charges so that a wide section of the population both inside and outside Bradford could take advantage of some of the facilities that will be in the development—an electronic zoo and planetarium—the majority party said that the matter had to be left to the developers, and the provision requested was denied.

Bradford college students are protesting that their students' union building, Queens hall, will be closed and turned into an arts centre that will no longer provide the cheap live music facilities currently available to students and well used by them. Of necessity, because it will be a commercial venture, it will become a high-priced, high-admission-charge facility, which will prevent students from making much use of it. Part of the college has been closed because of dry rot.

The local evening paper of Friday 8 December said:

"The union may be offered another venue"—

that is, to replace the Queens hall—

"if the West End scheme goes ahead, but the students say they want to keep Queens hall as it is.

Councillor Dale Smith, Chairman of Bradford council's education committee, has asked for a meeting with council bosses over the plan. Councillor Smith wants to talk to Councillor Ronnie Farley, Chairman of the council's enterprise and environment committee, and council leader councillor Eric Pickles about the plans. He also wants to know what will happen to the Alexandra building, another part of the college, which was closed this year because of dry rot.

Councillor Smith, a governor of Bradford and Ilkley college, said: 'I feel I should have been brought into discussion at an earlier stage.

I want to know whether the people discussing the West End development with the commercial planners have anything at the back of their minds to deal with the matters the college governors and the education directorate want resolved.'"

My plea for more information about what is happening in the negotiations over city grant seems to be shared by Conservative councillors who are not being informed by other Conservative councillors about the negotiations.

It is a matter of deep regret that this year about £3 million has been diverted from housing and education capital expenditure to buy land to be leased to developers at some future date. I recognise that this a local authority matter, not a matter for the Minister. As I have already said, Bradford is urgently in need of capital expenditure in a number of important areas, including housing and education.

At least £18·5 million of local government money is involved in the west end proposal. The criteria for city grant centre on derelict land. Without question, there is such land in the west end area. I raise the issue of whether derelict land and city grant covers such institutions as the Odeon cinema. It is the last purpose-built cinema in the centre of Bradford. It is to be demolished and yet another shopping centre will be built in its place. It is not just any cinema. It opened in 1930 and had the biggest seating capacity in England, 3,318. It was closed for modernisation in 1968 and reopened in 1969 as the Odeon twin cinema, and it is now a triple cinema. It is a well used community building. There are 7,000 admissions a week to the bingo hall alone.

The much vaunted Alhambra theatre immediately adjacent has 10,000 admissions a week and the local authority recently spent £9 million on renovating it. The Odeon has double that number of admissions. The cinema is highly profitable and at least the number of patrons as go to the bingo hall attend every week.

It is ironic that the proposal for the west end involves demolition of the only purpose-built cinema in Bradford which is in sight of the national museum of photography. The museum is devoted, at least in part, to treasuring objects connected with cinematography as well as with photography.

The city grant discussions will involve the demolition of the successful departmental store which is the flagship headquarters of the Yorkshire co-operative society. The directors want to demolish the present building and relocate 30 yards downhill. That does not seem to be the purpose of city grant. The building has a long connection with the Co-operative movement, which started in Bradford as early as 1860. Two separate Co-ops merged in 1869.

In 1935, the building to which I referred was constructed. It was known as the new co-operative emporium. It has a distinctive design with circular horizontal ribs that have considerable depth on corner pavilions. It is based on designs of Lewis Sullivan of the United States and Eric Mendelsohn of the United Kingdom. The Minister will no doubt be keenly aware the Eric Mendelsohn was an architect who fled from the Nazi purges in pre-war Germany. He developed a style of simple, functional architecture. One of his pavilions can be seen at Bexhill-on-Sea, and it is cherished as a building of important architectural value. Surely city grant was not designed to facilitate the demolition of buildings with such an architectural heritage.

It is important to mention the curiosities attached to the development company that is now undertaking negotiations. The company that started the negotiations was Arrowcroft. It has a good track record, and it converted the Albert dock complex in Liverpool. From subsequent experience, however, I do not believe that the firm is a good landlord. I have no brief from Arrowcroft, but it has an issued capital of £12 million. That means that the company has demonstrated its capability. The local authority, however, has decided that Arrowcroft, which was formally in discussion about city grant, should not be chosen as the developer.

Another firm, 3Ds Limited, has been chosen as the developer. That company does not conjure up a convincing impression in the minds of most people. The company was formed as recently as 1986. On 13 February 1989 there were three directors and a relatively small number of issued shares—88. On 21 August those shares were increased to 97. I do not believe that 97 £1 shares represent the best basis for undertaking a £180 million development.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

The allottees of the shares include Mr. B. R. Peace, Mr. P. Malkin and Old Court Limited, PO Box 58, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands. Other shareholders include Michael Thorniley-Walker, Peter Francis Smith and Marguerita Smith. That group do not disclose their address, but they are care of Sugden and Spencer, Arndale house, Charles street, Bradford BD1.

The company does not appear to be satisfactory, nor does it have a well established track record. On 10 July 1989 the company took out a mortgage of £16,006, but in June 1988 the company had lost £4,856. I should be interested to hear the Minister's views on the criteria that he adopts for dealing with companies that are embarking on such huge developments. At a rough guess, the development represents the biggest development of its type undertaken in Bradford. Companies with such relative incorporation, such as 3Ds, must have a large question mark over them.

I ask the Minister to provide more information about the negotiations. If the Minister does not have time to provide all the information now, I trust that he will provide it in answer to future parliamentary questions. There is an unhealthy relationship between the local authority, the Department of the Environment and the developers. They are getting together behind closed doors.

For city grant to be given, certain requirements and criteria must be met. Planning consent must either be given or clearly anticipated before that grant is made. Planning consent is an important process in local authorities' operations. Who will exercise scrutiny? The local authority is in agreement with the Department of the Environment and that Department will not give city grant unless planning approval is given. Giving city grant commits the Department of the Environment, which also has a planning function, to support that venture by virtue of giving a significant sum of money—I am sure that the Minister will accept that the sum is significant.

The planning process is important, as it dictates the shape of buildings, their access to roads and their general position. Within that process, however, the relationship between the local authority, the DOE and the developer is unhealthy. There is little opportunity for scrutiny and checking, as all the bodies involved are, perforce, in agreement and tied together as planning consent is given on the one hand and city grant on the other.

Of necessity, I have had to curtail my remarks. I wanted to point out that, although road works will be necessary for the new west end scheme, there are 200 outstanding road safety schemes urgently required in Bradford, but no capital expenture required. The priorities for Bradford are education, housing and road safety, and they should be considered before embarking on such a grandiose scheme.

The scheme has a number of question marks hanging over it, particularly connected with the Minister's responsibility for city grant. The taxpayer is also involved to a considerable degree. The developers and the Department of the Environment are talking of a figure of about £30 million to £40 million. I should be grateful for the Minister's comments on that.

7.51 am

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. David Hunt): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on finding an opportunity at this late hour in the parliamentary day to raise the important subject of city grant. I also thank him for saying that he does not expect a detailed response so that my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) may have a few minutes to speak on the next subject.

City grant is an important way in which central Government can assist private sector capital projects in the inner city. It replaced urban development grant, urban regeneration grant and private sector derelict land grant. Taken together over the years, those programmes have provided about 410 grants worth £253 million. In doing so, private investment of more than £1 billion—£1,060 million—has been committed, providing 45,000 jobs and 11,000 homes.

Following the introduction of city grant in May 1988, the number of applications has more than doubled, to about 120 a year. The level of grant approved has increased from £29 million in 1987-88 to £67 million in 1988-89, and is expected to remain at more than 60 million a year over the next few years. Since the hon. Gentleman got the information from the Library, there have been two further grants larger than the one he mentioned—£6·2 million in Birmingham Heartlands and £6·3 million in St. Helens. He is right to point out the level of grant now being awarded.

Real progress in our inner cities be made only by means of a close working relationship between central and local government, the private sector, voluntary organisations and local people. In central Government, we are determined to quicken the pace of inner-city regeneration. In the five months since I took over responsibility for inner cities, I have visited many inner-city areas, including Bradford and have been enormously encouraged by what I have seen. There is a spirit of optimism there, accompanied by a real determination by all those involved to see real progress made in the regeneration of our inner-city areas. In Bradford, we are fortunate to have an innovative and forward-looking local authority coming forward with exciting new initiatives.

The Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), takes responsibility for working closely with, and advising, the city action team and task forces in Bradford and Leeds. We intend to give Mr. Eric Pickles and his council colleagues every possible encouragement in their imaginative plans.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned proposals to develop the west end area of Bradford city centre. Members of my Department's city grant appraisal team and other Department officials have had discussions with developers and Bradford city council about a possible city grant application to support a major redevelopment project in the city's west end area. The discussions have explored the possibility of a grant application, but as yet there is no application with my Department.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned emotive phrases such as "behind closed doors" and "unhealthy discussions," but it is necessary, for reasons of commercial confidentiality, not to reveal details of discussions with developers or their proposals. As the hon. Gentleman said, however, my Department will decide on an application for city grant only if the local authority has granted planning consent for

the development. Listed building and compulsory purchase orders were required and also have to be granted before a decision can be made. Grant applications are not to be accepted for appraisal unless planning consent has already been granted or a date has been fixed for the appropriate council committee to decide, a planning application.

Any objections to proposed grant-aided developments —and any representations, for instance, about the future of Queens hall—have to be taken up with the local authority, because it is the democratically elected body responsible for planning and development control. I will write to the hon. Gentleman about the specific questions he asked about the project and attempt to deal with the points that he raised.

Looking at Bradford today, I am aware of all the different schemes coming forward. All the ingredients for success are present in Bradford—a dynamic and enterprising council determined to provide value for money and improved service, a healthy and strong private sector, good voluntary organisations and, especially, strong and vibrant local communities. It is to those local people that we look to ensure that there is adequate consultation before any of the schemes go ahead, and I shall watch progress with great interest.

Elderly People (Nursing Homes)

7.55 am

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful for the opportunity, if only for a few minutes, to mention this important subject. I thank the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and my hon. Friend the Minister for making that possible.

The level of DSS benefits for elderly people in nursing homes is wholly inadequate to meet the charges of nursing homes in the south-east. A typical nursing home's charges have risen from £212 to £248, not because of greed on the part of the proprietors, many of whom operate practically on the verge of bankruptcy, but because of the 15 per cent. nurses' pay award and the 25 per cent. increase in interest rates. By comparison, benefit increases have amounted to only 2·5 per cent.

Not only does this create a considerable problem for those operating the homes, but it acts as a major disincentive to building new homes. It is estimated that we shall need to build two 40-bed homes or extensions every week to cope with the increse in numbers of elderly people. That will generate considerable pressure in future. Current levels of benefit amount to about £190 a week for the very dependent elderly, who get £155 as a result of being thus categorised, plus £34·90 for higher-level attendance allowance.

Thus, a home with a high proportion of income-supported patients is viable only if the owner is a registered nurse and prepared to provide cover that she would otherwise have to pay others to provide. It is viable only if capital costs are already completely paid, so no interest is being incurred; if no provision is being made for future capital expenditure; if maintenance and small dignities such as newspapers for patients are kept to a minimum; and if the staff are paid less than Whitley council rates. Moreover, because of the length of time involved in the period of assessment for benefit, homes often go without any pay for several weeks, thus incurring interest charges and problems of cash flow.

Florence Smith is 93 and until January she lived in a residential home. When her nursing needs became sufficiently acute for the home to decide that it could no longer cope, she moved to a local, popular and well-respected nursing home. When she did, DSS benefit plus higher attendance allowance equalled the charges levied by the home.

However, within a few weeks the charges had been raised to £210 a week, which is extremely modest—one of the lowest fees in the south-east. Most homes in the area charge well over £300. Mrs. Smith's daughter is a pensioner herself, wholly dependent on the state pension, and although she is willing to provide the small necessities —clothes, toiletries and so on—she cannot regularly make up the shortfall, let alone the increased gap that will open up if the home is forced to increase its charges again.

When I wrote to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, she replied that it was never the Government's intention to cover the cost of residing at such homes, no matter how high. I contend that, the way things are, the Government are not covering the cost in the south-east at any rate, no matter how low.

Another of my constituents has a wife aged 77 suffering from Parkinson's disease. She is now in a nursing home after years of being cared for in her own home by her

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

husband. First, he had to wear down his capital to become eligible for benefit, and now he finds that the gap between the amount being charged to him and the sum that he can claim is so great that it is causing considerable problems, which are a source of worry to the wife as well as to the husband.

It being Eight o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, pursuant to Order [15 December.]

Mr. Speaker: Mr. John Selwyn Gummer—motion No. 3.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): Not moved, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Secretary Walker—motion No. 4.

Mr. Goodlad: Not moved.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Secretary Clarke—motion No. 5.

Mr. Goodlad: Not moved.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Resolved,

That, during the proceedings on the matter of the Future Economy and Environment of North Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before 4.00 p.m. nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at that sitting—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

8.1 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. After the long debate on the Adjournment following the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill, the Government—who have a majority of 150 over the Labour party—have failed to move three items of business on the Order Paper. Can you, Mr. Speaker, establish whether the reason for that is that the Government cannot find 40 Tory Members of Parliament to carry those three motions, given that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and I intended to oppose the obnoxious motion on the census?

After a long night of debate, and without any member of the Tory Cabinet being present in the Chamber, the Government are reduced to such a shambles that they cannot get important items of business through this House.

Mr. Speaker: The question whether a motion is moved is not a matter for me.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The census order is very unusual because it is part negative and part affirmative, and it is amendable. Obviously, you were unable to call any of the amendments to that motion, but no doubt the Government will be tabling it again. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to re-examine the amendments and to consider allowing a proper debate on them, as the motion presents the House with a rare opportunity to amend a statutory instrument.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's request is purely academic, because I have no knowledge whether the motion will be tabled again.

South American Leafminer Fly

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

8.2 am

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): The glasshouse industry faces a threat to plant health of major proportions. Unless action is taken soon, that threat may decimate the United Kingdom's glasshouse industry. There is little time to take action, and an incorrect decision now may prove catastrophic for glasshouse growers and pose a real risk to those growing outdoor crops. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this important subject before the Christmas recess. In this case, time really is of the essence.

The threat is due to an insect known as the South American leafminer—liriomyza huidobrensis. Until October this year, it was unknown in the United Kingdom, but findings have since been confirmed in at least 28 nurseries, spread across southern England but concentrated especially in the Lea valley. The pest is spreading and there are no effective control measures available to United Kingdom growers. The pest has its origins in central and south America. It is a European Community quarantine organism and a United Kingdom statutory pest, which means that growers must report any findings to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food plant health and seeds inspectorate and that all European Community countries must inform the European Commission of any occurrence and prevent its spread within, and between, member states.

The leafminer appears to have reached the United Kingdom via Holland, where it was first positively identified in August this year. By that time, it had become widespread in the Netherlands and was causing severe economic damage to edible and non-edible crops. Strict control measures are still being applied there in an attempt to restrict its spread. More than a third of the lettuce crop in the Westland area has been destroyed, and controls on exports from affected nurseries are being rigidly enforced.

The South American leafminer is known to cause severe damage to a wide range of both edible and non-edible crops. Of particular concern are vegetables such as lettuce, tomato and cucumber, and ornamentals such as chrysanthemums and gypsophila. The insect does its damage in the larval stage. The larvae mine between the upper and lower surfaces of the leaves, disfiguring crops, rendering them unsaleable and causing yield losses in crops such as tomato. Severe infestations can cause entire crops to develop distorted and discoloured leaves.

I understand that economic damage in the United Kingdom has, to date, been minimal, owing to the low levels of infestation and the eradication policy of MAFF's plant health and seeds inspectorate wherever outbreaks have occurred. It is crucial that we learn a lesson from Holland, where the pest has exploded into plague proportions within a single season.

Our only hope of controlling its spread in the United Kingdom is to eradicate it from ornamental crops while the incidence on edible crops is at a very low level. Once it becomes established on edible crops—it has already been detected on such crops in at least four nurseries—the possibility of chemical control will be greatly reduced, and widespread crop destruction may then become necessary to control its further spread. Nurseries replanting edible

crops are at greatest risk, especially cucumber growers who are at risk both from the damage caused by the pest and from the likelihood of destruction orders to control outbreaks because chemical controls for such crops are very limited.

Unless the many outbreaks on ornamental crops are eradicated now, there is a grave risk that the scourge will spread to edible crops. Our best hope is to eradicate the pest during the winter. We do not know whether it can survive outdoors through a European winter, and severe frosts will certainly be in our favour. The danger is that, if it is still in the country in the spring, its spread from nursery to nursery will be rapid during the summer. Moreover, we are unable to predict the consequences for outdoor crops, which are also host plants and include celery, beans and potatoes. I am convinced that growers should have all the weapons that they need to bring the pest completely under control now.

There are non-chemical methods of control. The leafminer is susceptible to a number of parasites. With no experience of their use, however, and given the varying effectiveness of biological control agents, it is clear that such controls do not offer an immediate solution. As I have emphasised, the problem must be dealt with now, and growers must therefore rely on chemical methods of eradication.

If the leafminer is to be controlled successfully, both adult and immature stages must be destroyed. Owing to its habit of mining, however, only a few chemicals are able to move through the leaves to reach the larvae and kill them. Unfortunately, the pest shows evidence of resistance to chemicals recommended for its control. There is, however, an insecticide—Abamectin—which provides excellent control by killing the larvae within their mines. It is used on ornamental crops in France, Spain and the United States, and will shortly be used in Germany; it is also available in Guernsey and the Isle of Man. The Dutch, too, appear to be gaining control of the leafminer, by means of a chemical programme which includes Abamectin. The insecticide is already used on tomatoes in Spain and the United States, and will gain approval for use on edible crops in Holland early in the new year.

In the United Kingdom, however, this insecticide, which is so desperately needed by growers, has been in the queue awaiting evaluation by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for more than 18 months—since April 1988. Since the introduction in 1986 of new legislation governing the approval of pesticides, I understand that only 11 new molecules have been approved and there are now over 40 molecules waiting to be evaluated. Even if Abamectin were to be looked at by the MAFF scientists tomorrow, it would still take some six months for the product to gain approval. Abamectin has been in the queue for too long, and growers' livelihoods are at risk now.

I stress that I fully recognise the crucial importance of allowing only safe pecticides to be used in this country, but I find it hard to believe that such concerns are any weaker in Holland and the United States where Abamectin is already in use. My feeling is that, faced with an emergency such as the one now threatening the glasshouse industry, MAFF and the other Government Departments concerned with pesticide approval must be prepared to adopt a more flexible approach.

An acceptable solution would surely be the restricted release of Abamectic now to deal with outbreaks of the leafminer on non-edible crops. While allowing limited use of Abamectin, MAFF should lay down the most stringent safety precautions to protect spray operators. At present, such use is allowed on 2 hectares under an experimental permit. I see no reason why, in these exceptional circumstances, that could not be extended to cover the nurseries affected by this newly invading pest. Meanwhile, the product should be brought forward for evaluation by the MAFF scientists now to enable it to be fully available to growers as early as possible next year. The scientists should make full use of the data used to satisfy Dutch and American departments of the chemical's safety for spray operators.

What makes the situation even more extraordinary is that the product was sold perfectly legally in the United Kingdom under the limited clearance system up to January 1987. It seems incredible that a plant health disaster of this scale could take place because Departments are unwilling to release a product which is available for use under indentical conditions in Holland and the United States and which was quite safely used in this country less than two years ago.

It is difficult to overstress the seriousness of the situation. Many growers have recently invested in new glasshouses with the help of the MAFF grant, but a continuation of high interest rates and poor trading results has resulted in their entering the winter with increased overdrafts and undiminished loans. If growers suffer from the leafminer attack and are forced by MAFF to destroy their crops without compensation, many businesses will simply be unable to survive. How ironic it would be if those MAFF grants were wasted due to inaction now.

The South American leafminer must be brought under control quickly and completely. Abamectin has proven ability to control the pest and is being used successfully in other European countries and in the United States. Ornamental and edible produce are likely to be imported for sale in the United Kingdom after treatment with Abamectin, yet United Kingdom growers are unable to use it to protect their livelihood.

I am most grateful to the Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), for meeting and listening to a delegation of growers whom I brought to the Ministry to see him last week. I repeat to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary the message that we delivered then—let us please have a rational approach to this disastrous situation and let us see the Ministry respond by treating United Kingdom growers as fairly as their European counterparts.

8.14 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) for choosing to raise a subject which is of very real concern to commercial growers throughout the country and, of course, in her constituency in particular. I congratulate her on the forceful and powerful way in which she delivered her case this morning. The debate enables us to clear the air somewhat and to set out clearly what the Government are doing to combat the South American leafminer and to try to ensure that it does not become established in this country.

Liriomyza huidobrensis, the South American leafminer, is a very serious threat to the horticulture industry.

[Mr. David Maclean]

This small fly, about 2 mm in length, has a very wide host range, feeding on plants from at least 17 different families, both ornamental and vegetable, including field and glasshouse crops. Although hon. Members might not be familiar with that nasty little beastie, I am not being flippant when I say that in the Lea valley talk is of little other than liriomyza huidobrensis.

First, let me make it clear that we are in no doubt as to the threat to horticulture presented by the South American leafminer, particularly in view of the wide range of plants that it attacks. It is certainly our aim to prevent this pest from gaining a foothold in the United Kingdom, as we have so far succeeded in doing with liriomyza trifolii, the North American leafminer, which has been a threat to our growers for a number of years.

Secondly, I underline the fact that, while the South American leafminer has long been recognised as a potential danger—and therefore prohibited under both the relevant EC directive and our national legislation—it has become an actual threat only in recent months. I understand that the Dutch authorities first became aware of its presence in the Netherlands in August, as my hon. Friend said. They notified the EC plant health standing committee in Brussels at its September meeting and they introduced strong measures to eradicate it from both domestic and export trade.

As soon as we became aware of the threat, we began targeting inspections of imported Dutch plant material and produce to pick up any contaminated material that might reach the United Kingdom despite the checks being carried out by the Dutch. We contacted the Dutch Government at ministerial level and we sent officials to the Netherlands to see on the ground how the Dutch measures were being enforced and to discuss with them ways of tightening the controls.

Some people have suggested that there should be a complete ban on imports of host plants from the Netherlands. That is wrong. We believe that the range of measures agreed with the Dutch authorities provide a good basis for preventing that pest from gaining a permanent foothold in Britain and show the Dutch authorities' determination to do their part to prevent infested material from reaching Britain. With all the complexities of the horticultural trade, total bans on imports of particular plant species could damage the economic prospects of the very firms whose interests we are trying to defend. It is better to secure clean imports than to stop trade altogether. However, we shall not hesitate to impose a total prohibition on any plant species if we consider it necessary to prevent the leafminer from becoming established here.

As a result of our negotiations with the Dutch authorities, we have reached agreement with them on a range of measures aimed at minimising the risk of infested material reaching this country. These include a number of steps by the Dutch authorities to tighten export examination procedures of plants known to be hosts of the leafminer. We have agreed a widening of the range of cut flowers from the Netherlands which now require a plant health certificate—and therefore inspection—before they can be exported to Britain. We also persuaded the Dutch authorities that chrysanthemum cuttings must be fumigated before export to kill off any infestation.

In addition, imports of radishes and horse radishes from the Netherlands have to be free of leaves. The authorities in the Netherlands have also let it be known that they will not be issuing any plant health certificates after 14 December for pot plants of known host plants, which effectively prevents their export to this country. They took this action because their industry was unwilling to meet our requirement that there should be inspections at the growing stage for these host plants because of the risk of pupae in the soil, which might not be detected by normal export inspection methods.

So far, this pest has been identified only on material coming from the Netherlands—which is, of course, among the world's leading horticultural exporters—but we are aware of the risk of its spreading to other Community member states and are therefore maintaining vigilance on imports from other sources. At the last meeting of the Community's plant health standing committee, my officials pressed the Commission to consider action against the pest on a Community wide basis. We know that several other member states are also very worried, and we shall continue to press for Community action.

We consider that the measures taken have greatly reduced the risk of this pest becoming firmly established here. The signs so far would appear to give confidence that they are beginning to have some effect. It is true that there have been findings on about 30 British nurseries, affecting mainly chrysanthemums, but including lettuce, cucumber and celery, and I acknowledge that a number of those have been in my hon. Friend's constituency.

However, nearly all those outbreaks showed signs that the pest had been there for some time, certainly well before the measures that I have outlined were introduced. There have also been findings on imported produce and flowers from the Netherlands, but those have become noticeably fewer in the last few weeks.

I appreciate the genuine concerns expressed by growers that the range of pesticides presently available for use against the South American leafminer may prove insufficient to eradicate it before it establishes itself, not only on ornamental but on edible crops.

As for chemical controls, we have evidence that existing pest control programmes are beginning to have an effect, and we have taken action to strengthen the growers' armoury by increasing the number of permitted applications of triazophos, which is marketed as Hostathion, for use against the South American leafminer. We have also improved the rate of application and we are optimistic that those measures will be effective.

Calls have been made—my hon. Friend made a strong call—for the pesticide Abamectin, which is approved in Holland on non-edible glasshouse crops and in Spain on certain edible crops, but not in the United Kingdom, to be made available in this country. It is not that simple. The pesticide must be evaluated on the basis of its behaviour under United Kingdom conditions. Differences of soil, climate and growing methods must all be taken into account and our standards for operator and consumer safety must be met before a pesticide can be approved for use in this country.

The House will appreciate that we cannot assume the responsibility for authorising the use of these chemicals without satisfying ourselves on those vital safety matters. The request from the National Farmers Union that the

strictly limited experimental permit for Abamectin should be extended to allow use on all affected sites cannot be met without a full evaluation of data on operator toxicity.

But I am pleased to announce to the House this morning that we have already started the evaluation of this pesticide, and my Department is now liaising with the Dutch authorities to determine whether their evaluation can be used to speed our assessment. It is hoped that the operator toxicity evaluation will be ready in about two months' time.

I cannot and will not anticipate the results, but we hope that it may then be possible to permit the use of Abamectin on affected sites to combat liriomyza huidobrensis. Evaluation of other parts of the data package to allow consideration of commercial approval will follow, but this chemical will not be allowed on the market for general use unless and until the independent experts of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides recommend that it is safe to do so.

Let me make it clear exactly what that means. If there is no risk to operators, the use of Abamectin can be authorised on an experimental basis but only on ornamental plants. It cannot be extended to food crops. Once all the scientific information has been assessed, the Advisory Committee on Pesticides will be able to say whether Abamectin is safe for more extended use on other crops. I must emphasis that that decision is many, many months away.

The companies with applications for new pesticides that are in the queue are entitled to expect fair treatment, which they have always received from the pesticide registration authorities. I must make it clear that we have agreed to this exceptional course of action in respect of Abamectin solely because of this rare opportunity to eradicate an exotic pest before it gains a foothold in this country.

It is clear that, whatever the measures taken, this nasty little beastie will remain a real danger to horticulture. I cannot, therefore, emphasise too strongly the importance of growers continuing to remain as vigilant as possible for the signs of the pest on their farmholdings. To help them identify this leafminer—it should not be forgotten that there are numerous native leafminers, as well as the North American leafminer with which it could be confused by the layman—we shall shortly be issuing an illustrated guidance leaflet. If they are at all suspicious that the pest is present, I would exhort nurserymen and others to contact their local plant health and seeds inspector at once. We intend to increase the number of such inspectors working on the checking of plant material specifically looking for this pest.

All in all, we consider that the extensive measures that I have described should enable us to prevent the pest from becoming established here. We shall, however, keep the matter under close review. As I promised my hon. Friend earlier, we shall not hesitate to take any further measures if we consider them necessary.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 December 1989

The House met a half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

ENTERPRISE AND NEW TOWNS (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Secretary Rifkind, supported by Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Ian Lang, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, Mr. Michael Forsyth and Mr. Peter Lilley, presented a Bill to establish public bodies to be known as Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and to make provision as to their functions; to dissolve the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board; to make further provision as regards new towns in Scotland; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 8 January and to be printed. [Bill 36.]

Statutory Instruments, &c

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the nine motions on statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft Electricity Supply Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft British Waterways Board (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft Railways (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft Water Undertakers (Rateble Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft British Gas plc (Rateable Values) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.

That the draft Non-Domestic Rating (Transitional Period) (Appropriate Fraction) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 7th December, be approved.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Fire Safety (Castle Point)

9.35 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Traditionally, the House provides opportunities to draw attention to the need to redress grievances, to right wrongs and to expose administrative blunders. Today, I wish to raise a matter of the utmost importance to the safety of my constituents. I refer to the recent proposal of Essex county council's fire and public protection committee to reduce to one the number of whole-time fire engines in Hadleigh in my constituency of Castle Point, and to relocate the hose-laying lorry to Billericay, more than 10 miles away.

There was no consultation with the district council or with me before this ill-considered proposal was made. Its significance can be grasped at once if I tell the House that in 1933 the Hadleigh fire station had two fire engines to cover 13,000 people. It now has the same number to protect 51,000 people and provides support for surrounding areas with 90,000 people. It is against that background that we must consider the proposal to reduce fire cover for my constituents.

In a report on the subject presented to the county fire and public protection committee in November, it was stated that the average annual number of calls received at Hadleigh in the years 1984 to 1988 was 337. In 1988 the station in fact responded to 796 calls, of which 367 were for the Hadleigh area itself and the rest for surrounding areas. I want to consider that figure of 796 calls last year. Significantly, the total number of calls received up to 17 December this year was 913, and we are not yet at the end of the year. That means that in the last year alone there has been an increase in calls of about 15 per cent. It is not, therefore, as though the number of calls, and, therefore, the scale of the risk, is declining.

Nor are we concerned with risks solely to residential and business property. Hadleigh fire station covers what is described as a "C" risk area, which is mainly residential with some shops. In addition, however, it is responsible for the "C" risk area of Canvey Island, which includes a major liquefied gas installation and other industrial plant classified as major industrial hazards. I should add that Hadleigh is central to an area from Leigh-on-Sea in the east, Benfleet, Thundersley and Basildon in the west, Rayleigh in the north and Canvey Island in the south. It is therefore very well placed to give support to surrounding districts.

You will know, Mr. Speaker how necessary it has become over the past 20 years for me to raise not once, but many times, the serious threat that is posed to my constituents by an excessive concentration on Canvey and in neighbouring Thurrock of stores of liquefied gas, oil and chemicals. That has led to warning after warning of the risks involved to human life and property, and to the holding of numerous and lengthy public inquiries.

One example of the problem is the huge methane gas storage plant holding tens of thousands of tonnes of liquefied gas which, if released by accident, could produce a lethal gas cloud. As the prevailing winds are south-westerly, one can see from the map that such a cloud would blow over a densely populated area where there are tens of thousands of adventitious sources of ignition. Every house has a gas pilot light, people light cigarettes and there are little fires all over the place. One can imagine what would happen if a gas cloud blew across a residential area.

Some hon. Members may recall—and my constituents certainly recall—that the matter became so serious that it drew repeated attention and comment not only in this country, but overseas. It even led to the publication of books by scientists in France and the United States. Some may even recall that in July 1974 I was obliged to raise the matter here in a speech which, I was told later, was the longest made from the Back Benches in this place for almost 150 years. So it was that at last the Government of the day took the matter seriously. Thanks to the vigilance of the newly established Health and Safety Executive and as a result of the recommendations of several lengthy public inquiries, there has been a marked improvement in safety standards and some reduction in the totality of risk.

However, risk remains, and the district council and I are determined that our defences should not be reduced. Against that background, I want to make it plain that any reduction in the fire and rescue cover for Canvey, let alone the rest of the area served by the Hadleigh fire station, is wholly unacceptable to me and to my constituents.

There are several crucial factors that the Essex fire and public protection committee appears to have ignored. Since the second world war, south-east Essex has grown faster than almost any other region. The population of Castle Point alone has leapt from 30,520 in 1950, to 79,300 in 1974, to 85,900 by 1987 and to about 87,000 now. The most vulnerable area in the district is Canvey which had a population of 10,800 in 1950, when I was first elected for the constituency, and now has a population of 36,000. The figures themselves tell the story. One reason for this growth has been the expansion of home ownership in the area. Castle Point can proudly claim to have more home owners as a proportion of its total population than any other district in Britain. Rochford, our next door district which used to be part of my constituency, comes a close second. Such phenomenal growth does not argue for a reduction in fire cover, but rather the reverse.

Any reduction in the number of fire engines at Hadleigh must inevitably mean running the risk of not being able to respond to calls as quickly as is necessary. I understand that the fire research establishment at Boreham Wood has test chambers which demonstrate how fires develop. As we know, there are many ways in which a fire can be started, can develop, and can then engulf and destroy a building if unchecked. In some cases, fumes alone can kill or disable people within a few minutes. In others the fire can be brought quickly under control provided—and only provided—that firemen receive adequate warning. What firemen can never know is just how serious a fire is until they reach it. The earliest possible warning must be given, therefore, combined with the earliest possible response. That means having available the right number of men with the right equipment. Flexibility is the key to effective action. To play around with a cost-cutting exercise against that background is irresponsible and that exercise must not be allowed to prevail.

The last word in the matter rests not with the county fire and public protection committee but with the Home Office. In this connection I draw my hon. Friend's attention to two special considerations which underline the short-sightedness of the proposal to reduce fire cover for my constituency. First, the fire service consists not only of full-time professional officers of high calibre, who are

available for emergencies at all times of the day or night, but of dedicated retained personnel who are, in essence, part-time volunteers. I am told that it is increasingly difficult to secure the services of such people.

I hope that my hon. Friend has read the report of the chief fire officer, who makes the point clearly in the conclusion to his recent review of the standards of fire cover. The chief fire officer says:

"Essex is one of the largest and fastest growing counties in the country and any reduction in fire cover should be considered with extreme caution. Regrettably the reliability of Retained personnel has become increasingly unpredictable due to the dormitory nature of the County and a greater reluctance on the part of employers to release their workers for retained duties. This latter situation is due in no small part to the on-going emphasis in the industrial and commercial sectors on productivity and value for money."

No one can read that passage without realising that the chief fire officer is giving a clear warning to the fire authority.

Elsewhere in the report, the chief fire officer says:

"Financially it may seem attractive to reduce the number of appliances to the absolute minimum recommended standards, but there are occasions where peaks of operational workload occur, such as flooding, prolonged dry periods, gales, etc. which are additional to normal fire calls. At these times, the Service's resources are obviously overstretched to an extent that normal response times cannot be met. If pumps are reduced, this will decrease the resources available to deal with the extremely high demands placed on the service at these times."

Those two statements in the chief fire officer's report were ignored by the fire and public protection committee. I must ask whether the Home Office is aware of the situation regarding retained personnel. If that is the position in Essex, surely it is likely to obtain elsewhere in the country. It is a factor that surely must be taken into account before any approval is given to reducing fire cover, in the words of the chief fire officer,

"to the absolute minimum standards",

which would be involved if the proposed reduction in my constituency were ever to be implemented. I seek a firm assurance from my hon. Friend—if not today, later, and certainly before any decision is taken—that such idiocy will not be tolerated in Castle Point or elsewhere.

Secondly, Essex county council should be aware—certainly we in Castle Point are aware—of the growing congestion of our roads. With the best will in the world, that problem is unlikely to improve for some time to come. For the present and for the next two years, major roadworks at the Rayleigh Weir and on the heavily congested A127 will create acute difficulties, especially in regard to the cover that Hadleigh is required to give to neighbouring Rayleigh, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), which I once had the honour to represent. The repercussions for Rayleigh of any decision to halve the fire and rescue cover at present provided by Hadleigh are serious. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford told me yesterday that he shares my anxiety and that he will seek to reinforce my plea early in the new year, if common sense does not prevail. The matter is serious for Rayleigh because, among the proposals, is one to close the Rochford fire station —in my hon. Friend's constituency—which also provides cover for Rayleigh.

Rayleigh, however, is covered by the Hadleigh station at all times but has only one retained fire engine. Reduce the cover, and Rayleigh is left exposed. In any emergency, it would have to await the arrival of a fire engine from Hawkwell, Leigh, Southend or Basildon but Rayleigh too, like Castle Point, has a fast-growing population. It is madness to contemplate reducing the cover that Hadleigh currently provides. I repeat, and I am measuring my words carefully, that an unnecessary delay of minutes in the arrival of a fire engine can mean the difference between getting a fire under control and a complete disaster, including loss of lives.

As for the road situation, which is crucial to effective and rapid deployment of fire fighters, I readily admit that plans are afoot for road improvement, but until they are implemented it would be foolhardy in the extreme to reduce existing fire cover and the flexibility that it provides. Canvey Island is particularly vulnerable, not only because of the hazardous installations but because it has only limited road access to the mainland. For years, the islanders have clamoured for an additional access, but we do not yet have it. As the chief fire officer has said, the fire service exists not merely to protect property from fire and to save lives but to help with other emergencies, such as serious accidents on roads, flooding and other sudden and unpredictable disasters.

My constituents remember the 1953 flood disaster, when Canvey Island was inundated and we lost more lives than any other district down the east coast and into the Thames estuary. They remember, too, the repeated warnings at public inquiries of the dangers of fire and explosion posed by the industrial hazards with which they have to live. Essex county council may think again, but in the meantime I wish to serve warning that any reduction in the fire cover for Canvey and for Castle Point as a whole is unacceptable. Therefore, I hope that when my hon. Friend replies he will say that he and his Department are sensitive to the situation and he will be able to give me an assurance that no such reduction in cover will be approved. It is possible that Essex county council will change its mind. I hope that it will, but the ultimate responsibility rests squarely on my hon. Friend's Department. One final point: I hope that he will concede that, if the population growth in Castle Point and in Essex as a whole has warranted the recent and welcome increase in police strength, the same sensible approach should be taken towards the provision of our fire and rescue services.

9.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) both on securing the debate and on raising an important issue of crucial concern to him and his constituents—the provision of an effective fire service. I assure him that I do not underestimate the seriousness with which he speaks. I noted what he said and I am sure that his local fire authority will as well.

It may be helpful if I begin by describing where responsibilities lie in this matter. Under the relevant legislation—the Fire Services Acts 1947 and 1959—it is the duty of the fire authority for the area to secure the services of such a fire bridgade and such equipment as may be necessary to meet efficiently all normal requirements. In this case, the fire authority is the Essex county council. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Essex county council to determine the appropriate number of fire stations, fire appliances and fire fighters for its area, all of which go to make up the fire cover.

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

Under the legislation, the fire authority is required to make an establishment scheme, which sets out its arrangements to provide fire cover. It has to send the establishment scheme to the Home Office, but the Home Secretary's approval to the scheme is not required. The fire authority is free to increase the fire cover in its area—it does not need the Secretary of State's approval to do that—but it must seek the Secretary of State's approval if it wishes to reduce fire cover in its area. That includes varying the establishment scheme by closing a fire station or reducing the number of appliances, or full or part-time fire fighters.

In determining the fire cover for its area, the county council will, like other fire authorities, have regard to the nationally recommended standards of fire cover which have been in existence since 1936. They contain recommendations about the number of fire appliances that should be sent to fires in particular kinds of areas, and how quickly those appliances should arrive.

There are four main categories of risk. At one end of the scale, for the kind of risk to be found in many of our major city centres, known as 'A' risk, the standards recommend that two appliances should arrive within five minutes and a third within eight minutes. At the other end of the scale, known as 'D' risk and covering much of our rural areas, the standards recommend that one appliance should arrive in no more than 20 minutes.

These standards have been reviewed comparatively recently. They were reviewed by a joint committee of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Councils for England and Wales and for Scotland, called the joint committee on standards of fire cover. This joint committee included representatives from the Home Departments, the local authority associations, the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers and the Fire Brigades Union, as well as other interested parties. In its report to the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, the joint committee on standards of fire cover recommended that fire authorities should review fire risk categorisation in their area, having regard to nationally recommended standards of fire cover. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary accepted the committee's recommendation and its proposals on appropriate standards of fire cover. In a circular to fire authorities issued in May 1985, the Home Office asked fire authorities to put in hand reviews of fire risk categorisation in their areas.

I understand that the chief fire officer of Essex county fire and rescue service presented his review of standards of fire cover to the fire and public protection committee of his county council in November of this year. I also understand that the report contains some 15 recommendations. The great majority of these recommendations relate to the need to keep under review the status of existing fire stations, particularly where population growth is taking place in the area, or for the relocation of existing stations. One recommendation is to the effect that the possibility of a change in manning the system should be investigated at the station concerned. Further recommendations are that a site in the Stansted area should be purchased for a fire station and that the number of pumps at the station at Dunmow should be increased from one to two. In only two cases is there a recommendation that fire cover should be reduced, but I immediately appreciate that both the stations concerned are in my right hon. Friend's constituency.

Four of the recommendations relate to stations in my right hon. Friend's constituency, at Corringham, Hadleigh, Rochford and Canvey Island—all of which he mentioned. I understand that the chief fire officer has recommended that there should not be any change in standards of fire cover at Corringham, but that its status should be reviewed regularly.

I understand that the chief fire officer has recommended closure of the part-time station at Rochford, whose area can be covered within nationally recommended standards by Southend's whole-time station or by the part-time station at Hawkwell. As to Hadleigh, I believe that the report recommends the removal of one fire appliance and the relocation of a hose-laying lorry to Billericay.

The chief fire officer's report does not propose any change in relation to fire cover in Canvey Island. It does, however, draw attention to the fact that if special risks and other industries on Canvey Island continue to decline, a move from full shift manning to day manning by one of the appliances should be considered. The second appliance is part time and no change is envisaged in the report.

I understand that the fire and public protection committee of Essex county council considered the chief fire officer's report on 16 November, when it accepted all his recommendations subject to local consultations, and he wrote to Her Majesty's inspector of fire services to advise him of that on 20 November.

It will then be a matter for the county council, as the fire authority, to consider the views of its fire and public protection committee and to decide whether to proceed with proposals to close fire stations or to reduce the number of firefighters or fire appliances.

Should the county council decide to propose the closure of fire stations, reductions in operational firefighters, or removal of fire appliances, it must first obtain the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. Such approval would be given only where my right hon. and learned Friend was satisfied, on the professional advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services, that the county council would continue to discharge its statutory obligations to provide an effective fire service and to meet nationally recommended standards of fire cover.

For the moment, this remains a matter for the county council. It is responsible for providing fire cover in the county and it is considering the result of the recent review of fire cover. It must, for the moment, be for the county council to consider its chief fire officer's report, and it would be undesirable for me to comment more fully now on what might come before my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary as an application for his determination. But I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that should the county council seek my right hon. and learned Friend's approval to reduce fire cover in the area he will take careful note of my right hon. Friend's comments this morning.

The Government are committed to maintaining the nationally recommended standards of fire cover and to the maintenance of an effective fire service in all parts of the United Kingdom. The fire service is an organisation of which all who serve in it, at whatever level, can be justifiably proud and my right hon. and learned Friend the

Home Secretary is determined to keep it so. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity of saying that this morning.

Sir Bernard Braine *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I take it that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) has the leave of the House to speak again.

Sir Bernard Braine: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to speak again. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his carefully considered answer. Reading between the lines, I think that I have the assurance that at the end, if all else fails, the Home Office will pay particular attention to what I have said this morning, which reflects the view of many of my constituents.

My hon. Friend said that initial responsibility rests with Essex county council. I know that that is the case and it is most unfortuate that, because of the failure of the fire and public protection committee to appreciate all the factors that obtain in my part of the county, let alone the rest of the county, it has come up with preposterous proposals which cannot stand.

I ask my hon. Friend and his advisers to look again carefully at the chief fire officer's report. I have great confidence, as, I think, all in Essex have, in our chief fire officer. One can see clearly from the report that he is issuing warning after warning to the local government committee which has the responsibility to which my hon. Friend refers. For example, in his introduction he says:

"Essex continues to develop"—

that is a reference to the rapid increase in population that we have sustained over many years—

"and this review aims to provide a long-term strategy designed to enable the Service to achieve and maintain maximum cost-effectiveness."

With respect, the first requirement that the public expect is maximum effectiveness in fire protection. The report goes on:

"The recommendations contained with this Report are subject to consultations with the Home Office and, in the case of any reductions of fire cover, to the approval of the Home Secretary."

That is where the buck stops. Ultimately, the Home Secretary must look at the matter and decide. Will my hon. Friend convey to the Home Secretary the fact that the proposals to which I have referred this morning are simply not acceptable on any criteria that anyone cares to advance?

I do not know what consultations have already taken place between Essex county council and the Home Office. I imagine that there have been none because the Home Office knows the overall picture. It has had to listen many times in the past to hon. Members talking in the House about the dangers to which we are exposed in south-east Essex. Successive Prime Ministers have taken a personal interest in the Canvey situation. There is no escape for the Home Secretary in regard to the decision. The sooner consultations take place and the ridiculous, damaging and irresponsible proposal is withdrawn, the better.

I take comfort from my hon. Friend's measured response. In passing, I congratulate him on his appointment. We have great faith and trust in him. I am sure that, as a result of today's debate, he will have managed to get a grip on the situation my constituency now faces. I beg him to let me know as soon as possible what steps are being taken in his Department to bring some sense into this situation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I take it that the Minister has the leave of the House to speak again.

Mr. Lloyd: With the leave of the House, I shall respond briefly to my right hon. Friend. I understand and have noted the strength of feeling with which he speaks. My right hon. Friend mentioned the buck being passed, but it is definitely with Essex county council at the moment. Therefore, until it makes its proposals my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has no role in the matter. But when proposals are made that he has to consider, I assure my right hon. Friend that he will consider them most carefully along with any comments that have been made.

Sitting suspended at 10.7 am.

On resuming——

Puppy Farming

10.15 am

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): It is difficult to convince people that something as soft-sounding as puppy farming could be a screen behind which there is so much cruelty. Most members of the public associate puppy farming with the little bundle of fluff that they see in a pet shop window. They do not realise that all too often the pet shop window is the end of a callous, cruel, greed-ridden and deliberately dishonest trail that can frequently be traced back to farms in my own part of the country, Wales. However, similar problems arise in Scotland, Cornwall and other parts of the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the examples to which I shall refer are in south-west Wales.

This is an appropriate time of the year to discuss the matter, although it might have been better to discuss it a week or two earlier. However, parliamentary time did not permit such a debate to take place then. Christmas is the time of peak sales of puppies, although it is becoming increasingly an all-year-round business. Even more important, it is becoming very big business. There are many caring and well-intentioned breeders and dealers, but far too many of them are neither caring nor genuine. They are out purely for maximum financial gain.

The popular myth is that most puppies are given to children, particularly at Christmas. Subsequently, however, many of them are abandoned as the children lose interest in them. The Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals and others have discovered, however, that a very large proportion of the puppy trade is dominated by people in their thirties and forties who buy puppies not for children but for elderly parents, in the hope that the puppies will provide them with comfort and even security. They do not seem to realise that the minimum part of the cost of a dog is its purchase price, even though that sometimes can be high. The RSPCA and others calculate that it costs about £4,000 to keep a dog over its average 11-year life. When one gives such a gift to a pensioner or a child, one is imposing on the family or pensioner an £8 a week cost for keeping the dog during the next decade. People ought, therefore, to consider that aspect when deciding whether to give puppies as presents.

That is not, however, the subject of the debate. I want to talk about a trade that is often sordid and cruel and, above all, is epitomised by sheer greed. I have already referred to the fact that most of my examples will come from south-west Wales. Most of them are to be found some distance to the west of my constituency, in a belt between Aberystwyth and Carmarthen.

I became involved in the issue two months ago—I must admit, by accident. While I was stuck in one of London's traffic jams on 12 October, I was listening to "Face the Facts" on my car radio when I heard a John Waite report that horrified me and convinced me that if the House were aware of all the circumstances action would be taken. The programme introduced what was described as a new cash crop. I should like to read some excerpts because I do not want colleagues to think that this is just one Member's view of what this trade represents. I want them to realise when they look at the *Official Report* that these are the views of outsiders who had no preconceptions. On the "Face the Facts" programme, the dogs were described as

> "a new and lucrative cash crop for local farmers and smallholders many of whom would rather you did not know about some of the conditions in which those thousands of cuddly little Christmas presents are being bred."

That is certainly true. Those people would far prefer that no one knew about those conditions.

Mr. Alan Coxon, who with his wife and friends set up an organisation called Puppy Watch Wales to monitor what was happening and draw attention to the scandal, said:

> "when you walk round the back of what could be a pleasant farm, you find a long shed with bitches three or four to a pen in darkness all the time, horrrendous noise, horrendous stench and the poor animals know no other way of life. Once they have been used for breeding for six or seven years, twice a year producing litters and making pots and pots of money for their owners, they are simply discarded because they are no use any more and they are either shot or dumped."

The lucky ones are shot. I visited one animal sanctuary where the lady who had taken over the premises found dogs and pups in the septic tank that were surplus to needs. They had not been killed in any decent manner but had simply been dumped. Mr. Coxon and his friends presented me with a petition containing more than 5,000 signatures of people, most of whom came fom the Carmarthen area, who were protesting about the horrors on the puppy farming "industry", for it has indeed become an industry.

If anything, Mr. Coxon's description was a serious understatment of the magnitude of the problem. The "Face the Facts" team was soon shown the reality, when Inspector Anderson of the RSPCA took the team to several farms. Referring to one farm, a reporter said:

> "The smallholder led us around to the back of the building where we discovered breeding was carried out in a disused and dilapidated railway goods wagon. Inside dogs shivering with cold"—

this was during one of the mildest Octobers on record, so one can imagine the conditions during the past couple of weeks—

> "were living on a sparse bed of straw heavily matted with excrement and sodden with urine and rain water. Though we saw five bitches, a Shih Tzu, a poodle, and three Yorkshire Terriers and then later a heavily pregnant King Charles spaniel, the owner insisted only two were kept for breeding."

As the team went around the farm, the situation deteriorated rapidly. The team came across a terrier, and Inspector Anderson said:

> "It's got a broken jaw."

The bones were sticking out, and there are more gruesome details which I will not go into. The smallholder said:

> "You might be right, but she's old, isn't she?"

Inspector Anderson prevailed on the owner to allow the team to take the poor creature to a vet. The reporter said:

> "We set off for Carmarthen and the vet. The forlorn creature that shared the journey huddled whimpering in the back, her useless lower jaw hanging limp. On closer inspection we saw dried food caked around and in her eyes. Evidently the bitch's only method of feeding had been to push her face in whatever food was available in the hope that some would go down her throat."

The vet put that poor creature down, which was perhaps the kindest thing that could happen. One of the anomalies of the cases which I am describing is shown by the fact that, despite the dog's condition, Inspector Anderson could take it away only with the owner's permission. He could not have done so if the owner had objected.

I know that the Minister and his officials have looked at the transcript and that some of them have listened to a tape of the programme. After hearing the programme, I immediately contacted John Waite and his producer, Guy Smith. They kindly came to the House of Commons and

gave me a lot of background information. They told me that, 10 months earlier, HTV had produced two programmes which went out late in the evening on the same subject. I visited them in Cardiff and they kindly provided videos of the programmes. They were still angry —so angry that, a year later, they were preparing a third programme. They were so committed that HTV had gladly said that it would waive all copyright conditions on the stills from the videos because it wanted to publicise what was happening.

I have a couple of photographs with me. They are horrible and horrifying. On several farms, I saw abandoned cars and vans that were used as pens for these poor creatures. The animals were locked in and left for long periods. The vans and cars were full of weeks of excrement in which the animals were living. There is a photograph of a Doberman that had been living in its excrement for so long that its hindquarters were so ulcerated that it could neither sit nor stand properly—it had to be put down. Up until the time of its death, it had been used for breeding.

One of the most horrible photographs was of three King Charles spaniels which had virtually no fur. The other pens were occupied and they had been left without food for so long that they had lost their coats and were sleeping on concrete. They died of hypothermia. These are the sort of conditions that exist in this kind and cuddly trade.

Most people would find it beyond belief that some people could be so stupid as well as so cruel. After all, as the pups sell for so much money, one would think that at least the owners would see the bitches as assets and take care of them, but it is cheaper for these people to replace the bitch than incur the costs of providing proper food and shelter and veterinary care. It is a measure of the inadequacy of our protection for these animals that the owner of the farm on which the Doberman and three dead animals were found was taken to court, fined and banned from breeding dogs for 10 years but on appeal had the ban lifted. She laughed all the way to Cumbria because she needed to sell only a couple of pups to cover the cost of the fine. She set up business again in Cumbria, where the RSPCA again traced her.

The reason why this problem is so widespread in this area is a quirk of economic history which, in fairness, is not within the control of the people who live there. They were the victims of the EEC change in the milk quota system. Many small farmers found that their incomes had gone. The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service told them that they should consider diversifying into such occupations as dog breeding. I have seen a letter from ADAS about a farm that I visited saying that the premises were suitable for adaptation. In fairness to ADAS, they may have been suitable for adaptation, but the farmer had no intention of paying for it. So it became a puppy farm. When I was there, dozens of the animals were in the house itself and some were in outhouses sleeping on the bare concrete. No attempt has been made to do anything to protect the animals.

As the problem is so widespread over that belt of Wales, why is it allowed to continue? After all, the RSPCA inspector, Mr. Peter Anderson, and the radio team from "Face the Facts" have investigated the matter. However, Mr. Anderson is hampered by the very law that the House introduced to protect animals—the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973. Under that well-intentioned Act, anyone with more than two bitches for breeding had to register and be licensed and could be subject to inspection. The same law means that anyone not registered or licensed is free from inspection. Therefore, the environmental health departments and the RSPCA are in a Catch-22. If the farm owner says that he has only one or two dogs, they have no right of access and it is impossible to collect the information and evidence on which to prove that the farm owner is in breach of the law. Therefore, the standard reaction from the breeders is to say, "We have only one animal."

The "Face the Facts" team watched pups being loaded into the back of a van belonging to a local dealer, Mr. Yeoman. They approached eight or nine of the people producing the pups and selling them to Mr. Yeoman. Each one came up with the standard answer, "We have only one animal that we use for breeding." That ensured that they were immune from Mr. Anderson's inspection and attention.

I visited a couple of unlicensed farms in the area and saw 30, 40 or 50 bitches penned up in inadequate accommodation, sometimes even in the house. There are a range of people involved, some with just one dog and others with over 50. As one can imagine, that means that they are deriving an enormous income.

Because of my concern and because of what the programme said, I asked to see the Home Secretary. In fairness, I was seen rapidly by the previous Home Secretary—the present Foreign Secretary—and the Under-Secretary of State on 23 October. I took with me the videos and a tape. I told them on what I was basing my representations. To his credit, the Home Secretary was able to point to a transcript similar to the one that I have been using this morning. In anticipation of my visit, he had already taken the trouble to establish the nature of the case. I had a positive reception not just at that meeting but at the subsequent meeting that I had with the Under-Secretary after I had made a series of fact-finding visits to south west Wales. I want to place on record that the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State recognised the genuineness of the problem.

It is clear that there is a crucial loophole in the existing law—the limitation on the right to inspect. However, one has to be realistic and recognise the problem. I am sure that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has come across similar problems and is aware or what I am describing. Even with an increase in the right to inspect, the councils would still be hamstrung by the limitations on the manpower available to cover the whole range of activities that come within the remit of the environmental health department.

The problem is so widespread now that it is difficult to see how inspection alone will meet the need. In the belt of Wales to which I am referring, there are about 200 licensed breeders but there are probably at least as many—and possibly more—unlicensed. Increasingly, those who previously took the trouble to be licensed are no longer doing so, partly because they resent others getting away with being unlicensed, partly because they want to save costs but more importantly because they have discovered that it is a way to evade the rules.

I am convinced that the key to the problem is the dealer. The dealer is the only link between the local small distant farm and the real markets. Those markets are not just in the cities of Swansea and Cardiff—that is minimal—but in London, Birmingham, Manchester and even abroad in Common Market countries. The local markets are

[Mr. Alan Williams]

saturated. One cannot sell many pups there as everyone already has an ample supply and they are trying to find ways of getting rid of them. Some dealers even farm out the bitches within the area so that other people incur the cost of feeding and raising them. The dealers then collect the litters and reap the profits.

Those dealers deal not in tens or hundreds but in thousands of young pups, some of which are barely six weeks old and should not even be parted from their mother. HTV estimated that one dealer had a probable turnover of about £500,000 a year. We are talking about a substantial, highly lucrative and profitable business. How much goes through ledgers? The VAT inspectors would probably have a wonderful time in south-west Wales and they might find it a highly profitable area for investigation, as would the Revenue and the Department of Social Security.

To illustrate the international nature of the market, "Face the Facts" found that 30 crates of animals were being offloaded at Heathrow on their way to Milan. It is a big business in which the public are being ripped off by dealers who have no fear of the fines because they are derisory in relation to the profits. Their only fear would be if they were to be banned from buying from unlicensed breeders, because their livelihoods would then be at risk. They would then become self-policing and might do the things that the environmental health department is unable to do in severing the unlicensed breeders from the marketplace.

We now find that the market is becoming larger and more sophisticated. It is not just the old pet shops. Pet supermarkets are emerging and are buying thousands of pups a year. One sees advertisements, repetitive addresses and telephone numbers in magazines such as *Loot*—a free advertising magazine—*Exchange & Mart* and in the local press. Dog agencies are now emerging also and the RSPCA told me yesterday that it was looking into a case where, in response to an advertisement, a gentleman paid £175 for a Yorkshire terrier of dubious origin and another couple paid the same person £270 for two pups of equally dubious origin. The so-called pedigree would be meaningless.

"Pebble Mill" saw the dealer in the marketplace. People were rushing from their cars with pups plucked from their car boots and handing them over to him. He was stuffing bits of paper—the so-called certificates of pedigree—in his pocket. Heaven knows how he ever related them to the individual pups because when the people from "Pebble Mill" loked into the van, they estimated that there were between 70 and 80 pups already there. When they went back to the dealer's house as he was returning, the cars were lined up waiting to deliver more pups to him.

The pedigrees are virtually meaningless. A pedigree cannot be meaningful until it is registered for that pup with the Kennel Club. Most people do not realise that or do not register the pedigree for some other reason. Only people who intend to breed or show bother to register. Dealers rip off the public by charging top prices for "pedigree" pups which have no genuine pedigree.

The position has become so bad that there have been complaints not just in Britain but from overseas about the trade from south-west Wales. The Swiss received so many complaints about ill and deformed pups that they investigated the matter. In the process they found that not only were they faced with the problem of the callous dealers, but some dealers supplied dogs to the continent with false rabies certificates, with all the potential horrific repercussions of that.

There are many genuine and good breeders and dealers in the trade but far too many who deal callously and cruelly. They are utterly motivated by profit without regard for the animals. The greed is generating more and more uncaring breeders. I submit that, while the dog may be man's best friend, sadly, man is certainly not the dog's best friend.

10.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I am particularly pleased to respond to the concerns of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about puppy farming. They are concerns which I share with him. As he told the House, we have had a number of meetings in which he expressed these concerns persuasively and we discussed how they might be tackled.

The right hon. Member and I stand largely on common ground. There can be no dispute that some unlicensed dog breeding establishments are horrific and a shameful example of animal neglect and selfish exploitation for, as the right hon. Gentleman referred to it, a lucrative cash crop.

From the evidence that the House has heard today, it is clear that the conditions in some of these establishments are utterly deplorable. Dogs are kept in old cars, old sheds and old vans. They often have inadequate water, light and heat. It is a miserable existence and a shameful way to treat animals. It cast a shadow over the large majority of dog breeders who, as he said, care deeply for the welfare of their animals.

The breeding of dogs is controlled by the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973. In many respects, this is an effective piece of legislation. It empowers local authorities to license establishments where dogs are bred and to inspect these thoroughly to ensure that they comply and conform to a good and reasonable standard of care. It is a detailed Act, setting out at some length the considerations which should apply to the properly run breeding kennel. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with that part of the legislation. Nor are we aware of any general problems in its application by local authorities, although one recognises that in remote country districts enforcement is often more difficult and there is greater scope for evasion.

However, I accept that it may well be highly desirable for local authority inspectors to be able to gain access to establishments that they have reasonable grounds for feeling were breeding dogs but had not sought a licence and so had not brought themselves under the controls of the Act. There are precedents either way for this. It is often unnecessary for such powers to exist; if, for instance, the public has a general right of access, there is no need to grant special rights to officials of one kind or another.

But, in the case of some dog breeding establishments, I accept that that can no longer be said to be the case and, providing that there are proper safeguards on the privacy of individuals and constraints on the exercise of the powers that local authority officials may have, there can be no objection to such a right of access being granted in order properly to enforce licensing requirements.

Perhaps it is worth spelling that point out a little further. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 sets out the strict conditions under which, for instance, the police can gain access in the investigation of crime. Broadly, access cannot be granted to private premises unless they are investigating a serious arrestable offence which might attract a sentence of five years or more. It is an important part of the safeguards that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 provides that right of access is not granted in the pursuit of less serious offences. But that is a wholly different matter from considering a right of access in order to enforce licensing requirements. Such a right is given in a number of cases and in some instances it may make nonsense of licensing requirements if they can be evaded, as the right hon. Gentleman said, simply by refusing access to enforcement officials, People may simply say that they have only one dog. That is why I have no difficulty in going along with the right hon. Gentleman. I agree that an extension of the powers currently available to local authority officials would not merely make a lot of sense, but has become a necessity.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to discuss the problems of indiscriminate breeding and controlling the sale of puppies and whether one might be able to confine such sales to registered breeders or pet shops. He has kindly raised these matters with me before and we have considered them with some care.

Again, I have no difficulty in agreeing that the idea of controlling outlets for puppies is fundamentally sensible. In particular, it would be highly desirable to be able not only to outlaw breeders who are trying to evade the controls and requirements of the law, but to close the outlets through which they trade. But I have to tell the House that I can see no way in which this could be done without wholly unacceptable side effects. It would clearly not be right to restrict the freedom of individuals to sell the offspring of their pets. It would clearly be unacceptable to require such people to be licensed by the local authority; and, possibly most persuasive of all, to seek to go down this route might divert our energies towards a system which was wholly impossible to enforce.

I regret to tell the rigth hon. Gentleman that I have, therefore, concluded that there is no future in trying to bring this about.

Mr. Alan Williams: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister. I am grateful for the remarks that he made in the first part of his reply. They were positive and helpful. I ask him at least to consider the second point although I know that he cannot say more today. The additional cost of licensing for anyone who wants to sell pups is relatively small, if one wishes to introduce proper controls. The advantage is that what the Minister posed as the disadvantage would be overcome. Dealers would be so restricted that they would be in a straitjacket which did not allow them to buy from people who were not licensed. They would police myriad individual breeders. They would buy only from licensed breeders and either squeeze the others out of the market or force them to come within the scope of the system and become licensed.

Mr. Lloyd: I sympathise with what the right hon. Gentleman wishes to do. He will recognise that the law must treat everyone equally. To apply the licensing provisions only to those who breed regularly for gain and distinguish them from those who have one dog that occasionally has a litter of pups which they wish to sell to a friend would be extremely difficult. Yet if one could not distinguish effectively one could not outlaw the unlicensed regular commercial breeder.

Mr. Williams: That is precisely my point. One must recognise that the price of achieving the sort of controls and safeguards that we want is for everyone to be treated the same. If one wants to sell pedigree pups at the premium prices which go with a pedigree, one should have to be licensed.

Mr. Lloyd: If the right hon. Gentleman will set out in detail how that would work, as he has done with previous arguments that he has brought to me, I shall look at it carefully. We have thought hard about how to construct an effective law. The right hon. Gentleman is saying that a law would be effective only if applied to everyone, including private individuals whose dog produces a litter, one of which is sold to an acquaintance or friend——

Mr. Williams: To dealers.

Mr. Lloyd: To dealers. These things move along. An individual may sell a puppy to a puppy farm. I am willing to consider what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, but we must ensure that any change in the law results in good, effective law that can be applied.

If one could ensure by granting increased rights of access by local authority officials that all establishments breeding dogs on a commercial scale were properly regulated and controlled, it would go a long way towards controlling the evil that the right hon. Gentleman has described today. We should be able to have confidence that that was sufficient in itself and that additional constraints on the onward sale of puppies were superfluous and unnecessary. I am willing to hear the right hon. Gentleman's detailed programme on how a law may be constructed to deal with that additional point.

I remind the House that the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 is underpinned by the Protection of Animals Act 1911. It is a major piece of legislation which has served us well and continues to do so. Anyone who is convicted of an offence under the 1911 Act can be banned from keeping animals in future. That is the greatest safeguard that animals can have. The licensing provisions of the Breeding of Dogs Act ensure that acceptable, clean and proper standards are observed in all kennels that are registered. The Protection of Animals Act ensures that, when animals are maltreated, effective sanctions are available to punish the offenders and prevent them from being able to take charge of animals again.

I welcome the opportunity that the right hon. Gentleman has given the House to discuss these issues today. I welcome the passionate restraint with which he has debated the thoroughly disgraceful conditions in which some dogs are bred and kept. I am glad to have this opportunity to confirm that we are happy to help the right hon. Gentleman a long way down the track to remedy this evil.

Sitting suspended at 10.52 am.

On resuming—

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted proceedings pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Student Loans

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the administration of student loans.

I reported to the House yesterday—at the earliest opportunity—the background to the decision of the participating financial institutions to withdraw from the Student Loans Company. I indicated then that I would be happy to make a statement today. The main points are as follows.

The objectives, principles and framework of the scheme as outlined in the Education (Student Loans) Bill remain completely unchanged. I regret the banks' withdrawal, but it affects neither the policy nor the Bill.

As I announced yesterday, arrangements are now being made for the Student Loans Company to pass into Government ownership. This will ensure that the preparations for the scheme can continue smoothly. A great deal of the preparatory work already undertaken is relevant to the new approach. The banks have agreed to contribute £0·5 million to these preparatory costs.

The new approach may even be a cheaper option. It has always been the case that the Government would fund the administration of the scheme as well as the loans. We were prepared to pay a fee to the financial institutions to secure the benefits of their branch networks for students.

The main result of the institutions' decision will be less easy access to loans for students. I would have preferred them to have that convenience, but the essential point is that nothing in the decision of the institutions alters either the Bill or the analysis behind it. The Bill will continue on course.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Secretary of State says that he regrets the banks' withdrawal. So do all those who are faced with backruptcy. The Secretary of State mocks himself as well as the House if he thinks that anyone will believe his ludicrous claim that the banks' withdrawal "alters nothing". Does he not understand that the banks' administration of the scheme was absolutely central to its operation, to Government policy and to their commendation of the scheme to the House on 20 October and again on 5 December 1989? Why else did he say:

"I believe that it was right that . . . the administration should be handled by the financial sector"—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 381.]

Can the Secretary of State point to any time or occasion when he has hinted or suggested that, in place of a scheme run by the banks, there should be a scheme operated by a nationalised corporation, as it now will be?

Given the total change in the nature of the scheme since Second Reading, the Secretary of State shows contemptible disregard for the House and for the democratic process in his determination to use the wide arbitrary powers in the Bill to railroad through an entirely new scheme without proper scrutiny by Parliament and without its authority.

Will the Secretary of State say when he, the Under-Secretary and the officials in his Department first got wind that the banks might pull out of the administration of the scheme? That is absolutely critical. Was it prior knowledge that the scheme might well collapse that lay behind the Secretary of State's refusal to serve on the Standing Committee and instead to leave the Under-Secretary hanging in the wind? Can the Secretary of State explain why the Standing Committee has been left pursuing the charade of debating a scheme for a week and a half when, at some stage in the past 10 days, he certainly knew that it would not go ahead?

Will the people employed by the Student Loans Company be civil servants? What will happen to the chief executive of that company? That job was advertised at £55,000 with a car—twice the salary of a Nobel prize-winning professor at a British university.

Will the Secretary of State say categorically that the scheme will be fully in operation by September 1990?

Is the Secretary of State aware that answers to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on Monday of this week showed that, even before the latest debacle, the cost of this ludicrous scheme had risen to £2·17 billion over the next 20 years, over and above the cost of grants? Why will the Secretary of State not use that sum—more than £2,000 million—to improve the grant system, and really help those students who are most in need?

The student loan scheme, like the poll tax, was the invention of the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who is now chairman of the Conservative party—a man with an unrivalled record for leaving messes for others to clear up. There will be little sympathy for the Secretary of State if he does not admit in public what we all know that he concedes in private—that this loan scheme is fundamentally flawed and has now been utterly torpedoed by the banks.

Yesterday's decision was a victory for the Labour party and the student movement. The Secretary of State should recognise defeat and withdraw the Bill now.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall endeavour to answer as many of the hon. Gentleman's questions as possible. He has been way off the mark on every score. He has completely misunderstood the role of the banks in relation to the Bill, and has grossly exaggerated that role. I think that I can demolish every point he has made. I apologise, Mr. Speaker, for the length of time that I may take, but I have been asked a lot of questions.

The hon. Gentleman's first point was that the banks were central to the scheme, and that I had said so in my speech on 20 October. My speech covered many columns of *Hansard*, and the reference to the banks took a very few lines. That shows that it was not central to the argument, and I did not say that it was. I challenge him to find that anywhere. I said that I believed that it was right that administration should be handled by the financial sector, and I gave the reasons:

"They can provide a quicker and more personal service. They have skill in handling personal loans. They have experience in advising individuals on financial matters and they have nationwide branch networks."—[*Official Report*, 20 October 1989; Vol. 158, c. 381.]

That is what I have said throughout the debate. To say that that is central to the scheme is utterly ludicrous.

The hon. Gentleman then said that the Student Loans Company would now become a national corporation. As he well knows, throughout the discussions on student loans it has been made absolutely clear that the Government—that is, the taxpayer—will fund the loans and the administration of the scheme. The Government were to fund the whole cost of student loans and were to pay an extra fee to the banks for the convenience of using their branch networks. That has not changed. There is no

change in the funding, so it is ludicrous to describe this as a major change. *[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Gentleman would allow me to answer his questions in sequence. His argument does not run. The whole scheme is being funded by the Government. We were prepared to pay extra to the banks for the convenience of using their branch network, which was designed to be for the convenience of students to enable them to get easy acces to loans.

The hon. Gentleman said that I had shown disregard for Parliament, but I have made two major speeches in the past two months and I reported to the House yesterday the moment I knew of the banks' decision.

The hon. Gentleman knows from debates on the Bill that the powers it provides are not arbitrary. The Bill follows precisely the way in which the original student grants scheme was drawn up and legislated for. He knows that the advantage of not having all the precise details and mechanics of the scheme spelt out is that we then have the flexibility necessary to change them by secondary legislation. Nor is it true that the Bill is in any sense affected because it allows the Government to own the Student Loans Company, as is clear from paragraph 3(1) of schedule 2.

The hon. Gentleman talked of proper scrutiny of the Bill in the House. He knows that it has a lengthy schedule that covers many of the details of the scheme, the criteria and eligibility. The fact that the Opposition have tabled a rather large number of amendments, which they are perfectly entitled to do, shows that this is not a short, arbitrary Bill. Rather it shows that there is enormous scope for discussion of all the details.

The hon. Gentleman asked when I was informed that the banks had come to the view that, if Lloyds did not participate in the scheme, they would pull out. I was informed of that at lunch time on Monday and I saw the relevant people as quickly as I could. I was informed on Wednesday that that decision would be made because it was not until Wednesday that I was able to see the chairman of Lloyds. There has not been any wasting of the Committee's time. As this aspect of the scheme is not crucial to the Bill in any sense, it does not in any way affect the Committee's discussions about the Bill on Tuesday.

The hon. Gentleman talked about my refusal to serve on the Standing Committee. He must know that that is the most utter nonsense. No Labour Education Secretary served on any Standing Committee throughout the time of the last Labour Government. He knows that that was the rule throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. His is the most trivial point and shows his general approach to the Bill.

As for staff——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Come on!

Mr. MacGreggor: I was asked a great many questions and I am doing the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) the courtesy of answering them. It is obvious that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) does not want to hear the answers because he knows that they are knocking the points made by the hon. Member for Blackburn out of the window.

It is obviously intended that the Government should operate the staff of the Students Loans Company. The position of the chief executive has still to be discussed. There are a number of details here, and I suggest that we make a statement to the Standing Committe the moment they are resolved. It remains our intention for one scheme to be fully operational in the autumn of 1990.

The hon. Gentleman knows very well from debates that we have already had in the House about costs that the choice is between a mix of grants and loans during the 1990s and into the 21st century, and grants alone. The hon. Gentleman says that he will rely on grants alone. He knows that that would be a much more expensive operation for parents and taxpayers and that the loans system is a much better deal for them. It is entirely reasonable that, as happens in most other countries, students should be asked to make a modest contribution to their maintenance—only their maintenance—while they are at university because taxpayers with a lower income than students will have for most of their working lives would otherwise be asked to bear an increasing burden in the form of the cost of students maintenance. It is entirely reasonable to ask students to make a contribution. The crucial point is that the Bill has 177 lines, a lot of amendments are being tabled in Committee, but not one line is altered by the banks' decision.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): In view of the scandal over the student loans scheme, would it not be the right and honourable course for the Minster with responsibility for higher education, who has been responsible for the Bill throughout, to resign?

Mr. McGreggor: The hon. Gentleman has clearly not listened to a word I have said. This is a very small administrative part of the total scheme. The crucial point is that we asked the banks to operate the scheme because that was better for students. Using the banks' branch network would give them immediate access on campuses. That is the only change. That is why I regret what the banks have done. It is not in the interests of students. We shall now have to consider how, operating the scheme in a somewhat different way, we can get as good access as possible, but it will not be as good as using the banks' branch network.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend make it absolutely clear again that the highly irresponsible action of the joint clearing banks—not co-operating with Government policy and the Government's scheme and giving way to pressure from the National Union of Students—will not be allowed to undermine Government policy? Will he also make it clear that the clearing banks' decision to give way when just one of them would not co-operate with the scheme makes them seem like a lot of lemmings running over a cliff? Will he therefore consider the possibility of ensuring that student grants should be encashable only at banks which co-operate with the Government's scheme and at which students have bank accounts? Then the lemmings might dash back up the cliff to try to co-operate with the Government.

Mr. MacGregor: I made it clear at column 189 of the *Official Report* of the Second Reading debate that we never asked the banks to express an opinion for or against the loans scheme because that was a decision for Government and Parliament. I said that I thought it right to ask the banks to assist in the administration on a contractual basis because they have a branch network and that that was for the convenience of students. It is on that basis that they came in. It is for the banks to say what made them change

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their minds. I regret that they have withdrawn because I do not believe that withdrawal is for the benefit of students. I can assure my hon. Friend that this decision will in no way change the policy or the Government's position on it.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am a reluctant supporter of student top-up loans, agreeing with Polonius who said:

"Neither a borrower, nor a lender be"?

I have, however, to take account of a letter and a telephone call I received this morning from constituents, and other comments I have received during half term, that they have still not received their maintenance grant from Ealing council, which is Labour controlled——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going a little wide of this statement.

Mr. Greenway: They are therefore forced to borrow at high interest rates. Loans are essential for them. I therefore support my right hon. Friend's scheme. Will he seek the early privatisation of the Government loans facility that he is setting up?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already expressed in the House my regret that Ealing has been so slow at providing grants for students. I regret that the loan scheme will not now have the banks' branch network, which would have provided immediate access to the loans scheme. I shall devise as good an alternative as I can to ensure that what happens in Ealing does not happen with the loans scheme.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Secretary of State be a bit more generous and congratulate the banks, particularly Lloyds, Clydesdale bank and the Bank of Scotland, on refusing to take part in what they have called a political act and their integrity in so doing? Will he join his Under-Secretary of State in congratulating the students on fighting an excellent campaign, using the Government's own tactics—consumer power?

Will the Secretary of State answer the question that he has not yet answered—how much taxpayers' money has so far been wasted on this futile venture? Will he now explain how a nationalised state-run loans system is compatible with Tory philosophy, how it will secure the adequate delivery of hundreds of thousands of student loans and whether it has the support of anyone but some of his Back Benchers? Will he take the advice of the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals this morning—that the Government should have a radical rethink—and, during Christmas, reflect carefully, throw away the poisoned chalice left to him by his predecessor and announce that the Bill is dead when we come back in the new year?

Mr. MacGregor: Of course not. The hon. Gentleman has clearly not been listening. I have made it absolutely clear that this does not affect the Bill at all. I believe it is clear from responses that I have received——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): From whom?

Mr. MacGregor: —and opinion polls I have seen that there is strong support for the Bill among many parents and a lot of taxpayers. As people realise the significance of it, I believe that there will be many more supporters of it. Clearly the hon. Gentleman was not listening to me.

I answered the point about the costs, which so far amount to about £1 million. A good deal of that relates to work that is valuable and necessary for the continuation of the scheme and therefore that money is not aborted. Some of the money has been involved in the preparatory arrangements for the bank branch networks and that is why the banks have said that they will make a contribution of £500,000 which is 50 per cent. of the total cost. There has been no loss to the scheme or to the taxpayer as a result of those arrangements.

I am surprised that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has completely misunderstood the scheme because he is a member of the Standing Committee. He should understand that the scheme has always been a national scheme effectively controlled by the state. The intention has always been that it should be financed in total by the taxpayer. The only aspect in which it was operating through the private sector was in the sense that we have asked the banks to assist us in the administration because of the benefits that were evident from their branch networks. We asked the banks to act as agents for one part of the administration of the scheme, and that is all. Apart from that, we are talking about a Government-financed scheme. That was always the case and will continue to be so.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is not certain that an effective mechanism, failing the use of the bank branch network, can be found to disperse and collect loans in time for implementation next summer? Would it not be better therefore to proceed with the enabling Bill but be ready to delay implementation until further thought can be given either to Government guarantees for the banks' money to be loaned or for the use of the Inland Revenue—as happens in Australia—as part of a proper Government-led system?

Mr. MacGregor: We have been through this and I have debated the issue with my hon. Friend on many occasions. I have drawn his attention to the difficulties in connection with using the banks' own funds for that purpose and also to what I consider to be the many serious objections to using the Inland Revenue mechanism.

When we considered the various ways in which we could operate the scheme, we gave a great deal of thought to alternatives to the bank branch network. Originally, on balance, we came to the view that it was best to use the bank branch network because of the point that I have made frequently, that it gives students easy access to the loan system. Incidentally, it also gives students the opportunity to discuss their overall financing position with branch managers. Those aspects will be lost as a result of the banks' decision.

As a result of our earlier work with regard to the preparation of the scheme, it will not require too many changes to switch over to the alternative scheme which will probably—and I use the word "probably" advisedly because we will have to take final decisions in due course —in some senses have to operate through the post. The scheme will now be like all the other northern European

loans schemes which have been very successful. The administration of our scheme will operate in roughly the same way as they do.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Despite the certain amount of levity with which this matter is being treated, does the Secretary of State accept that it is really very serious? Did an administrative error or a political error in the Secretary of State's Department lead to today's decision? Is it not important that the ombudsman should consider this with the clarity that he used when considering the Barlow Clowes issue, which is, of course, a more serious matter? It is important that we know who is to blame. In previous Administrations and over a longer period, ministerial heads would have rolled for this kind of thing. It is extremely serious for the Secretary of State to make such a statement.

I hope that we will not have another statemen in a year's time telling us that the Student Loans Company has failed. It is important that the Secretary of State spells out who is responsible. Just to nationalise—to use the phrase—is not good enough. We need to know more about it. Today's statement was very serious and it has not been treated in the right manner.

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that the levity came entirely from Opposition Members. They were not prepared to listen to my replies, which are very clear in terms of the points raised by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and in terms of their perspective.

With regard to the right hon. Gentleman's point about background and responsibility, my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), told the House on 19 June:

"I am glad to be able to tell the House that, following discussions with representatives of the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers, a scheme has been designed which is agreed to be a cost-effective and feasible means of introducing top-up loans in September 1990 as planned."—[*Official Report*, 19 June 1989; Vol. 155, c. 21.]

Since then, we have held discussions with the banks to draw up the details of the scheme. In November we signed a memorandum of understanding with the banks on the preparatory work and 10 banks came into that. That was clearly the next and very important stage in developments. All the preparatory work has taken place on that basis. The banks have now gone back on that memorandum of understanding and it is for them to say why they have withdrawn.

The Government's position has been entirely clear. All the main arrangements in relation to the student loans scheme, all the principles and key ingredients, have been debated in the House on many occasions. They are contained in the Bill and are being debated in Standing Committee. They are not affected by the banks' decision. The banks have decided that they cannot act as agents for the Government in the way that we had hoped that they would. We have lost the branch network, but nothing else has changed. The Student Loans Company has been set up and we shall now have to run it. We were going to finance it anyway. The main difference is that the students now lose the benefit of the branch network. That is all, and that was the decision of the banks, not the Government's.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have a series of debates on the motion for the Adjournment of the House today. I will allow questions to continue for another five minutes which will include both Front-Bench Members and then we must move back to the main debates —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That is all very well, but hon. Members have taken part in the ballot to speak today and have earned a place.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): We have heard reference to the experience in other countries. Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accept that Conservative Members can see the advantages, both administratively and otherwise, of a Government-led scheme? Does he accept that the decision that was announced this morning has no bearing on the case for the student loans scheme? In the Standing Committee, the Opposition have totally failed to make any good case against a scheme which will be to the long-term benefit of students in this country and of their parents.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is entirely right, and that is why Opposition Members have had difficulty in attacking the principles and overall objectives of the scheme. They are trying to make something out of an administrative aspect which is way out of perspective. My hon. Friend was also right about support on the Government Benches for the scheme, as was shown by the fact that the Bill received its Second Reading by a majority of 81.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Does the Secretary of State recognise that this is a great day for students and for higher education? No one believes that the Secretary of State's statement does not severely undermine the loans scheme—no one, that is, except a few right hon. and hon. ostriches on the Conservative Benches. The ability of the Government to offer sweeteners to private organisations is now on the record. However, they have clearly failed to sweeten the banks. Why is that?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman has got it completely wrong. There was no question of sweeteners. We offered to pay a fee to the banks for administering —as our agents—one part of the scheme because of the benefit of the bank branch networks. That was all. It was entirely reasonable to pay the banks a fee for doing that because a cost to the banks was involved. I repeat that the Government were to finance the whole scheme and they will continue to do that. There is no major material change of any kind. The hon. Gentleman's remarks were ludicrously out of perspective.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): If 20 people leave an average school, why should the 10 who leave early, perhaps to become plumbers or electricians, have to pay the taxes of the 10 who want to go on to university? Why should the Opposition want to perpetuate such privileges?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is right. Many of the people to whom he referred and the vast bulk of taxpayers will earn a good deal less throughout their working lives than students who get the benefit of higher education. All we are asking students to do is to pay a part of their maintenance through a loan scheme while at university, bearing in mind that the vast majority of them will gain substantial benefits and income thereafter as a result of the investment in their higher education. For those who do not take jobs and for those who have lower incomes than 85 per cent. of the average, we have introduced generous

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repayment terms. They will not have to repay during those periods, which is more generous than loan schemes in any other country.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): In view of the Secretary of State's total failure to answer the questions put to him by Opposition Members, will he confirm the written answers that were given to me by the Under-Secretary of State that the scheme will cost the taxpayer £2.17 billion over and above the cost of grants over the next two decades? First, should that money not be put into grants to improve the grant system and opportunities in education instead of being wasted on this fatally flawed scheme?

Secondly, what mechanisms is the Secretary of State considering for forwarding students' applications to the loans adminstrator? Did I correctly understand him to say that it will probably be through the post? Thirdly, will he answer the question by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson)? The right hon. Gentleman now faces a desperately tight timescale to try to get the scheme up and running. If he will not dump it altogether, will he seriously consider deferring it for at least a year? Should he not drop the scheme altogether? It is an utter shambles and a farce, which shows great contempt for the House and a lack of concern for higher education.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman uses extravagant language. He is making such trivial points that it is a way of hiding their triviality. I have answered all hon. Members' questions, and I will answer the hon. Gentleman's three questions.

Hon. Members have debated the funding point at length both in the Chamber and in Committee. The crucial comparison is between the overall costs, by the end of the decade, of the Government's combination of grants and loans and the Opposition's approach to tackle it through grants alone. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that would be much more expensive to the taxpayer and would be paid for by people whose incomes will often be lower than those of the students when they get jobs. *[Interruption.]* Of course that is true, because loan repayments will be coming in.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, I obviously wish to make the means of access for students as satisfactory as I can. I had hoped that it would be done through branch networks. One possibility is that it may have to be done through the post. I will seek ways of making that better, because I want to retain as many benefits as possible that we would have got from the branch networks.

Finally, I did respond to the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson).

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to prolong discussion on the statement. It is a private Members' day.

Mr. Skinner: I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker: I have to call Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: You, Mr. Speaker, preside over the Second Reading of Bills and the money resolutions. A money resolution must be in order and in accordance with the Bill as presented. From what the Minister said, it is clear that the scheme may be cheaper or it may be dearer. If it is dearer, I ask your Office to check whether the money resolution that was presented on Second Reading is now in order and can incorporate the changes that have been announced by the Secretary of State today.

Mr. Speaker: I clearly heard the Secretary of State say that no amendment will be necessary.

We now return to the Adjournment debate. I must say to the hon. Members for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) that they should divide the next hour between them—about 28 minutes each.

COCOM

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.34 am

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I am grateful for this opportunity to refer to COCOM and, in particular, to draw the attention of the House to the recommendations of my report to the Western European Union, which were unanimously endorsed by the parliamentary assembly in Paris earlier this month. As the House will be aware, COCOM stands for the Co-ordinating Committee for Multi-lateral Export Controls. It is the means by which for the past 40 years the western Alliance has prevented what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently described as

"our most cherished scientific achievements"

from falling into the hands of the Soviet bloc. Matters in which the West is understood to have superiority include micro-electronics, optics, super-conductivity, passive sensors, phased array radars, lightweight composite materials, and air-breathing propulsions. In general, it is believed that we have a 10-year lead in technology over the East, with the Soviet bloc, for example, being eight years behind in semi-conductors, five to seven years behind in computers, and a decade behind in machine tools. When applied to western defence, that superiority in strategic technology has ensured peace and is contributing to the end of the cold war.

I accept that there remains a continuing need to protect those technologies through COCOM until arms control negotiations and reductions and confidence-building over a reasonable period justify a review of that need. However, my report to the Western European Union suggests that the western Alliance should now accept a number of realities in the light of current events in eastern Europe which have immediate consequences for the COCOM rules that control the trade in technology. It suggests that, in the light of performance, the enforcement of those rules needs to be critically examined. It suggests that the basis of those rules—the state of Soviet technology—needs to be reassessed. It suggests also that opportunities for trade in technology between East and West should be discussed more openly than ever before in a forum that already exists —the conference on security and co-operation in Europe —while still accepting that both sides have secrets to protect in the interests of their own security.

Despite our success in establishing the technology lead that I have mentioned, it is relevant to remind the House that COCOM's rules and controls have failed to prevent a serious transfer of technology to the Soviet bloc at the expense of our own security. The list of COCOM violations reads like a horror story. Illegal exports of American precision ballbearing grinding machines now enable the Soviet Union to manufacture more accurate guidance systems for missiles trained on western targets. Western technology, which manufactures drill bits for the Soviet oil industry, enables the Soviets to produce new armour-piercing projectiles. Western oceanograph technology enables the Soviet Union to locate our submarines with greater accuracy.

Probably the most publicised recent violation was the illegal sale of lathes and numerically controlled machine tools to the Soviet Union, for which Toshiba is paying a considerable price in being outlawed from United States markets. The theft from last year's Farnborough air show of the technology behind the Agile Eye helmet, which allows fighter pilots to aim missiles at targets simply by looking at them, should remind us that there is no let-up —what the Soviet Union cannot obtain by fair means it will seek to obtain by espionage, subterfuge and outright theft.

It is understood that the foreign intelligence section of the KGB and the GRU Soviet military intelligence remain as strong and as committed as ever to engaging their officers in missions of scientific and technological espionage, which is why, for as long as the Soviet Union undertakes such operations, it must always expect its spies to be expelled when they are found out. It cannot have it both ways—glasnost and espionage. That is why my report urges controls and enforcement procedures that are more effective, more efficient and common to all COCOM member states. Clearly they have not satisfied those criteria in the past.

Ideally, it must surely be sensible to seek national legislation based on an agreed control list that is commom to all COCOM member states. That, in itself, would do much to dispel the widespread resentment of many western companies that complain that the United States can control the exports of other COCOM states through its extra-territoriality claims yet appears to turn a blind eye when its own companies are selling banned items. The continued charge of double dealing and cheating is threatening to discredit COCOM—in particular, United States participation in it.

The United States attempted to embargo British and other western equipment for the construction of the Siberian pipeline but we subsequently found that it was supplying much of the equipment. On a much smaller scale, there appears to be a growing number of cases of European business men who dare not set foot in the United States because they have been put on a CIA blacklist simply for selling to eastern Europe without licence technology that is clearly obsolete. Others have found that they have been set up and entrapped by over-zealous United States customs officials on the pretext of breaches of the COCOM rules. A constituent of mine, Mr. Andrew Kuzan, obtained an American licence to export a second-hand obsolete test head to Hungary. The licence was withdrawn at the last minute without explanation. He was arrested for attempting to export sensitive technology illegally, and he has just spent two years in an American gaol. It was particularly galling for him and his family to find that only a few miles away from their home in Bournemouth there is an American enterprise that has won a Russian order to supply more advanced versions of the test equipment that he had been convicted of selling illegally. I drew my constituent's case to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement nearly two years ago when he was Minister of Trade.

My second recommendation concerns the assumption of the current state of Soviet technology that is the basis of the COCOM rules. There is a growing amount of evidence to suggest that the COCOM rules are being inappropriately applied because our assessment of the state of Soviet technology does not stand up to analysis. For example, it was understood that the Soviets were well ahead in ground-based laser technology to knock out satellites and incoming missiles. But when American Congressmen visited the Soviet facility at Sary-Shagan this July, it was

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concluded that the Americans' own technology, being developed at White Sands, was further advanced and greatly superior and that the Pentagon had presented a worst-case assessment to boost the strategic defence initiative and advance COCOM. That is not the only example.

Last month, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee accused the United States Government of defence statements that are

"out-dated at best and absolutely false at worst."

To the United States' credit, on that country's initiative, COCOM members have recently established security and technology meetings—STEM—to assess the state of technology for both East and West, but those assessments are not being reported to COCOM and are being left to national Governments to interpret for themselves. Nor have they said much about the state of Soviet technology. I urge a fundamental reassessment of the current state of Soviet technology and a complete review of the COCOM list in the light of the reassessment.

When President Gorbachev addressed the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe at Strasbourg in July, he said of COCOM that, even if one could justify such practices at the peak of the cold war, today many of its restrictions seem utterly ridiculous. He suggested that experts and representatives of respective Goverments could get together and break down the cold war logjams to bring secrecy down to the reasonable limits that are still required for security and to give the green light to normal trade in scientific knowledge and technology. Since then we have been told that such a transfer of technology would not be a one-way process and that there are benefits to us in the West to share.

Last month the Soviet deputy premier, Dr. Abalkin, urged in Brussels that there should be more technological co-operation between his country and the European Community:

"The Soviet Union has something it can offer, several lines of technology that have not yet been developed in the West. This has become clear since we lifted the lid of secrecy from our defence and space programmes. We want to act as partners on the basis of equality."

I believe that the time is now ripe to respond positively to President Gorbachev's appeal for western technology to support the restructuring of his economy for the betterment of his people, and for the sharing of technology between East and West for mutual benefit.

My report to the Western European Union suggests how we might achieve that. First, where on-site verification procedures for the transfer of sensitive technologies would be appropriate and would satisfy COCOM member states, let the list be liberalised accordingly. Secondly, as there is already an opportunity forthcoming for Europewide economic co-operation to be discussed, let it be used to discuss trade in technology. That opportunity will come as soon as next March in Bonn with the conference on economic co-operation in Europe as part of the CSCE process. That provides exactly the right forum for trade in technology to be discussed because it involves all COCOM member states—and all the states that it prescribes—that belong to Europe. It will also be underpinned by the Helsinki principles of security co-operation, human rights and confidence-building so recently reinforced by the Vienna concluding document.

There is already an impressive list of possible collaborative projects, most notably in space, which the strict application of COCOM rules, as they stand today, would prevent. If that happened, Europe would be the loser. Those projects range from the technologies of manufacturing and distribution, which can transform the standard of living of the people of eastern Europe, to participation in the Eureka project, shared research in nuclear technologies and the joint Anglo-American and Soviet project for a supersonic business jet.

Is there not scope for the United States, Japan, Britain, France, Germany and the Soviet Union to combine their resources and technology to produce that "space plane" known as the Orient Express, Hermes, Hotol and Sanger in the West, which it is the ambition of each country to build? That would be a symbolic end to the scandal of costly competition and duplication in space. I recommend that, should there remain areas of mutual suspicion and mistrust based on a false assessment of the state of each side's technology, a committee of experts should be established within the CSCE framework to make recommendations for the way forward in the sharing of technologies between East and West. That will clarify the no-go areas for each side and will confirm the areas that are ripe for mutual and maximum co-operation and on which future binding commitments can be entered into with confidence by both sides.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept that my recommendations for the future of COCOM are responsible and realistic, and reflect the mood of these historic times. We are now, at last, moving forward to a new world in which man can share and pool his vast technological achievements for the benefit of all without fear that he is abandoning his own security. It is, of course, essential that whatever changes we propose, we carry our ally the United States with us. It has, after all, produced most, although not all, of that technological superiority under whose protection we have enjoyed unparalleled peace and prosperity. There is now evidence that the United States is responding. President Bush, after the Malta summit, said that President Gorbachev's approach "now absolutely mandates new thinking on the part of America."

I hope that it will be accepted that the COCOM rules can be revised without abandoning our secrets, our advantage or our security and that the part of our technology that it is now prudent to share should be used to support reform, to enhance civilisation and to encourage perestroika in the Soviet Union, on the understanding that a stable, country and a happier Russian people are also in the interests of a stable, happier and peaceful world.

11.49 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): The House owes a considerable debt to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) for giving us the opportunity to discuss COCOM. It is not an organisation which frequently sees the light of day or is frequently the subject of great public discussion and scrutiny.

My hon. Friend is right when he says that the times through which we are living—times of great change, excitement, hope and opportunity in eastern Europe and in the Soviet bloc—throw into sharp relief the issues that

the COCOM organisation and the COCOM principles embody. He has done a considerable service to the House in enabling the matter to be debated at this time.

However much COCOM may be reformed and retargeted, the fundamental point remains that it has a vital role in protecting our security interests through protecting our strategic technology. Running through my hon. Friend's speech was a recognition that that was the case. COCOM is not an economic embargo or a mechanism for applying sanctions. It is not a form of political leverage on the "proscribed destinations", which are principally the countries of the Warsaw pact and China. It is not a mechanism to ensure and preserve a technological gap between West and East for economic and commercial reasons.

Mr. Gorbachev, speaking to the Council of Europe in July, said:

"East-West relations have of late been bled white by COCOM."

That is a gross overstatement and it is wrong on two counts. Our exporting potential and performance have not been bled white; nor is the crippling economic mess in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union a result of our strategic export controls. It is true that COCOM has had success in denying the Warsaw pact access to critical technology, but that has had virtually no impact on the eastern European civilian consumer. The impact has fallen on the military consumers, which is, of course, the purpose of COCOM. That is the real cause for the Warsaw pact's complaints about COCOM.

It is undeniable that COCOM controls have borne directly on some industrial sectors, but the real stranglehold on eastern European economic development has been caused not by controls on the top slice of western technology, but rather by the chronic economic, industrial and infrastructure inefficiencies stemming from a system of centralised planning. The current problems are due not to technology starvation, but to starvation of rational economic management and the West is already beginning to help the East to remedy this.

As my hon. Friend has stressed, Europe is experiencing a wind of change the like of which it has, perhaps, never experienced before. A vivid demonstration of this was provided recently in the halls of NATO where a Soviet Foreign Secretary criticised the Romanian regime, an ally in the Warsaw pact. However, we need to be assured of two points: that sensitive technology can be put to effective civil use, and that it will not instead be diverted to military use.

The West can gradually help to encourage the conditions for the former and, in the meantime, COCOM helps to prevent the latter. The movement in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union towards greater democracy and freedom in economic and political behaviour is vital. And I do not believe COCOM can or will stand in the way of this. Although it is an institution which was created at the time of Stalin, COCOM is not somehow a counterpart to Stalinism. We welcome the Soviet, Polish, Hungarian, Czech and East German debunking of Stalinism. However, the fact that that is happening, encouraging though it is, does not mean we can now debunk COCOM. Great expectations have rightly been aroused by developments east of the iron curtain. We shall do what we can to help to bring those expectations to fulfilment. However, to flood those reforming countries with high technology cannot be the answer.

All partners in COCOM recognise the need to control only those items of genuine strategic significance. With them, we are urgently considering ways in which COCOM can respond both prudently and imaginatively to recent events. Media headlines of a move, especially from the United States, towards wholesale liberalisation are misleading. President Bush at a news conference on 16 December said on the need for reviewing COCOM:

"there are certainly still legitimate national security interests that must be preserved . . . But I think it is timely that we take a new look at some of the commercial constraints."

There is nothing here with which we or, I believe, our partners in COCOM would disagree. The question is how to turn agreement on the need for a measured yet flexible approach into practice.

Many ideas are already under discussion in COCOM and more widely. Let me set out a few of these. The first is streamlining—the process of continuously reviewing the COCOM control lists to ensure that they apply only to genuinely critical items. This process must and will continue.

Secondly, there is verification. Poland and Hungary have offered guarantees against diversion from civil to military end use. Those are welcome, but guarantees alone, as my hon. Friend will accept, are not enough. The verification of certain exports is already a part of COCOM procedure, but verification cannot unlock the door to a flow of high technology across the iron curtain. We shall use this method to the fullest practical extent, but we should not fool ourselves by believing that we shall be able adequately to police every sensitive export for the duration of its strategic life.

In principle, of course, it would be ideal if we had a totally detailed knowledge of the extent of Soviet technological capability, but this is impossible to measure accurately even if we could be granted access to every Soviet office, factory or laboratory. I remain to be convinced by the suggestion that the Bonn economic meeting of the CSCE should provide a forum for the detailed discussion of eastern technological capabilities. I doubt whether that meeting would have the necessary levels of expertise, but of course we can raise this with partners. It may offer a way forward in some respects.

All these ideas and others now need vigorous discussion between COCOM partners. Following the high level meeting in October, senior officials will again meet in Paris, probably in February. Their aim will be to draw conclusions and policy decisions from the present mix of ideas. It is too early to predict what policy lines will merge, but we shall be arguing that COCOM's response to reforms in eastern Europe should be developed in a considered and co-ordinated manner. As my hon. Friend has observed, COCOM countries have two alternatives, both of which involve taking risks, and they should take the more imaginative of the two paths.

I can assure the House that, subject to the continuing need to protect our vital security interests, COCOM will not be, must not be, an impediment to reform in eastern Europe. We can both assist the East and keep up our own insurance. COCOM need not, I believe, be inimical to these twin objectives.

Rates (Scotland)

11.58 am

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I regret that at this festive time of year I have to raise the unhappy topic of the implementation of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987. No single item of legislation in the past Thatcher decade better illustrates the Government's philosophy than that legislation, which the Prime Minister has called her flagship.

The theory underlying the legislation is that consumers of local government services should pay for them and that those who administer the services should be accountable to the electorate for their provision. Therefore, we have the concept of the community charge, which is in reality a tax, based on the view that it is possible to make people pay a flat-rate charge for local services. Conservative Members have argued that people should pay a flat-rate charge in the same way that they do for a television licence. But a moment's examination shows how absurd that is. If one could afford it, one could have three, four or even five televisions in the house, but pay for only one licence. Therefore, the consumption of the service is not related to the charge.

Originally, the view on the community charge—more appropriately called a poll tax—was that, if implemented, it should be as a supplement to and not a replacement of the rates. It has been well documented that the panic measure was introduced in the House because of the revaluation in Scotland in 1985. The Government sought a cheap and effective way of replacing the rates, initially in Scotland, and they introduced the legislation just before the 1987 general election.

It is valid to examine the legislation because when it was introduced it applied to no section of the United Kingdom other than Scotland. Even now, there is no poll tax legislation for Northern Ireland. We are a United Kingdom Parliament and theoretically we are all subject to similar, if not the same, levels of taxation, but there are differences and distinctions.

At the time of the 1987 general election, no other piece of legislation, passed by the House, was subjected to the direct examination of a part of the United Kingdom. The Government argue that they are accountable to the people for legislation which affects local authorities, but when we examine what happened in Scotland at the general election we find that the Tories were almost wiped out. No one can say, with any measure of truth, that the poll tax legislation was not the subject of intense debate at that time. Scotland, the specific subject of the poll tax legislation, overwhelmingly rejected that legislation, yet we still got it. So much for electoral and democratic accountability.

I do not know how any Scottish Minister, knowing that he owes his place at the Dispatch Box to the electorate, can say at the next general election that, even if the Government's record is rejected, they will continue with their policies because they have a majority in the United Kingdom Parliament.

This legislation, the Government's flagship, places an enormous strain on the Union. Those who persist in neglecting the democratic views of the Scottish people and at the same time mouthing unionism in terms of the United Kingdom are verging on being hypocritical. They are endangering the Union. The Government cannot say that people have a vote which counts, which has to be related to a specific piece of legislation, and yet, when the electorate affected by that legislation rejects it, continue to force that legislation down their throats.

Unfortunately, memories are short when it comes to the implementation of the legislation. One of the most invidious features of the legislation is the infringement, and continued infringement, of individual liberty. The poll tax registration officers seek personal information to find out where a person is living and whether they should be subject to the poll tax. They even get hold of unlisted telephone numbers.

A student was living with one of my constituents. His telephone number was unlisted, but, somehow or another, the poll tax registration officer in Fife managed to get hold of it. That is the extent to which he was prepared to go to get hold of information. He is responsible to no one—neither to the Secretary of State nor to the regional councils in Scotland. No democratic control is exercised over poll tax registration officers.

The poll tax bears no relation to ability to pay. It is a flat-rate tax. The Government argue that its effect is modified by a complicated rebate system. However, the tax burden will be shifted from the backs of those who have sufficient resources to the backs of those who have not. It is a highly regressive and painful tax. That pain is inflicted in various obnoxious ways. In order to secure the payment of the poll tax, certain sanctions are imposed. We know about the sanctions relating to income tax and rates.

As for the cost of administering the poll tax, yesterday the Under-Secretary of State gave what I consider to be a wholly bogus figure when he said:

"The cost to local authorities of collecting the community charge in 1988-89 is estimated by authorities at £31·8 million."

That is well over £14 million more than the cost of collectting rates. I believe the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which says that the true cost of collecing the community charge will probably be £50 million. The Under-Secretary's figure does not include indirect charges. The poll tax costs more to collect and employs 2,000 additional people. Scotland has lost jobs in shipbuilding, steel and coal mining, but those losses are compensated for, theoretically, by the creation of 2,000 additional jobs. So much for keeping control over local authority manpower.

When the local authorities considered how much the poll tax would yield, they believed initially that there would be a downturn in the yield of about 6 per cent. There ought to be about 4 million people on the register. I ask the House to bear that figure in mind.

If the tax is to work, the penalties must be severe, and the Government know that. It is one thing to try to enforce penalties in relation to a tax that people have accepted as fair but another to have similarly severe penalties in relation to a tax that people do not accept and have voted against and that is manifestly unfair. The penalties for non-payment include arrestment of wages or salaries, arrestment of bank accounts and such things as income support and the poinding of one's goods and, eventually, one's savings.

I want the House to realise how obnoxious the warrant sale procedure can be. I do not think that this has been shown before. One of my constituents, Mr. Terence Donnelly, received a letter dated 14 December from H. M. Love and Partners, 8 Abbey Park place, Dunfermline. Representatives of that firm called at Mr. Donnelly's house while he was working. The letter stated:

"We refer to the Summary Warrant granted at Dunfermline Sheriff Court in connection with arrears of Community Charge for the year 1989/90.

As payment has not been made, our Officer has called today with instructions to carry through a Poinding of your household effects. As no one was in attendance, you are hereby notified that unless payment, as detailed below, is made to our office immediately, our Officer may be instructed to return to your premises.

It should be noted that the warrant carries authority to open and shut lockfast places."

If the householder is absent, the sheriff officers or the messenger-at-arms can break in. That is the sanction which the Government are willing to impose to collect this regressive tax. The Minister must respond to that point in relation to the sanguine speech that the Secretary of State made in Edinburgh on 4 December and the figures that were repeated yesterday. The Secretary of State said that 70,000 warrants were being issued in Strathclyde, but only a minute number of warrant sales are being effected.

All Scottish local authorities have avoided the imposition of warrant sales. I am told that Strathclyde has not had a warrant sale in 14 years. Depending on how the figures are calculated, nine months into the financial year between 500,000 and 750,000 Scots have not paid the poll tax. If the Government want to impose the full rigour of the law, they will have to stand back—they will say that this is not their responsibility but that of the local authorities—and watch those authorities get themselves into extreme financial difficulties. They may say, "It is your responsibility to collect these sums." To put it crudely, Scottish Labour local authorities will have to do the Tories' dirty work.

Scottish local authorities have assured-warrant sales for the rates. I shall repeat Strathclyde's record because it is worth repeating: it has had no warrant sales in 14 years. However, the local authority is to issue about 300,000 letters through the sheriff officers saying that people are in debt. I do not see how warrant sales can be avoided if the full rigour of the law is enforced. Perhaps the Under-Secretary will explain his proposals and how local authorities can avoid that.

In addition to those complications, we have the pressure applied by English Back Benchers to alter the scheme halfway through. The Opposition have arguied that people with Alzheimer's disease should be totally exempt but the Minister said no.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East):Warrant sales would be required for large amounts of money if we are talking about a year's poll tax. The furniture collected and sold secondhand and the costs involved with that mean that a person's house will be virtually stripped bare and still the money would not be raised to pay the poll tax and the debt would be outstanding. That is a horrendous device.

Mr. Douglas: I accept that point.

I return to the subject of altering the rules of the game —with some justification—halfway through, and the complexity involved for Scottish local authorities. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities said that the stumbling block over transitional relief is the Government's desire to see the recalculation of rebate for any qualifiers who are currently in receipt of such benefit. COSLA says that it cannot administer this along the lines that the Government suggest and that the cost will be enormous. The Government are now suggesting that COSLA employs a firm of consultants to investigate the cost.

One of the forms of arrestment was to go to the bank. In a letter of 22 November the Scottish clearing banks said that the cost to the banks of trawling through their accounts would be considerable. A paragraph that was not entirely accurate in terms of total numbers but which illustrates the point said:

"Press reports suggest that there are now 450,000 non-payers which could result in an inordinate cost being placed on the banks if a corresponding number of arrestments were to be served on them. Should even 100,000 arrestments be served on a bank, the cost for that bank would run into several millions. If these costs are multiplied across all four banks, the costs could exceed £20 million."

What is the Government's reply about the cost effectiveness of the collection of taxes?

Round one of safety-netting transferred resources from the rural regions to the more urban regions. Next time the Government will finance part of it and the charges to Strathclyde and Glasgow will rise to an estimated £20 million. So the poll tax will soar.

I know that time is short. As it is the season of good will I will not be unduly offensive to my absent friends in the Labour party although I have given notice that I intend to refer to them. The Government are in a dilemma and so is the Labour party—theoretically the party of conscience. At a rally a few weeks ago the shadow Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), and my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) paraded themselves in front of a banner saying, "No warrant sales." Does the Labour party mean it? If it does, how will it present itself at the next regional elections? Will it say, "If you elect a Labour regional councillor there will be no warrant sales"? That is difficult to do. Will it say, "If you elect us, wait until the next Labour Government in order to get the poll tax repealed"?

If we raise that level of expectation and Labour is elected on a Thursday, by Monday nobody in Scotland will be paying the poll tax. The depth of hatred for the tax is not seen in the south-east of England. If that level of expectation is raised, nobody in Scotland will wait a year or 18 months for a Bill to go through the legislative process.

We are in the season of good will. To put it in biblical terms, if Mary and Joseph had gone to Bethlehem to pay their poll tax, they might have had to pay the standard charge for the stable and when they returned to Nazareth they might have found their furniture poinded and subject to a warrant sale.

The Bill is the Government's flagship. It epitomises a policy of making the poor pay. My party was created, in effect, to defend the poorer sections of the population. That is our raison d'etre. I am sad that my party says that it is opposed to warrant sales and poinding furniture but at the same time tells people that they must obey the law and pay the poll tax. To propose that people should obey the law is to imply that the law is just. But the law should have a democratic sanction behind it. This law does not have that sanction in Scotland. The Minister knows that, and knows that if the Conservative Government and the Conservative party continue to behave in the manner that they have, come the next election there will be no Conservative Members in Scotland. What will the Government do then? If there is a Labour Government

[Mr. Douglas]

there will be a dilemma, and if there is a Conservative Government those who persist in stuffing this type of legislation down the throats of the Scottish people will be responsible for splitting the Union.

12.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): In the limited time available I shall seek to answer as many as possible of the points that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) raised.

The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues prophesied great difficulty in introducing this form of local authority tax. In fact, 99 per cent. registered and those who said that they would not pay failed in practice. I stress that we said consistently that over 1 million people in Scotland would receive rebates. It is now clear that that is indeed the case. Those on income support had their benefit increased to take account of the 20 per cent. of the poll tax that they would have to pay. They are exempted from paying the other 80 per cent.

The principle behind the community charge is that it introduces far more accountablity. We are convinced that it is an incomparably fairer system than the previous rating system under which only about 40 per cent. paid rates, although more contributed to them. Accountability is the principle.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the use of telephone numbers. I cannot comment on the circumstances of the case that he mentioned without further information. I suggest that it is reasonable that people who are liable for the community charge should be registered so that they pay their fair share towards the cost of local authority services.

The figures for the cost of implementing the poll tax are as given in the parliamentary reply to the hon. Gentleman. One of the common threads running through our debates on the community charge is that the Opposition have never presented a clear view of their position on the community charge. As the hon. Gentleman says, the official position is that people should pay. The hon. Gentleman represents a minority view in his party.

The number of people who have made some payment of community charge throughout the regions is largely within the range of 85 to 95 per cent. of those liable to pay. In one region 98 per cent. of people were recorded as having paid something. I acknowledge that those figures do not take account of people who are in arrears. As I said to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West, the figures are not available from local authorities. The figures for the total number of people in arrears would be misleading. The legislation allows people to be up to two instalments in arrears before they risk losing their right to pay by instalments. Many people take account of that in their payment pattern, just as they did under the domestic rating system.

Even the figures for summary warrants do not provide a particularly accurate guide to the number of people in arrears. Those figures simply show the number of people who failed to clear their arrears at particular dates at which local authorities decided to proceed with the next stage of their arrears collection process. The ideal course is for everybody to pay on time, but I have yet to hear of any tax at any time for which that happens.

The collection procedures are no different from those used under domestic rates. They were agreed by the House of Commons as recently as the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987. We have heard a great deal about the numbers of people that local authorities are pursuing for arrears. It is the last hope of those campaigning for non-payment that these procedures will prove ineffective. However, there are already signs that people are responding to the notifications that they have received about summary warrants and are paying up or entering into a payment arrangement with their local authority. All the evidence suggests that that pattern will be repeated across Scotland. All that people who have received a summary warrant will have gained is a 10 per cent. surcharge.

Much has been made of the numbers of warrants so far and those likely to come next year. One non-payer per local authority is one too many because that person is consuming services without paying for them—simply getting a free ride at the expense of the rest of the community. Nevertheless, realistically a certain level of non-payment must be expected and authorities have budgeted for that.

Inevitably, comparisons are sought to be made with the rating system. They are difficult because many aspects of the two systems are different. The figures emerging from local authorities are broadly in line with what we expected at this stage from the evidence of what happened under the rating system.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have only four more minutes and I should like to deal with the hon. Gentleman's questions on warrant sales.

Recently there have been reports that the local authority power to arrest bank accounts might prove unworkable. As with so much else, the reports were misleading. I understand that in recent meetings between local authorities and representatives of the banks many of the banks' initial fears were allayed. Moreover, bank account arrestment is only one of several diligences available to local authorities.

The ultimate sanction is the warrant sale. It is fair to say that nobody wants any case to reach that stage, but it is only right that the process should be available to local authorities as a weapon of last resort. It is important not to get this aspect of debt collection out of perspective. It is not the case that almost everyone in arrears will face a warrant sale. First, other means of collecting debt are available to authorities, such as the arrestment of bank accounts or earnings. Secondly, almost all people either pay their debts in full or reach an agreement with the authority before a sale is reached.

I have been informed that last year in Strathclyde the number of warrant sales in respect of rates arrears could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The hon. Gentleman claimed that there were none. Whatever the case, it shows the scale on which warrant sales were carried out.

The Scottish Law Commission found similar arrangements existed in every other western country. After looking thoroughly at the whole question, it concluded that the procedure should be retained in Scots law. However, it recommended that some of the more resented

aspects of warrant sales, such as the advertisement of sale showing the debtors' name and address, the requirement to hold the sale in the debtors' house and the inclusion of most household effects in the goods to be sold, should be changed. They were changed in the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987 and it is noteworth that when the Bill went through the House the Labour party did not vote against it in principle. Before a sale is reached, the person in question will have been given every opportunity to settle his debt by other means.

I understand that the hon. Gentleman is recommending non-payment of the community charge. Few of us like paying taxes, but it is wholly irresponsible for a Member of Parliament to adopt that attitude, not only because Members of Parliament should be setting an example and not encouraging law breaking, but because they are wealthy members of the community who can well afford to pay. It is unfair for a Member of Parliament to refuse to pay and, by his actions, put a burden on the less well-off members of the community that he represents. In the circumstances, it is right that the local authority should have the power to enforce payments. If non-payers were allowed to get away with it, authorities would have to cut back on essential services or on the number of employees, or they would have to require more people who pay the charge to subsidise those who do not. I believe that that would be unfair.

The hon. Member mentioned the transitional——

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Act 1989.

South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Act 1989.

Scottish Episcopal Clergy Widows' and Orphans' Fund Order Confirmation Act 1989.

Chatham Dockyard

12.30 pm

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the important matter of the historic dockyard in Chatham.

In June 1985, the Secretary of State for Defence announced the closure of one of our royal dockyards—Chatham. That was a trauma for the people of the Medway towns, and particularly for the people of Chatham. For centuries the names of the Royal Navy and Chatham have been synonymous. Many people in Medway towns worked in the dockyards, as their fathers and grandfathers had done before them. It was urgent that the Government should ensure that the valuable riverside site in Chatham should not become a derelict eyesore but should be redeveloped to maintain and improve the quality of the environment in the Medway towns and to provide job opportunities to replace some of those lost by the closure of the dockyard.

The Government also faced the problem that one fifth of the acreage of the dockyard is the great historical section of the famous yard. That is in my constituency. When one walks through the famous gate, one is confronted by the most complete Georgian dockyard in Britain. Nelson joined the Navy there, and his flagship Victory was built there around 1760 and rebuilt there between 1803 and 1804.

The dockyard comprises some 100 buildings, and 47 of them are the greatest concentration of scheduled ancient monuments in one place in Britain. To preserve that great heritage, the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust was set up in 1984 as a company limited by guarantee. Its objectives were prepared by the Government and they were, first,

"to secure for the public benefit preservation and use of the historic dockyard in Chatham in a manner appropriate to its archaeological, historical and architectural importance";

and, secondly,

"to promote and foster for the public benefit a wide knowledge and understanding of the archaeological, historical and architectural significance of the Historic Dockyard".

The Government gave the trust the freehold of the site so that it could pursue those objectives and meet the criteria. They also gave the trust £11,350,000—they did not say how they arrived at that figure—and a number of large industrial artefacts which were extremely expensive to move and set out for display.

The Government also gave the trust the responsibility to honour a contract, which had already been embarked on, for repairs to the ropery. Those who are not familiar with Chatham dockyard should be made aware that the ropery is a brick building some quarter of a mile long with a roof to match which the House may be interested to know supports one mile of guttering. The contract that was embarked upon was for £2,650,000, but turned out to cost £3,023,000, which had to be deducted from the original £11·5 million.

The public had previously been allowed in to the dockyard on Navy days, but in July 1984 the visitor centre and the whole historic dockyard was opened to them for the first time. There is now a living, working museum. Ropes are being made in the ropery and sold; flags are being made in the flag loft and sold. An historic ship is being repaired and restored and there are five museum galleries. The wooden ships gallery has recently been

[Dame Peggy Fenner]

completed and the trust now wants to embark on an iron-clad gallery. There are facilities for temporary and visiting exhibitions, a steam centre and an extensive education programme which encourages schools and school parties to visit and make the most of the educational and historical opportunities there.

There is a seasonal theatre company, a range of annual special events, concerts and theme weeks. Visitor numbers have gradually increased as the museum has developed. This financial year, they numbered 95,000, which was a 43 per cent. increase on the previous year. The all-party heritage group, the chairman of which is my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), were recent, distinguished visitors. My hon. Friend hoped that he might return to the Chamber in time to speak in this debate, but he has sent me a letter saying that the group was extremely impressed with the progress being made and the quality and excitement of what is on offer at the dockyard, and that I should convey to the House its strong support for the plea that I am making.

The trust's strategy can be encapsulated quite briefly. The museum's theme is principally to tell the story of the building of British warships and the life of dockyard workers. It is to develop housing in the dockyard. There is a magnificent terrace of 12 Georgian buildings there. To bring people to live in the dockyard again, a high-quality scheme has been prepared which we hope will be completed in 1992-93 and enable 82 families to return to the dockyard. The scheme provides facilities for maritime and craft-related tenants. So far, we have more than 50 tenants, two thirds of whom meet those strict criteria. By about 1993 the trust hopes to have developed residential courses in maritime-related skills and crafts on offer to the general public.

To the initial endowment, the trust has attracted, generated and earned through the gate donations and grants nearly £1·1 million. It also has £500,000 in loans, making a total of £12,453,000. The trust appointed a full-time fund raising officer in October 1988 further to develop and increase the fund-raising activities. The number of visitors has increased and a charge is made on them. That income has risen to £107,000 in the financial year that has just ended. Income from the 50 commercial tenants has risen dramatically to £195,000 in line with the growing rents on commercial property in the Medway towns.

The trust has doubled its original money by wise investment and income generation. A simple summary of the trust's current position is as follows. Capital receipts and commitments to date total £12·5 million. The reduction for the restoration liability—which was very heavy as it involved a concentration of 47 scheduled buildings—has declined from £22 million to £15 million and the total expenditure to date has been £13·5 million. At the end of the current financial year, the total remaining funds are a little less than £8·5 million.

I bring this case before the House in prudence before the trust's funds reach a lower level. The management team has recently completed a draft budget for 1990-93 because it wants to look ahead at the level of expenditure on further restoration and development of the museum facilities. The trust is committed to further restoration as the buildings concerned are scheduled buildings. The trust is committed to their restoration because the Government have scheduled them as a precious part of the nation's heritage and that restoration will cost a further £15 million. The development of the museum that is outstanding, including the iron-clad gallery, amounts to £5 million and a sum of £4 million is required to fund the budget deficit. In total that is just over £24 million.

I have already placed this matter before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I know that the all-party heritage group has visited the museum and has listened to the facts. It fully supports my comments today. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to convey to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State my wish to see his commitment to our national heritage and his reassurance to the trust which is caring for it.

The museum site is unique in Britain's history. The work on the site to date has been carried out expertly by the trust which has some very devoted trustees under the chairmanship of the chairman and chief executive, General Sir Steuart Pringle, former commandant general of the Royal Marines. Their work is of high quality. They have mapped out the path ahead, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will express a further commitment to that work and match it with the necessary funding.

12.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) on securing this debate and raising the important matter of the future of Chatham's historic dockyard. The dockyard is widely recognised as one of the nation's most important heritage assets. Indeed, it is probably the most complete Georgian dockyard in existence. Chatham was once the country's premier fleet base and, later, a most important repair and building yard. It is a memorial and a testament to British sea power. My hon. Friend has described its importance.

The Government's recognition of the historic importance of the dockyard was clearly reflected in our commitment to assist its preservation when the royal naval dockyard was closed in 1983. That commitment was delivered by the establishment of the Historic Dockyard Trust in 1984, together with an endowment of £11·35 million. That money went towards the cost of preserving and maintaining the built heritage assets. We have also given added legislative protection to many of the buildings and sites within the dockyard—50 are scheduled ancient monuments, and 13 of them are also listed.

The Government accepted, on the trust's inception, that the costs of maintaining the buildings and developing the site into a "living dockyard" through a mix of visitor facilities, light industry and housing would probably exceed £11 million. However, it was rightly felt at the time that, with a vigorous development and marketing strategy, the new trust would be able to supplement its endowment with private sector investment. So it was made clear to the original members of the trust that the £11 million was for the preservation and maintenance of the site and was not primarily intended to finance the developments that were necessary to establish the site as a heritage and tourist attraction.

We did not, and do not, underestimate the difficulty of attracting such private funding and, so far, the trust has

not been as successful in attracting private support as it had hoped. Nevertheless there has been considerable additional finance from the public purse since 1984. English Heritage has provided about £420,000, the National Heritage Memorial Fund has provided £130,000, the English tourist board has offered a £200,000 repayable grant, Kent county council has contributed £360,000 with the prospect of more by way of a loan, and Rochester upon Medway city council has contributed £50,000.

I pay tribute to the considerable achievements of Lieutenant General Sir Steuart Pringle, his fellow board members and the staff at the trust over the past five years, particularly for bringing back into imaginative use a number of the historic buildings.

My hon. Friend has well described some of those activities and new facilities. The initiatives have attracted more than 50 commercial tenants, and developed the heritage assets of the dockyard for thousands of visitors to enjoy each year. We also welcome Sir Steuart's continuing commitment and enthusiasm to build on these achievements.

Despite the indisputable historical importance of the dockyard, however, I do not think that the House could readily or easily agree to the allocation of further public money at this stage—certainly not to the £24 million that Sir Steuart is seeking. But I recognise the Government's obligation to the funding of heritage projects—indeed, our overall budget next year will be about £150 million, compared with Government expenditure of only £37 million in 1979. Within this large national sum the grant-in-aid to English Heritage is nearly £80 million, of which it aims to spend about £30 million on repair grants to historic buildings throughout the country.

Despite the significant overall budget for heritage and the increase over the past 10 years, we must be cautious about spending large sums on any one site which would prevent money from being spent elsewhere. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Medway knows that there are many pressing candidates for additional spending in other parts of the United Kingdom.

There are, indeed, many worthy causes for public and private patrons. To see and understand the very best of objects and buildings from the past is important to our national way of life. It helps us to define who we are as a people. It helps us to form roots and it is an important component of education. The country's rich and valued heritage—of historic towns and villages, great houses and early industrial and military sites such as Chatham—has also provided a base for our growing tourist industry.

Against that background, I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government remain keen and concerned to identify a way forward for Chatham which is acceptable to all concerned and which secures the long-term future of the dockyard. The task is by no means easy; we do not dispute that the trust has a particularly difficult job on its hands. But, as my hon. Friend knows, we are undertaking detailed discussions with Sir Steuart to identify options for the future.

Senior officials from the Department will be meeting Sir Steuart again early in the new year; I think that the date is set as 10 January. That follows visits to the dockyard in October and November by my hon. Friend the Minister of State with responsibility for heritage matters, and my noble Friend Lord Arran on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. I am pleased to note that the chairman of the all-party heritage group also visited the site and I shall take careful note of his comments—in particular, of his message of support to my hon. Friend for today's debate. We shall pursue with the trust the feasibility of its current development strategy and its plans for attracting private investment and looking for new and increased commercial opportunities.

Dame Peggy Fenner: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is extremely difficult to get private patronage or support for maintaining the fabric of many historical buildings?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I acknowledge that. That is why, when the trust was set up in 1984, the £11 million endownment was primarily designed to be spent on the repair and maintenance aspects of the site. In addition, we recognised that development expenditure would be required, and that should be funded, at least in part, from private sources. I have emphasised throughout that we understand the difficulties of attracting such funding. I am pleased to note that a fund-raising officer was appointed in October 1988. That is a welcome development and we look forward to learning about what the trust plans to achieve through that appointment.

We all admire the vision of Sir Steuart and his colleagues, but we must be wary of counsels of perfection, even in the context of a unique asset such as the historic dockyard. A Rolls-Royce development plan would require massive short and long-term public investment, and that may not be realistic or feasible. However, I hope that a sensible compromise can be identified. I will convey these thoughts and the views of my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as she has asked. I hope that we can find a way to enable the trust to meet its original objectives—albeit over a longer time than it might have wished—and to secure the effective preservation of this historic dockyard.

Education (Cornwall)

12.55 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate and I thank the Minister for staying on as we are just about to break for Christmas. I know that the Minister visited Cornwall not long ago and that the county's problems have already been brought to her attention. I requested a debate on the funding of the education service in Cornwall because there is no more important investment than the investment that we make in the future of our children. However, the disparity between what needs to be spent on education in Cornwall and what the Government are willing to spend —or, more accurately, will allow to be spent—is widening to an ever more worrying extent.

There are changing financial arrangements. Our schools have been under-resourced for far too long, but the introduction of the poll tax and the associated changes will make matters worse. Cornwall could reasonably expect its prudent management in the past to be recognised in the level of Government financial support that it is to receive, yet Cornwall, which is underspending by £4 million on the Government's current assessment of its spending need on education, is overnight to be turned into a so-called "overspender" when measured against the new standard spending assessment. That is absurd to anyone who looks at the figures and it arises for a number of reasons which are, by and large, unconnected with any assessment of the needs of the education service in Cornwall.

The Government's financial support includes wholly inadequate provision for the effects of inflation on local authority spending. It is inadequate in terms that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would accept, although it has not been changed in terms of local government funding. Apart from being a real cut because of the effects of inflation, it takes no account of the need to increase spending to meet the increased pressure that schools face in implementing recent legislation.

To compound all that, the method that has been adopted for calculating Cornwall's education standard spending assessment takes further resources away from Cornwall. Under this element, the county has lost grant equivalent to £11 per adult. To make matters worse, resources have been moved from poor counties, such as Cornwall, to support richer counties around London. The area cost adjustment has lost Cornwall a further £7 an adult and is another example of the problems that will arise from the introduction of the poll tax. I hope that the Minister will agree that it is unfair that people in Cornwall, where wages are 20 per cent. below the national average, should have to subsidise counties around London, where incomes are substantially higher than the average. Even if Cornwall spends at the Government's standard level for education need as now defined, despite higher inflation, my constituents will contribute 40 per cent. more than they do this year.

Against that background of more financial constraints, there is a huge demand for resources for buildings, maintenance, books, equipment, in-service training for teachers and training for governors. However, the capital budget is of particular concern in Cornwall because we have so many Victorian primary schools and nine split-site secondary schools which need urgent attention. Over 50 primary schools have outdoor toilets and over 80 are without a hall. The county tells me—and I am sure that it is right—that it has no hope of meeting the regulations on the standard of premises by the deadline of 1991. In other words, the Government have set standards but are not allowing the money to meet them.

I visited Mevagissey school in my constituency recently. Huge problems arise there as a result of overcrowding. The school hall has to be used on the same day as a gym, a meeting place and a classroom, but the school has been taken off the lists of schools urgently needing new buildings. It was on the council's priority list last year, but this year it has been replaced by another school equally, or more, deserving. It is a vivid illustration of the merry-go-round of hopelessness in trying to meet £100 million worth of need with £7 million or £8 million worth of spending.

I heard this morning devastating news about the capital building programme for next year. The council asked for permission to spend £18 million, including ongoing commitments from this year to £10 million. The Minister discussed those needs with those councillors during her visit and they made strong representations to her. However, the announcement just made is that the figure allowed by the Government for 1990-91 will be only £6·522 million, against a need of approaching £100 million, of spending to meet targets that are meant to be met by 1991. This means that the LEA will need £3·5 million from further savings or sales of assets just to keep up with the projects already in progress, let alone any projects that county councillors and others from all parts of the county might wish to have for next year. Many planned projects will not now be able to go ahead.

The situation regarding building is nearing disaster again and no one in the county, of whatever political persuasion, can understand why the Government will not allow the county council to act. Teachers, governors, parents and children will be stunned by the sad news that they have just had, and people will be justifiably angry. I hope that the Minister will now agree, as at least one concrete measure arising from this debate, to meet a delegation from the county to press this concern. I am sure that the county will be seeking such a meeting.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), in an Ajournment debate in July 1988, also raised the problem of bringing school buildings up to standard —that emphasises the all-party nature of this concern— but, despite his efforts, today's announcement will leave the situation worse than it has ever been. It is about time that Ministers recognised the difficulities in which they are putting Cornish schools.

Major investment is needed to ease the growing problem of teacher morale, and a greater Government appreciation of the valuable job that teachers do would be welcome. That arises, in part, from the difficulties that they face working in schools, but also from the frustration that they have in implementing the changes that the Government are introducing. The falling morale among teachers particularly saddens me, but the Government ignore the difficulties that teachers are facing, and just heap more and more work on them.

Already, there are chronic teacher shortages in many parts of Cornwall and difficulties in getting teachers with the skills required for teaching maths and sciences, and the situation is worsening. In letters to the Secretary of State for Education and Science—which have been copied to me

—from head teachers, they raise many deep concerns about the situation in schools. Rather than try to express their frustration in my words, it would be best to quote some of the letters, because they speak powerfully about this crisis of morale.

One head teacher wrote:

"The workload is becoming almost insurmountable for all of us—we will work for the sake of our pupils but these excessive demands, lack of time and preparation to complete everything within Government issued deadlines will result in the continued erosion of the teaching profession, and you will find that existing expertise, dedication and professionalism will recede."

Another teacher, with 30 years' experience, said to the Secretary of State:

"Please, please wake up to the fact that it is now our caring, dedicated staff who are desperate to leave teaching. We are continually being encouraged to be 'positive'. I and many other teachers never found this a problem until recently. There is more to 'job satisfaction' than salary. Top of my list comes inner satisfaction that I am giving of my best to my class—this is becoming increasingly difficult."

A young head teacher only recently appointed wrote:

"I do not have enough books or books of the right quality. We are short of basic equipment and expensive equipment needed for science . . . I am tired, under extreme stress and have lost a great deal of enthusiasm. I have been offered three jobs in industry at twice the salary I am getting at present and it is likely that I will accept the next job offered to me."

Another teacher said:

"I have a good many years left to give to education but my enthusiasm for teaching cannot go on indefinitely unless the Government provide significant additional resources to enable us to implement the National Curriculum in a professional manner."

Finally, another teacher wrote:

"Morale in my school is at an all time low and deteriorating. I no longer have the time or reason to motivate staff. I shall be seeking early retirement myself at the earliest possible time, if the stress does not kill me first."

I emphasise that those letters come from head teachers in schools of acknowledged high quality. There is no argument about the results that we get from the county. But to tackle the problems we need to have proper recognition of the problems that teachers face and pay must be part of that priority.

I should like a commitment from the Minister that the £600 million limit on the amount to fund the teachers' pay increase next year will be increased. That limit represents an increase across the board of only 7·4 per cent. In view of the present level of inflation, that will make financial hardship for teachers worse rather than better. I implore the Department of Education and Science to start talking again to teachers through a proper negotiating structure. That can only be fair, especially in view of the extra demands being placed on teachers.

I should also like to see the Government invest in much higher profile recruitment for properly qualified teachers to ensure that the maths and science teacher shortages in the county, which are even greater in other parts of the country, are addressed.

I must also make it clear that none of the letters that I have received makes the problem of pay the priority. They refer to something much more basic—training, books, the most basic materials for making the most of the brief, unrepeatable time that we have to give our children their education.

Ministers may not like the issues that I raise. They mainly concern funding and the Government are averse to that, because they have to go to the Treasury to ask for funds, and I understand the difficulties in doing that. But the Government must face the fact that more money is desperately needed, not least in our county.

The announcement that we have heard today is inadequate. Teachers' morale is undeniably low. The teachers whom I have quoted today are talking of resignation. We hear the Government talk about new schemes and CTCs which will never be seen in my county, but schools for the vast majority of children in the county are running out of the basic resources that they need to give children the fundamental and best education that they need.

Teachers in my county are struggling against many odds and achieving good results. They do not have the best of teaching facilities, not through any fault of the Government but because they are old schools, and that needs to be changed. The teaching that is provided in the county is excellent, with excellent results. Cornwall is pressing ahead with implementing the Education Reform Act 1988. Despite the problems and under-resourcing that Cornish schools face, the results are good at GCSE and A-level, as is the staying on rate post-16. We pride ourselves on the efficiency and value for money that is achieved by our education service. But the problems that I have been addressing today are real and immediate and cannot be wished away. The money will have to be spent sooner or later. The present spiral that we are entering is one of decline, and I hope that the Minister will accept that that needs to be reversed.

As I said earlier, I hope that the Minister will agree to meet a delegation from the county, no doubt with other hon. Members who represent Cornwall, which will seek to press the immediate problems of the announcement on capital spending.

1.8 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I welcome the debate, and I am grateful for this opportunity to say a few words. I should be glad to join any delegation that my hon. Friend the Minister of State might care to receive. I very much hope that a delegation will come to London to see her and talk about Cornwall's problems. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) has outlined some of them. He was right to emphasise Cornwall's legacy of outdated Victorian schools, particularly in the villages.

The problem cannot be laid entirely at the Government's door.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *indicated assent.*

Mr. Harris: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me about that. It arises, in part, because of Cornwall's previous priorities. It used most of its building resources on secondary education, with the result that some village schools have been neglected.

The hon. Member for Truro referred to the pressure on the school hall in Mevagissey. There are several village schools in my constituency that do not have school halls. I am thinking in particular of Breage school near Porthleven. That school faced closure a few years ago. It is now flourishing, thanks to the head teacher's inspired leadership and the backing of the staff. The school is literally bulging at the seams in an old building that has not been modernised this century.

A delegation ought to come to see the Minister about Cornwall's capital building programme. I share the hon.

[Mr. Harris]

Gentleman's disappointment that it did not feature more prominently in yesterday's announcement. He referred to the education authority's request that the capital building programme should be increased to £18 million, but the county council knows perfectly well that that is an unrealistic bid; it would be horrified if it were given permission to spend £18 million. It could not finance it. Therefore, it submitted a high figure in the hope of attracting a realistic increase. I hope that it will be allowed to spend more than the £6·5 million increase that has been allocated to it.

There is a tendency in this place and throughout the country to say that underfunding is the Government's fault. All of us would like more money to be spent on education. The hon. Member for Truro will join me in another debate to argue for more spending on Cornwall's health services. We are both fighting the case for the air ambulance, for example. One has to apreciate the Government's problems over managing the national budget. There is also a local problem over managing Cornwall's education budget.

I am told that during the last three years Cornwall education authority has overspent its budget. According to reliable information, I also understand that this year it is likely to overspend by £1·5 million. Consequently, it is now having to make cuts. It has cut £500,000 on the repair and maintenance of the kind of schools to which the hon. Gentleman and I have referred. It has also cut £450,000 from the school transport budget. That creates problems in rural areas such as those that the hon. Gentleman and I represent.

We should consider the reasons for overspending. I am told that the overspend on education officers' car allowances is about £136,000. That is nothing to do with the Government; it is Cornwall education authority's problem. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's general case, but I do not believe that all the blame should be laid at the Government's door. Cornwall education authority, at county hall, must, where this is needed, put its house in order.

1.14 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). It is important to start by saying that any delegation that asks to see a Minister normally receives a courteous reply and an answer to that request in the affirmative.

It is right to remind the House that the level of education spending in any local education authority, whether for recurrent or for capital expenditure, is not directly under the Government's control, as my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives said. Local authorities decide their own priorities and direct their budgets accordingly. It is therefore the Cornwall local education authority, and ultimately the voters of Cornwall, to whom the hon. Member for Truro needs to direct most of his animus.

Recurrent funding accounts for teachers' salaries and other running costs for schools will be delegated to most schools under the local management of schools provision in the Education Reform Act 1988. I am delighted to hear that Cornwall is pressing ahead in implementing reforms under that Act. I am sure that many of the points made by the hon. Member for Truro on the funding of individual schools and the pressures placed on teachers, especially head teachers, will be alleviated by the introduction of the local management of schools provision. That has proved to be the case in pilot schemes. We are convinced that there will be more effective spending and that, therefore, available funds will go further and buy more.

The critical issue for Cornwall's funding, as for all other authorities, is the level of its education standard spending assessment. As I am sure the hon. Member for Truro knows, the SSA takes the place in the new finance system that was occupied by the grant-related expenditure assessment in the old system: it is the figure at which the Government consider that an appropriate and standard level of service could be provided by the authority. The total of all SSAs for all local authority services is the level at which the charging authority will be able to levy the community charge for standard spending—£278 before contribution to or receipt from the transitional safety net. The SSA takes account of the numbers of pupils, students, adults and children under five deemed to be in receipt of the authority's services. It also gives weight to the particular circumstances of each authority. In Cornwall's case, that is important because the SSA places more emphasis on the costs of providing education services in sparse areas than the GRE did. Cornwall has the fifth highest sparsity index in the country and is therefore a beneficiary of this change.

In 1990-91, Cornwall's education SSA will be 8 per cent. above its education GRE for 1989-90—a rise broadly in line with the change for most LEAs. However, the SSA will also be 16 per cent. above Cornwall's education budget for 1989-90, as reported on the form RER—the report that comes back to the Department of Education and Science from the local authority—and this means that the authority should find no difficulty in coping with the new finance system, at least through its recurrent education expenditure. This is a reflection—the hon. Member for Truro drew attention to this point—of the authority's past prudence and efficiency. I hope that the local authority, despite the view of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives on part of its expenditure, will continue to look carefully at how it budgets.

On the more general question of capital resources for schools, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State secured a substantial increase for local authority capital and for grants to voluntary-aided and grant-maintained schools in the current year's public expenditure round. Details for individual LEAs were announced yesterday, and I shall come to Cornwall's position in a moment. I should like first to make some general points on the Government's approach to work on school buildings.

The big increase in funds available will allow local education authorities and governing bodies to continue their programme of improvements to schools, including preparation for the national curriculum and following the guidelines of the 1981 regulations that are currently being looked at. We are making available for new improvement work alone a four-and-a-half-times increase in the equivalent sum made available last year. That amply demonstrates the importance we attach to capital spending on schools.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives is right in saying that if by any chance the sums of money put in by

the local education authorities for capital spending had been allocated, they would have found considerable difficulty in managing to achieve spending on that level.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I understand the Minister's point. However, there is a degree of cynicism in the local education authorities since we have received approximately two thirds of what we asked for, and so has the average authority nationally. There is a suspicion that more attention has been paid to cutting the bid down by two thirds than to what is required by any individual authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: I must quickly dispel that misapprehension. A careful study of the capital allocations throughout the country will reveal that it is by no means the case that local authorities have received two thirds of what they bid for. Would that it were so in my local authority's case.

I should not give the impression that everything necessary can be done at once, or that what we are making available will meet all the spending needs identified by all local education authorities. A great deal needs to be done to the fabric of schools all over the country to bring them up to scratch and to make them fit for the delivery of the high standards of education to which parents and teachers alike aspire, which our children deserve, and which we believe that our education reforms will achieve. Local education authorities have in recent years added to that substantially from receipts generated by sale of education assets—typically school sites sold as part of reorganisation—by the use of revenue funds, and grant from the Department in the case of voluntary-aided schools. Of course, there is never enough to satisfy the full needs that people put forward.

It is important to remind the House that the numbers of pupils, and thus of schools, have been falling for the past 10 years. Capital spending per pupil has nevertheless increased by 10 per cent. in real terms over the past 10 years. We recognise that more needs to be done, and it is against that background that we have announced the big increase in annual capital guidelines and grant to governors of voluntary-aided schools.

As in recent years, priority has been given first to meeting committed expenditure on projects outstanding from previous years. This year we have uprated these sums by a realistic figure to allow for inflation, which should go a long way to meet complaints from LEAs that inflation has been insufficiently allowed for. Priority is next given to meeting the cost of new school places in areas of population growth. There must be places in schools for all children who require them. Priority is then given to projects designed to remove surplus places. That is because more efficient use of buildings releases resources which can be recycled for the benefit of the rest of the education system in the local authority concerned. Funds are then allocated, by means of an objective formula, for school improvements, and it is in this area that we have been able to distribute a four-and-a-half-fold increase compared with last year.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I am sorry to interrupt the Minister again. She is aware that the amount needed to bring us up to the Government's target levels for 1991 is many times greater than that allocated to the county council and well below what it could usefully spend, whatever the arguments about the bid put in. We will not meet those targets. How does the Minister answer parents and teachers on that point?

Mrs. Rumbold: Those guidelines were laid down in regulations in 1981. It is clearly recognised that in past years requirements to be met under those regulations have changed. It is in light of that that we are currently reviewing those regulations to see whether we can ease the requirements for local authorities.

Mr. Taylor: As I understand it, the Minister is saying that because the money is not being made available to meet the targets they will reduce the targets.

Mrs. Rumbold: That is not what I am saying. We are reviewing the needs as we perceive them now. They are generated by a different set of circumstances, principally the Education Reform Act 1988. We are considering the guidelines to see how schools, particularly small schools, can be accommodated within the terms of the 1981 guidelines.

We have talked about the overall total guideline for Cornwall, which is £6·522 million, of which the apportionment is £5·557 million for schools and £965,000 for further education. That represents some 35 per cent. of the authority's total bid and this proportion, I should emphasise, is exactly the national average for all LEAs in this exercise. But the settlement for Cornwall fits the national pattern not only in terms of arithmetical proportion, but in the more general sense that, while it does not meet all the authority's objectives—I am clear about that—it will allow for significant progress to continue in the improvement and adaptation of its schools and colleges.

I have already mentioned that the guidelines should not be seen as the sum total of what is available to authorities for capital expenditure on education; they are more a catalyst to which can be added other resources such as capital receipts, and other sums made available by virement from other resources at the disposal of county councils. I am glad to see, from an observation of the educational spending patterns of recent years, that Cornwall makes significant use of those flexibilities.

In the voluntary-aided sector, we have met in full the considerable bid for committed expenditure of over £1 million. The authority's bid for new works was entirely in respect of minor works, and here we have made available a sum of £90,000, which should enable the authority, at its discretion and, no doubt, in consultation with the dioceses concerned, to start a number of planned works at primary schools in the coming year. I hope that that news is welcomed by hon. Members. In further education, the authority received an allocation for its sole bid for a new major building project.

The other subject that the hon. Gentleman raised was teachers' morale. I am familiar with the contents of the letter that he has received from the National Association of Head Teachers and other organisations. We recognise the extremely hard work put in by teachers throughout the country. We welcome their devotion to their work and acknowledge a debt of gratitude to them especially as they have undertaken the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988. The implementation of the national curriculum and other new provisions place a great demand on teachers.

We have been at pains to make it clear that teachers deserve both recognition and respect for their professionalism and commitment. Teaching is an attractive career. Some 25,000 people enter or re-enter the profession each

[Mrs. Rumbold]

year. Applications for primary initial teacher training are up by 15 per cent. The proportion of teachers leaving teaching for other paid employment is less than 1 per cent. each year.

Clearly, pay is important. Teachers' pay has risen by 40 per cent. overall since March 1986. This year we have given the interim advisory committee a remit to examine, in particular, the pay of head and deputy head teachers. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the total sum given to the interim advisory committee is twice that given last year. It is important to recognise that the Government have taken steps to make teachers' pay a high priority.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the new pay machinery. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had a constructive round of meetings with the teachers' unions and employers a short while ago. He is now considering the points made to him and he aims to put in place machinery for the 1991 settlement. He is pursuing the matter vigorously, but he does not underestimate the difficulties that remain. I hope that I have managed to reassure the hon. Gentleman that the Government take schools, education, capital and teachers seriously.

Housing (North Yorkshire)

1.29 pm

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the problems of housing in North Yorkshire. It is a broad topic and could cover a multitude of subjects, but as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State knows—I am delighted to see him here to reply to the debate—I wish to raise the specific problems experienced by my mainly rural constituents of finding suitable accommodation to buy or rent locally.

The problem has been aired in the House before, particularly in the last Session during the passage of the Local Government and Housing Bill. Yet it merits further attention because it is the single most pressing social problem for my constituents and has a particular impact on rural communities.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be aware of the nature of the problems in North Yorkshire. They are nothing new. There have always been population movements into particular areas. Once it was into the cities, then into the suburbs and now it is back into the countryside. Such movements have always created pressure on housing stock and difficulties for those who were living in the areas concerned to begin with. The problem has always been with us and will probably always be with us.

What is new, however, is the intensity of pressure on housing in areas such as the one I represent. In the 1980s the demand for homes in the environmentally attractive area of North Yorkshire soared. Greater wealth and improved transport allowed many people to move into the area, some for retirement, some for a second home and some for work. In addition, many cottages were turned into holiday homes.

In February when I was canvassing in the Richmond by-election I saw how whole villages closed down for the winter, with a large proportion of the housing stock unoccupied for many months of the year. It is principally the natural attractiveness of the dales and moors which has spurred this great demand for housing. Ironically, that natural attractiveness makes it impossible adequately to expand the supply.

Planning controls, particularly in the national parks which cover half of my constituency, are tight and have been tightened. Many local people have the money to build a house and even the land to build it on, but not the planning permission to do so. I would not argue for any general relaxation of planning controls. It is in the interests of the whole nation that our most attractive natural areas are preserved for future generations, but it is important for the nation to acknowledge the price paid and the trouble taken by the local residents. They want to make a living and bring up a family, and they love their surroundings, but they often ruefully reflect that a beautiful view does not pay bills. The price to be paid threatens to be high.

Lancashire polytechnic recently highlighted the scale of the problem in my constituency in a comprehensive survey of all households in Wensleydale. The work was carried out on behalf of the Wensleydale housing forum, to which I pay tribute. The survey confirmed what we already knew. Many people are moving into the Dales. Indeed, in the past 10 years one in three households has moved in. At the same time, local young people cannot find anywhere to live. Forty per cent. of households are of pensionable age

and fewer than 20 per cent. include anybody between 16 and 25. The consequences of such changes can be both great and serious.

The effects on schools and public transport are predictable, as is the strain on health care. There is also the sometimes forgotten impact on the environment. The natural environment that people find so pleasant and attractive depends on the maintenance of upland farming. If the next generation of farming families cannot find anywhere to live, the impact on the environment will be serious.

I do not criticise anyone for wanting to live in or move into the area. Many of those who move in become among the most active local citizens. I should like the strains which have arisen to be recognised. Some people in my constituency have said that 95 per cent. of the local population cannot afford the average price of a small house in the Dales. That may be an exaggeration, but I do not think that it is a wild exaggeration.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will agree with me when I say that it is a distressing experience for people who were born in the area, brought up there, and who feel that they belong there, as they have friends and family in the area, to find that they are unable to get any accommodation there.

Many married couples in my constituency have to live in caravans on the premises or in the gardens of relatives. In far-flung rural areas people are not able to go to live in the town down the road instead of in a village or in the countryside. There is no town down the road. People who work in rural areas in many parts of my constituency could not commute from nearby towns because the towns do not exist.

One may say that there have always been problems, but when a whole generation faces the same difficulty throughout the country, the problem merits considerable attention. Some people may say, "So what? Populations shift, communities come and go. Industrial and urban communities have experienced great and traumatic changes in the past, so why do any special favours for rural areas?" My answer is that no one wants any special favours. My constituents are the last people to expect the Government to bail them out on any occasion.

Given the tight constraints imposed on the supply of local housing, people are entitled to seek ways to redress the balance in their favour. It is ridiculous to say that we have a free market in housing when the supply is so restricted. My constituents are entitled to ask whether we can interfere in the market to help rather than to hinder local people who understandably desire to live in their home area.

There are powerful moral, environmental and social reasons for active Government assistance to help to alleviate the problems. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister, does not need persuading that there are such reasons but it is worth placing them on record in the House.

It is all the more important for the Government to tackle the problem successfully because if they do not the Opposition will come up with silly, unworkable plans such as their scheme to require planning permission for the ownership of second homes. I warn the Opposition that with that scheme they risk enmeshing themselves in a bureaucratic tangle that has considerable implications for basic civil liberties. The Government bear a heavy responsibility to get things right so that the Opposition do not get the opportunity to wreak havoc.

To be fair, my hon. Friend and his colleagues in the Department of the Environment in the past year have shown a refreshing awareness of the scale and the urgency of the problem. The noises that have emerged from the Government on rural housing have been positive. I congratulate the Minister on the announcement last February about village sites for low-cost housing, on the great increase in funding for housing associations, on the constructive nature of the recently issued planning guidelines, and because they have generally recognised the existence of the problem. However, I think that the Minister will accept that the initiatives taken so far will take time to bear fruit, and the results may be limited in relation to the scale of the problem.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning yesterday gave a written answer on Housing Corporation funding and activity which was impressive. The Government are providing the means for a huge increase in the activities of housing associations. However, when the money has been shared out by region, county and district, the effects on the ground over the next few years could be small. I have been told by Hambleton district council, one of two districts in my constituency, that one £4 million scheme for 28 dwellings would take up its total share of housing association funding for two years.

Will my hon. Friend impress upon his colleagues at the Department of the Environment and at the Treasury that there is a need for continued increases in Housing Corporation funding as a high priority? He should consider carefully whether rural areas receive as much funding as the seriousness of their problems warrants.

The work of the housing associations is welcome, but inevitably, local authorities are still in the front line of dealing with the rural housing shortage. As planning authorities they unfortunately bear the brunt of local dissatisfaction with planning constraints. Responsible local authorities, such as those in my constituency, and throughout the rural areas of North Yorkshire, feel harshly constrained when they try to help to tackle the problems that I have described.

I am aware that, when I raise the subject of local authorities' role in housing provision, I am entering a political minefield. Their creation of great municipal estates was a disaster for Britain and must never happen again, but local authorities in North Yorkshire have a much more distinguished record on housing provision, to say nothing of many other things, and it seems to me that there are three ways in which they can help to tackle the local housing problem. In all of them, there is scope for the Government to be helpful to local authorities without unleashing a spending spree by the less responsible of them.

First, local authorities can seek restrictive agreements on the sale of properties to put people who already live locally at an advantage in the housing market. The Yorkshire Dales national park is making a major effort, which I warmly applaud, to place as many newly constructed properties as possible under section 52 agreements, which restrict subsequent sales. I know that the Government have encouraged the use of such

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agreements in certain circumstances and places. Such a policy must be applied sensitively, and sometimes flexibly, but it is a genuine and constructive attempt to help.

There is much confusion and concern about whether such agreements can be made to stick in planning appeals or in subsequent tests in the courts. Clearer guidance from the Government on this matter would be welcome, although I recognise that it is a complex topic and my hon. Friend the Minister might not be able to give a full and definitive answer today.

Secondly, there is potential for local authorities to provide land or low-cost developments by housing associations or other bodies. At the moment, local authorities are sometimes boxed in by restrictions and penalties if they try to help in that way, and some housing associations are worried that local authority assistance with many possible low-cost developments will never happen. I know that the Government have recently tried to help in this respect and that there is always a danger when local authorities are given financial freedom that that freedom will be abused by a minority of them. I should welcome clarification of the Government's stance and any additional leeway that can be given to local authorities with suitable land or available funding that could be used for rural development.

Thirdly, local authorities still have a limited role in providing housing directly. Forthcoming restrictions on the use of capital receipts are likely to reduce the scope of their activity. If so, that will not help the rural housing situation. Local authorities in my area have never been extravagant. They have never incurred huge debts, but their ability to use money to help the local community with its most pressing problem may be curtailed.

I know that this is another difficult area for Ministers, mainly because some local authorities have behaved very differently from those in my constituency, but can the Government study how changes in local authority regulations will affect rural housing, and will they try to find ways in which to replace the much-needed funding that may be lost? There may be other ways in which to assist with rural housing through changes in the planning process. I wonder whether the planning system could be reformed to encourage the private sector to think ahead about the provision of low-cost, local-need housing. Within the framework of a county structure plan, district councils could put forward bids looking, say, five years ahead, specifying how many of the planning permissions they grant should be reserved for local need or be part of low-cost schemes. Such provision would then be built more into the expectations of developers and the plans of housing associations.

There may be other ways in which to assist. It may be possible for the Government to give local authorities more advice about opportunities already available to them so that they take advantage of initiatives that the Government have already provided, which they may not do at the moment. Whichever of these suggestions turn out to be practical, I think that my hon. Friend the Minister will recognise that there is a strong feeling in North Yorkshire and many other rural areas that more must be done and that pressure must be maintained on this subject.

This is a most pressing social and economic problem, although none of us is so naive to think that it will ever be solved to universal satisfaction. We can no more stop the high demand for homes in the most attractive parts of the country than we can stop the tide coming in. However, we can help those people who wish only for relatively modest accommodation in their own home areas and who want to see suitable sites and local money put to the best use in providing that accommodation. No one is asking for special favours. I ask only that people are given a fair chance instead of facing a planning system and housing market that are stacked permanently against them.

1.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) for choosing to use this short debate to raise an important subject. As he does so often, he spoke eloquently and persuasively today. Like my hon. Friend, the Government are concerned to maintain the viability of rural communities and we recognise that ensuring that there is affordable housing for local people to rent or buy has a key part to play in that.

Unlike some Opposition Members, we believe that people must be free to choose where they live. That means that we have no intention of forbidding long-distance commuters and second-home owners moving into rural areas. We recognise that it is important for the health of rural communities that they do not become merely dormitory villages for commuters or twilight homes for the elderly. It is crucial that affordable housing is available for those who live and work in rural areas, including people with limited incomes.

We are, indeed, the first Government to recognise the distinctly rural angle to public housing policy. In July 1988, we announced our rural housing initiative which for the first time set out a specific policy on low-cost housing in smaller villages. Since then we have been steadily putting in place a package of measures designed to tackle the problem.

We are increasing the level of investment in rural areas through housing associations, which have a major role to play in providing affordable housing both for rent and for low-cost sale, in particular shared ownership. We have significantly increased the public funding of the National Agricultural Centre Rural Trust to support its work in providing start-up funds for rurally based housing associations. We have greatly increased the public funds available to the Housing Corporation, so enabling it to establish a special rural programme aimed at villages with a population of under 1,000. The Housing Corporation has recently brought forward increased targets under this programme which should be providing 1,500 homes a year for rent in small villages by 1992-93. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for recognising the enormous additional assistance that we are giving to housing associations in our programme over the coming years.

Most people in rural as in urban areas, including those on modest incomes, want to buy rather than rent a home. We are anxious to stimulate provision for low-cost home ownership, and have taken a series of measures to stimulate this under both housing and planning powers. Particularly important is the encouragement of shared ownership schemes, which enable people to part-rent part-buy, thus reducing the initial cost of purchase and

thereby lowering the barriers of entry to owner-occupation. Most are offered by housing associations, some with public subsidy, others without, but there is no reason why commercial developers should not run similar schemes, and we are beginning to see signs of interest in that.

As my hon. Friend reminded the House, there was considerable debate during the passage of last Session's Local Government and Housing Bill about whether shared owners should be prohibited from "staircasing" to full ownership. I hope that we have now settled that debate. We entirely agree that shared ownership housing should be retained for local people in rural areas, but not by denying people the opportunity to become full owners of their homes. We are introducing a scheme whereby housing associations in certain rural areas will have a pre-emption right to repurchase former shared-ownership dwellings when the occupier moves on, thus ensuring their retention as low-cost housing. The Housing Corporation will guarantee to make the necessary funds available without reducing its rural rented or shared ownership programmes.

The corporation has also been invited to identify separately for the first time a rural element within its low-cost home ownership programme, to allow 250 approvals next year rising to 350 by 1992-93, a trebling of the present level. Of course, the figures are still small, but in a small village even one or two houses can make a substantial difference. We shall keep progress under close review in consultation with the Housing Corporation.

We have been encouraging local authorities to see their housing role as more of an enabling one, working with housing associations and the private sector to increase the supply of low-cost housing rather than developing new housing for rent or sale themselves. They can sponsor housing association schemes from their own resources to top up Housing Corporation provision, and if they choose, they can pay subsidies to private landlords. Next year's local authority housing investment programme allocations were announced earlier today. The average allocation is twice that for 1989-90 because of the better targeting that our new system permits. That is possible only because we still maintain some control over the amount of capital receipts that local authorities are able to spend. If we did not have that control, we would not be able to target our resources in the way that we intend next year. I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that Richmond has been allocated 230 per cent. of its 1989-90 figure, and Hambleton has been allocated 203 per cent. They have done very well out of today's housing investment programme allocations.

We recognise that there is still a role for direct local authority provision, but we hope that authorities will operate through housing associations where possible. If a local authority gives land to a housing association for low-cost housing development, without retaining nomination rights, there would not normally be any consideration and, therefore, no requirement to set money aside to redeem debt. If it retains nomination rights, there is a non-monetary consideration; but my noble Friend the Paymaster General announced in another place on 24 October that we would provide in subordinate legislation that, in those cases, no debt redemption would be required. So, effectively, there is no deterrent to authorities making land available freely or cheaply for low-cost housing.

There is also no reason why low-cost rural housing should not be provided by private developers, whether alone or in conjunction with housing associations or local authorities, and whether for rent, shared ownership or direct sale, and we are starting to see signs of that happening.

We are taking steps to encourage landowners and developers to help in providing affordable housing for local people. As my hon. Friend said, in February 1989 we announced changes to planning rules, whereby local planning authorities may exceptionally release small pockets of land, not previously designated for housing, for low-cost schemes. The key point is that if the land does not have development value, because planning permission for general purpose housing would be refused, the houses can be let or sold at well below the market price, subject to conditions that ensure that they remain available to local people.

We would expect to see appropriate covenants between the landowner and the developer to ensure that the additional housing remains available for local needs, normally backed up by an agreement with the planning authority under section 52. It is very important that those guarantees are carefully worked out, but I do not share my hon. Friend's doubts about whether they are workable. Many authorities are already working with them very satisfactorily.

My hon. Friend mentioned that there are some local doubts about the legal basis on which low-cost housing would be reserved for local needs. From a planning point of view, it is important that authorities set out clear policies for low-cost housing in their local plans to provide a framework for individual decisions. My hon. Friend referred to a programme for the next five years. Such a programme can be contained within a local development plan produced by the local authority. That would help to reduce any risk of challenge on appeal. I shall give one example, although it is not in my hon. Friend's constituency, but it is nearby. The North Yorkshire authority, Ryedale, has already adopted such a policy on an interim basis, pending revision of its statutory local plan. The policy is very much along the lines that we want to see, and I hope that other authorities will follow their lead. We published guidance on local needs policies in our recent draft planning policy guidance note on housing, and we shall be issuing the final version of that guidance early in the new year.

If there are uncertainties about the legal mechanisms, I suggest that authorities contact the National Agricultural Centre Rural Trust. It has been instrumental in promoting village housing schemes; it has produced an admirable guide to village housing; and it can point to cases where legal arrangements have been made to the satisfaction of all the parties concerned. I hope that, if my hon. Friend's local council has not contacted that organisation, our debate today will encourage it to do so.

The trust sees signs of widespread interest among private landowners in making small sites available for low-cost housing. A growing number of schemes are already under way. For instance, in Gloucestershire, an area of very high prices—probably even higher than in my hon. Friend's constituency and with equally strong pressures from outsiders—the Gloucestershire housing society has two shared ownership schemes under way on low-cost sites made available by private landowners, and

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several more in prospect. That illustrates what can be achieved by using the opportunities that the recent policy initiative has made available.

In giving new priority to low-cost rural housing, we are not in any way abandoning our concern to protect the rural environment. We are not abandoning our planning policies or our concern for countryside protection. But it is important to remember that not many new houses are needed in a village—just enough to ensure that children brought up in the village can set up house there if they want to. Many villages have small sites that could be used for two or three houses without any damage to the environment. Most rural district councils are concerned to protect the beauties of their landscape, and I am sure that they will go on being scrupulous about inappropriate development. But that does not mean that there should be no development whatever. It is especially important in rural areas that developers should pay close attention to the environmental aspects of what they plan to build.

The Government have thus responded to the growing concern about the lack of affordable housing in rural areas. Inevitably, our initiatives will take some time to have their full effect, but we have put in place the mechanism to deal with the problem, and that, coupled with increased public and private funding, should provide a significant boost to the output of low-cost housing.

Of course, it can always be argued that more needs to be done, but in the two years since we introduced the rural dimension to housing policy, we have made real progress, and I am encouraged by the reports that I am receiving of innovative housing schemes in a variety of rural areas. Needless to say, we shall be watching developments closely and considering whether further steps are necessary. If more resources are called for, we shall do our best to provide them, although we have to balance rural against urban needs. We are also working on research proposals to assess the effectiveness of our initiatives.

We have recognised a problem which previously went unacknowledged. We have put in place a policy for dealing with it and we have made significant additional resources available to back up that policy. There may be further to go, but I hope that my hon. Friend and the House acknowledge how far we have already come.

Our approach is a positive approach to get more houses built for those in rural areas who need them without imposing restrictions on other people's freedom to own what property they choose. We have spelt out clear and coherent policies that work within the framework of a planning system that protects the countryside without imposing planning controls where they are not justified. As usual, the Labour party is running to try to catch up with us.

Judges

1.57 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Let me begin, Madam Deputy Speaker, by wishing you and everyone else a happy Christmas and a merry new year. In a few hours' time, this place will be closed. The heat of battle will be over and tranquility will have returned to our land. Before that happens, I should like to give the Law Officers a chance to lift the veils that shroud our system of judicial appointments—veils which make that system a complete mystery to the public. I should also like to give the Law Officers a chance to explain why the system is sexist and racist as well as being based on snobbery and class.

As a barrister, I know only too well that the secrecy that surrounds the appointment of judges is almost masonic. Judges are drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of barristers, and most of them are appointed by the Lord Chancellor, in consultation with other judges. The result of that system is that judges recruit other judges to the Bench in their own image—their own sex, colour, class and prejudices. This system produces an elite—a self-perpetuating oligarchy. It creates a judiciary which in my view is composed of the least forward-looking, least radical and most hidebound body of our citizenry.

Justice at the highest levels has become the preserve of cloistered, geriatric, white men. Is it any wonder that we have judges asking in court, "Who is Mick Jagger?" Is it any wonder that judges have to ask barristers to explain what "bonking" means? If I said to the Law Officers, "Bonking is good for you", they would know what I meant and would not need an interpreter or a barrister to demonstrate it for them.

More seriously, the character of these cloistered, geriatric, white men can explain some of the tragic mistakes that the Court of Appeal made in the cases of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six. Perhaps the character of these geriatric, cloistered, white men can also help to explain the reaction of judges to the Lord Chancellor's proposals to get rid of the restrictive practices of barristers and solicitors.

That brings me to the question of how the Lord Chief Justice is appointed. Can the Minister describe the system under which the current Lord Chief Justice, Lord Justice Lane, will be replaced when he resigns? Which Ministers will be consulted? Presumably the Lord Chancellor will consult the Prime Minister, but what about the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General? Which senior judges will be consulted? The Law Officers may say that this is all hypothetical and that they do not know that the Lord Chief Justice will resign, but they should remember that the Lord Chief Justice described the proposals to get rid of the restrictive practices of barristers and solicitors, which were brought forward by the Lord Chancellor, as "sinister". He said two days ago in the House of Lords: "the interests of justice have gone."—*[Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 December 1989; Vol. 514, c. 146.]

It is inconceivable that the Lord Chief Justice could preside over a system that he believes to be sinister and could continue to preside over a system from which he believes that the interests of justice have gone. It is not tenable that the Lord Chief Justice should be engaged in a running battle with the Lord Chancellor. Although I am sure that the Lord Chief Justice would prefer that the

reforms were withdrawn and that the Lord Chancellor resigned, that will not happen. Many of us at the Bar believe that the Lord Chief Justice is honour bound to resign and we want to know the system by which he will be replaced.

There is racism and sexism in the system of the appointment of judges. We know that over 50 per cent. of the population of this country is composed of women, yet out of 10 Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, there are no women. Out of 27 Lord Justices of Appeal, only one is female. Out of 81 High Court judges, only one is female. Out of 422 circuit judges, only 17 are female, which is 4 per cent. Out of 703 recorders, only 25 are female, which is 3·6 per cent. I should have thought that by any standards that was a disgraceful state of affairs and that it shows that women are shunned, scorned and rejected in recruitment by myopic male judges.

I am convinced that it is no use for the Attorney-General to say, as he has in a parliamentary answer, that we must simply encourage more women to come to the Bar and to put themselves forward as judges. The system must discriminate positively in favour of women as judges. We also need positive discrimination by chambers to ensure that the number of women practising at the Bar increases and thus that more women can come forward as potential judges. How many chambers have a quota for women barristers? In the medical profession, over 50 per cent. of those putting themselves forward to become doctors are women, but I am certain that nothing like 50 per cent. of those coming to the Bar are women. What are chambers, the Bar Council, judges and the Lord Chancellor doing to ensure that more women come forward?

How many chambers where groups of barristers meet have a creche? How many chambers or groups of chambers have a workplace nursery to help women barristers? How many courts have a creche or workplace nursery to help women barristers and solicitors? Is it any wonder that both the Bar and judges exude sexism? Ironically, sometimes this works in favour of women. Judges tend to see the women before them not as intelligent, rational beings but, bringing with them the prejudices of a thousand years of male chauvinism, as pretty little things, full of feelings and sentiment, but lacking in logic and reason. One strange result of that is that women in the criminal courts may get lower sentences than men who have committed the same crimes.

In the civil courts, we have judges such as Mr. Justice Bernard Caulfield fantasising over women. He described one witness as fragrant, radiant and elegant. I shall not be a chauvinist and comment on whether Mrs. Mary Archer is radiant and elegant. However, some women have asked me how the hell the judge knew that she was fragrant. What scent was this woman using that was so powerful that she could deceive this besotted judge? "I say, it is Chanel No. 5, old man." "Sorry, m'lud, it is Poison by Dior." That is a strange way to approach women in the witness box, and it is strange to use such phrases in summing up.

What about black people? The last census showed, the proportion of black people in the population as 3 per cent. but I should not be surprised if, when the 1990 census comes out, the proportion is more like 5 per cent. Out of 10 Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, none is black. Out of 27 Lord Justices of Appeal, none is black. Out of 81 High Court judges, none is black. Out of 422 circuit judges, only one is black—one fifth of 1 per cent. of the total. Out of 703 recorders, only five are black—0·7 per cent. of the total. That does not mean that judges are racist, but it reflects the institutionalised racism of the judiciary. It suggests a shocking lack of concern on the part of judges about the future of black people.

How can black people trust the system of justice when all they ever see before them are these cloistered, geriatric white men?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman a great deal of leeway, but I hope that he will not reflect in that manner on the judiciary. As he well knows, to do such a thing, he would need to table a substantive motion.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am not criticising them. "Cloistered" means that they come from a narrow social background. That is a matter of fact, because they basically come from public schools and universities. "Geriatric" was a phrase used by Lord Scarman. He gave me the idea to raise this debate. I heard him on the radio talking about the response of black people to our legal system and he explained that there were not enough black policemen and was asked, "What about the number of black judges?" He became so embarrassed that I started to table questions and find out what went on. "Geriatric"—at the highest level, although not at the level of the recorders or circuit judges—is a description of the age group of these people. "White" is a description of their colour. No criticism is intended. It is a plain, straightforward statement of fact.

How can black people feel confidence in the system? What will the Law Officers and the Lord Chancellor do about it? Again, positive discrimination is one of the answers, but I have one or two new proposals. We need a fundamental review of how judges are trained and appointed. We need a review that will open out access to the judiciary and get rid of the virtual monopoly of the Bar.

It is clear to me that being an advocate is not the same thing as being a judge. Yet nearly all the judges are appointed from advocates, from members of the Bar and mainly from people who have become Queen's counsel at the Bar, but they do not have the same function.

Of course it is clear that judges need to know how the courts work. They need to know what counsel for the prosecution and for the defence, for the plaintiff and for the respondent, get up to. But it does not follow that a judge must have been a barrister, and that is not the case in some countries.

All solicitors should be eligible for appointment as judges. Academic lawyers should be eligible for appointment as judges, as should other people who have had distinguished careers in entirely different areas. The Lord Chancellor should look to headhunting when he wants to appoint judges, and that may involve something which is distasteful to the Bar, although perhaps not so distasteful to the Lord Chancellor who is more radical than some of his predecessors. I have great sympathy for the Lord Chancellor and the battle that he is having with the judges in his attempt to reform the legal system. If I can catch Mr. Speaker's eye on another occasion, I shall be saying words in his favour on that matter. Such an approach may involve not only headhunting but advertising.

[Mr. Sedgemore]

That is a wide issue which we do not have time to go into in this debate. The fusion of solicitors and barristers would help to widen the arena from which judges could be drawn. Fusion is a contentious issue. There are arguments for and against, and it is not solely concerned with the appointment of judges but with the whole system of justice. But for other reasons as well, fusion would widen the area from which judges could be drawn.

We should set up a judicial commission along the lines of the Civil Service Commission to look at the recruiting and training of judges. That judicial commission should contain not only some judges—I accept that there would have to be some judges—but distinguished lay people who have been successful in other spheres of life. That commission should look at the issue and make recommendations that would widen the character and nature of those who make up the Bench.

Justice is a precious thing and it should not only be for all the people, it should be seen to be for all the people. Therefore, I hope that the Solicitor-General will come forward with some new and constructive ideas so that we can go into the 1990s improving our system of justice.

2.7 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) on initiating the debate. He masquerades most convincingly before you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a respectable, suited, balding white man, as I do myself.

The debate provides an opportunity to explain briefly the way in which judges are appointed. It also provides an opportunity to dispel some of the myths and misunderstandings that prevail when the subject is discussed.

It will surely be common ground that it is essential to the fair and proper working of Britain's system of justice that those appointed to the judiciary should be of the highest quality, in terms of intellect, character and experience, and of the highest integrity.

It should come as no surprise that successive Lord Chancellors have testified that they regard the appointment of judges as among their most important duties. The number and range of the modern judiciary make that task more difficult than it has ever been. I will briefly outline its extent.

First, the Lord Chancellor is responsible for advising the Prime Minister on the appointment of the most senior judges of all, the Lords of Appeal, the heads of the four divisions of the High Court and the Lords Justices of Appeal. He is also responsible for making recommendations on the appointment of High Court judges, circuit judges and Queen's counsel. Those appointments are all Crown appointments and the Lord Chancellor's function is to provide advice to the Prime Minister who, in turn, advises the Queen.

The Lord Chancellor is also responsible for appointing judicial officers, such as masters of the Supreme Court and registrars of the High Court and county court, stipendiary magistrates and many tribunal chairmen. He is also responsible for appointing, or advising on the appointment of, a wide range of part-time judges and judicial officers, including recorders and assistant recorders with similar jurisdiction to the full-time office holders whom I have already mentioned. Finally, he is responsible for appointing all the lay magistrates in England and Wales, except in the Duchy of Lancaster. They number over 28,000. As the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch accepts, there is a very high, and growing, proportion of magistrates from the ethnic minorities, for the reason that the pool from which they can be appointed is already much wider and more easily available.

To assist the Lord Chancellor in making the main judicial appointments, he looks for the great bulk of his advice to the senior judiciary: to the judges and leaders of the legal profession. To help him in the task of gathering and recording their views, interviewing actual and potential candidates for many of the appointments and summarising and correlating the large amount of information gained, the Lord Chancellor has appointed a small team of officials within his Department, but he personally takes all the important decisions—in particular, on every full-time appointment and all the senior part-time appointments.

Eligibility for judicial appointment is regulated in the first instance by statute. At present, a Lord Justice or above is required to be a barrister of at least 15 years' standing, a High Court judge to be a barrister of 10 years' standing and a circuit judge to be a barrister or solicitor of 10 years' standing, provided, if he or she be a solicitor, that they have served as a recorder for at least three years. There is no statutory requirement for Queen's counsel. These eligibility requirements will be changed if the proposals in the Courts and Legal Services Bill become law in due course. The main change, in terms of judicial appointments, is that solicitors with appropriate advocacy qualifications will be eligible for appointment to the High Court and above.

Progression to the most senior ranks in the judiciary depends primarily on experience and performance in previous appointments. In modern times, the Law Lords have been drawn almost exclusively from the Court of Appeal, and Lords Justices almost exclusively from the High Court. High Court judges are appointed from those members of the senior Bar who are recognised as being at the head of the profession, augmented by some promotions from the circuit bench. The circuit judges are chosen on application from the relatively small number of recorders of sufficient seniority and standing who are recognised as suitable for full-time appointments at this level. At any one time, therefore, although the overall numbers in the profession—6,000 barristers and nearly 50,000 solicitors—may seem large, the pool of real candidates for a particular appointment never looks very extensive.

The fundamental principle applied by successive Lord Chancellors is to appoint to each judicial post the candidate who appears to him to be the best qualified to fit it and to perform its duties, without regard to sex, religion, ethnic origin or any perceived political opinion. Professional ability, experience, standing, character and integrity are the criteria, coupled with the requirement that the candidate must be physically capable of carrying out the often quite tiring duties of the post.

The hon. Member asked whether the Lord Chancellor has appointed sufficient women judges, or sufficient judges from the ethnic minorities. He has argued that the judges are drawn from a narrow class and that they are insufficiently representative of the population as a whole. The Lord Chancellor would certainly not reject out of

hand the notion that in a diverse society those with the responsibility of appointing or recommending appointment to positions of influence and responsibility should be astute, where they can, to make appointments that command the confidence of, and thus where appropriate reflect, the composition of society as a whole. He would therefore readily accept the desirability, where suitable candidates presented themselves, of seeking to make more such appointments, but I do not understand the hon. Gentleman to be arguing—even if he were, I should not be able to agree with him—that this should be the primary criterion.

The prime consideration at every level must be that the judiciary should be appointed from among those best qualified to do the job in question—to carry out judicial tasks. For this, the first requirement, supplemented and combined, of course, with the necessary qualities of character, standing and integrity, must be tried and tested knowledge and experience of the law and practice of our judicial system.

Most of our courts, unlike those on the continent, operate by means of the adversarial system. The judges must, therefore, have the qualities of a skilled umpire between contesting parties, but he or she must have more than that: the judge must have both the detailed knowledge of the law and the necessary analytical faculties to identify and isolate, whether for himself or for a jury, the essential features of a case. He or she must have a knowledge of the rules of evidence and understanding of proper practice, the facility of courteous explanation and the power of judgment—qualities which can normally be gained only by long and dedicated experience as an advocate in the courts. These qualities are not called for as mere artificial barriers or disguised exclusions based on prejudice. They are genuine requirements. In a criminal case, to allow one inadmissible question can abort a trial.

The prime requirement for our judges, therefore, is the ability to manage trials skilfully, to preside effectively without intervening too much and to produce sensible, just and legally valid decisions. To do this requires long years of experience in successful practice as an advocate—normally at least 10 years is appropriate and, for the more senior and taxing appointments, even longer is desirable. Without such a background, the judge will simply not have the experience to do the job properly and he or she will not command the respect and confidence either of the advocates or of the litigants who appear before him or her.

This need for essential experience has a number of important implications for judicial appointments. It means primarily that the composition of the Bench at any one time is to a great extent dependent on the composition of the legal profession in the age groups from which appointments can reasonably be drawn. I cannot help observing that if the ethnic minorities have increased from 3 to 5 per cent. in the 10 years since the previous census, that increase of 2 per cent. must be composed to a considerable extent of people under the age of 10—a little early, I think, for judicial appointment!

That is the principal reason why, at the moment, more women or more members of the ethnic minorities have not already been appointed to the Bench. The Lord Chancellor has stressed time and again, and I am happy to repeat it today, that he is personally anxious to see more women and more members of ethnic minorities appointed to the Bench. But he cannot properly appoint to positions of such responsibility people who do not have the necessary qualities to do the job; and it is a simple fact that, at present, there are not enough women or ethnic minority candidates in the legal profession in the appropriate age groups and with the right experience for him to be able to make many such appointments. Nothing would be worse for the reputation of the judiciary—nor would it be fair either to women advocates or to advocates from the ethnic minorities—than for the Lord Chancellor to lower the standards for appointment to the judiciary simply to ensure a different racial or sexual mix. The Bench in 10 or 20 years' time is likely to look very different in terms of racial and sexual composition from the way it looks today.

I revert therefore to the way in which the Lord Chancellor makes his decisions. His aim is to do so on the basis of the widest and fullest possible consultation with the senior judiciary and leaders of the Bar. The purpose is to obtain the verdict of the professional community on each candidate, in so far as there is one. The main method of consultation is by organised rounds of regular consultations with all Supreme Court judges and Law Lords and by annual meetings with a broad cross-section of the circuit bench, including all the resident and designated judges, and with the leaders of the circuits and the Bar as a whole. Particular efforts are now made to seek out views on solicitor candidates for appointment. That can sometimes be difficult, as they may not be seen so frequently in court, but the Lord Chancellor makes appropriate allowances for that when reaching his decisions. It is perhaps worth stressing what, again, the Lord Chancellor has said on many occasions: he is anxious to encourage more solicitors to put themselves forward for judicial appointment when they have reached the appropriate age and standing.

The breadth of the Lord Chancellor's consultations enables him to apply another important principle in the modern system. As far as possible, he avoids making final decisions about a candidate on the basis of the advice of any one person, however senior. That is a safeguard against both favouritism and personal prejudice.

As a result of those continuing consultations, the Lord Chancellor's Department holds a large and growing body of information and opinions about several thousand lawyers and judges. In so far as the material consists of facts about them, they are treated as entitled to be told what it consists of and, if necessary, to correct it. If the material consists of expressions of opinions—as much of it does—about a candidate's work and his suitability for appointment, it is treated as confidential.

In addition to the regular and extensive process of consultation, the Lord Chancellor regards certain senior judges as having a special voice as his advisers on certain appointments. In particular, the Lord Chief Justice and the other heads of division have that position in relation to appointments to the High Court, and the presiding judges of each circuit have it in relation to the appointment of recorders and circuit judges. However, in the end, the responsibility for all those appointments is the Lord Chancellor's alone, and he alone makes the decisions on whom to recommend for each of them.

The hon. Gentleman has suggested—it is by no means a new suggestion—that some sort of commission should be appointed to replace the Lord Chancellor's role in advising on judicial appointments. But how will a commission be in a better position to appoint women or members of the ethnic minorities to the judiciary? At the end of the day, a judicial appointments commission will be working with

[The Solicitor-General]

the same raw material in terms of candidates for appointment that the Lord Chancellor is now and, unless the hon. Gentleman is seriously arguing that judges should not be appointed on merit but on the basis of some artificial quota, a judicial appointments commission will not be able to make any significant difference to the number of such candidates who can be appointed.

The position is, however, improving, or perhaps one should say developing, as the House would hope, as both women and ethnic minority members become more established and senior in the profession. Over the past 10 years, the proportion of women called to the Bar has risen from 24 per cent. in 1977-78 to 37 per cent. in 1987-88. Among solicitors, the proportion of women admitted has likewise risen over the same period from 26 per cent. to 45 per cent. and it may already this year have reached 50 per cent. There are no comparable statistics for the ethnic minorities, although the numbers are increasing. In the past two years, the Lord Chancellor has recommended the appointment of two black silks in each year. As their seniority progresses, we can look forward to women practitioners and practitioners from the ethnic minorities playing an increasing and valuable role in the ranks of the judiciary.

Ambulance Dispute (Protest)

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of each Session we pass an order to protect people's rights of access to the House. I seek your assurance that that will be guaranteed for those who are outside now. There is currently a protest in Parliament square by ambulance personnel. The protest is on the move, but it has not interrupted the traffic and it is not meeting any public opposition. I want an assurance that they will be allowed to continue, provided that they keep moving, that they will not be moved away and that the police will not over-react. While the House is still sitting it is important that we have a clear ruling that they are within the law and can make a peaceful protest. It must be stated that, provided that they are not stationary and do not block the traffic, they are within their rights to carry on that protest for as long as they reasonably wish to do so.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member is a man of honour so, of course, I accept what he says. I am not there to see the demonstration. I shall have the matter looked into. I am sure that what the hon. Member says is correct.

Planning Applications

2.30 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): At this time of Christmas, it would be churlish of me to introduce a note of discord into the House. However, it is right to ask what is the point of passing laws in the House or in the other place if the House is unable to enforce them. I refer in particular to the planning legislation. It illustrates my point well. We pass more and more laws here and find it increasingly difficult to have them enforced.

Much of our time in the House is spent debating in detail, for many hours, points of law that we believe will be enforced in the highest courts of the land once we have passed them. I am afraid that I must tell the House that that is not the case with our planning legislation.

What could be a more sensitive issue in this small island than the ability to control land use? That has been recognised by successive Acts of Parliament and town and country planning legislation. It is true that there are armouries of controls. We have statistics and population forecasts. We have structure plans and local plans. We have Government planning inspectors, applications guidelines and procedures. We have planning committees throughout the length and breadth of the country. Planners form an enormous profession. There are planning advisers—usually local government planners who have retired. There are degrees in planning laws. There is a huge industry to control and manage planning.

I wish to speak about what happens if one cocks a snook, to coin a phrase, at the planning system. If one decides to go ahead regardless of all the planning regulations, laws and procedures, what will happen? My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) would have been here if he had not had to chair a meeting on urban problems. His interest in planning and environment is well known. When asked what would happen if one defied the planning system in his constituency, he said that very little would happen and there was not even a planning enforcement officer in Acton. He wondered why some developer with a little speculation had not built a skyscraper in his constituency. He doubted very much that anyone would have stopped him because there is no one to enforce the law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) would also have been here but for the pressure of business in his constituency. He echoes the same complaint—that enforcement in his constituency is not effective. I am sure that the Minister recognises that the law is not working. Members of the public do not seek planning permission but go ahead and find little opposition.

In my constituency in south Devon, in the area of South Hams, houses and extensions have been built without planning permission. Barns have been converted and factories and shops built but not in accordance with the detailed plans and regulations. Recreation and leisure facilities have been built, seemingly without anyone knowing that planning permission had not been obtained. Raw sewage has been discharged into our beautiful rivers without planning consent.

I am sure that the nation is under the mistaken illusion that when such things happen the whole planning contraption springs into action and the local authority, poised like a greyhound, chases out those who defy the

law. That is not the case. As my hon. Friend the Minister would expect of me, I have gone into great detail on what happens at the rock face when planning laws are defied.

South Hams council has a department specifically geared to deal with people who defy the law. That does it great credit. It has all the machinery ready to pounce. But does the House realise exactly what takes place? I have a letter from David Incoll, solicitor to the council, who says:

"It is a legal requirement that"

to stop somebody doing something which he should not do and for which he needs planning permission

"an Enforcement Notice is served upon everyone with a legal interest in the property or land."

That means not only the owner of the land, but everyone with an interest, however remote, in that land. The enforcement notice must be served on all those with any legal interest.

The first action of the South Hams district council or any other council which has enforcement officers and a legal department is to serve a requisition for information notice on people with a legal interest in the land. The problem is that the council faces great problems in having that notice for information served. It must be served by recorded delivery and its service can be avoided, as Mr. Incoll says,

"by not accepting or collecting the letter."

Therefore, the initial inquiry can be prevented by the person who is addressed refusing to accept the letter which is only a request for information about who has an interest in the land.

As the Minister will know, many councils, including South Hams, have dramatically cut back staff and expenditure to keep to the Government's guidelines on local government expenditure. South Hams planners have kept as far as possible a powerful department, but many local authorities do not have one. Even before an enforcement notice is delivered or sent, the council must send out staff to find out who has an interest in the land.

After 21 days and no reply to the request for information, council staff go out and find out who has an interest in the land. The enforcement notice must then be served on everyone with an interest in the land, not just the owner. It may take many months to serve the enforcement order and, what is worse, many months for it to be enforced. Even then the presumed owner may deny any interest, thus necessitating further inquiries.

Mr. Incoll gives as an example a current case in which he received instructions in November 1988 but has yet to ascertain the ownership, despite the use of private investigators. The Minister will appreciate that the cost in terms of staff time and money on that particular case is considerable and that there are hundreds of other such cases.

I need not trouble the House now about various legal requirements, but if the enforcement notice is not served on everyone with a legal interest the High Court can negative the enforcement notice and charge the local authority with costs for proceeding with it without serving it on all those who should have been served with it.

I have got only halfway through the procedure and the House will appreciate how complicated it is. I should pursue this because *Hansard* should have on record how complicated these matters are. Moreover, if the Minister is not fully briefed, he can be briefed now.

Once the legal interest has been ascertained the enforcement notice can be served and will come into effect in not less than 28 days. A notice has to set out a period for compliance. However, if an appeal is made to the Department of the Environment, the effect of the notice is suspended.

Let me give an example. If someone starts to build a factory or a bungalow without planning consent, notices must be served on all the people who have an interest in the land to tell them to stop building. If one cannot find out who they are, one cannot serve an enforcement notice. If one finds them and serves notice, that may take many months, and in the meantime the builders go on building. The council can attempt to serve a stop notice on the builders, but if the builder appeals to the High Court the notice is cast aside, and the builder can go on building. That has been happening throughout the country.

As Mr. Incoll says, the risks involved in serving a stop notice is that compensation is payable if the notice is successfully challenged on appeal for any reason other than that planning permission should have been granted.

I hope that I have given sufficient details to show how complicated the procedure is. Very few people understand it—I am sure that the Minister is one of those who do—and, as a result, it does not work.

To enforce the present procedure one needs a vast battery of staff, and one has to rely on the good will and good sense of the British people not to build on our green fields without planning consent, but, if they choose to do so the Minister could and would do little to stop them. Local authorities cannot do what the public want, and the law has become an ass when it tries to enforce stop notices and the planning regulations.

The public criticise the planners every week, local newpapers carry articles chastising the planners for failing to stop schemes, and local politicians are heavily criticised and lose their credibility. Confidence in the planning regime is being destroyed.

Fortunately, Mr. Carnwath QC has come to the rescue like a knight on a white charger and has produced a report in which he said that things are as bad as I say they are, and that the Government must take action. Surprise, surprise, the Government have done nothing. That is odd because one would have thought that they would put something in the Environment Protection Bill that they have just published. Of course we need to do something about dogs mess and litter. That is important, but what about the land? Why are there no enforcement clauses in the new Bill? Unless the Minister puts one in or introduces other legislation by the end of the Session, I warn him that the planning group which consists of some 90 Back-Bench Conservative Members mostly from the south of the country has agreed to put an amendment in the Bill on Report. That will help the Government to do something about a problem that the Minister says needs to be tackled.

It is all very well to clear up litter and dog mess, but it is more important not to have our green and pleasant land covered with unauthorised developments.

The problem has been caused in this place, because we have not passed legislation that is effective and efficient. A clumsy, inefficient and protracted state of affairs exists.

The public have a right to expect something from the Government, and if the Minister will not commit himself today a question mark will be raised over the Government's green policy and programme. There is no point in dealing with trivia if the major problem is not tackled.

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

The Government have robustly stated the importance of local plans. They confirm that the boundaries laid down in them are near sacrosanct. Successive Secretaries of State have said that they must not be breached on appeal by planning inspectors. Only 10 per cent. of the nation has properly consitituted local plans. I am glad to say that South Hams district council, as one would expect, has properly constituted plans. They are current, excellent, well prepared, there has been adequate local consultation on them and they are in place. The problem is that developers are waiting like sharks for one Government inspector to breach the boundary of the development area. South Hams is in great danger. We have more areas of outstanding natural beauty, of great landscape value, protected coastline, heritage coastline, conservation areas and national park than any other area. We could not have more designation designed to protect the environment from development outside the local plan, but we have a problem with twin tracking.

Twin tracking is nothing to do with British Rail having a second line or being privatised. It is a way in which developers may bounce the system by putting in two identical planning applications at the same time. One runs through to the local authority which should have come to a decision within eight weeks. Often, however, the application is too complicated to decide on quickly, so the details have to be discussed with the developer. After eight weeks, the second application jumps straight to the planning inspector. The developers try to bounce the local planning committee and get the Government to decide something which should be a local authority planning matter.

We should also consider the time and cost to which the local authority is put when it has to deal with two planning applications, one for its own planning committee and one for the Minister. The Minister should deal with this matter seriously. He probably knows of a written answer I received on 5 December which said that planning appeals rose from 19,856 in 1986-87 to 22,482 in 1987-88 and to 28,659 in 1988-89, representing increases over the previous year of 11·3, 13·2 and 27·4 per cent. respectively. Planning appeals have increased by 40 per cent. during the past three years. Why? Because of twin tracking. Regardless of cost, big developers will try to speed things up and put pressure on the Government and local authorities to make a decision that they might not want to make.

I shall give my hon. Friend an example of what I mean. It is unfortunate that large developers such as George Wimpey should try to buck the system. Two applications for major developments in South Hams are pending. One is in Wembury, which is an area of great landscape value, outstanding natural beauty and a conservation area. That company has put in an application to build 16 detached bungalows right outside the development area. I hope that my hon. Friend will say that he will robustly encourage inspectors not to breach local plans and the development area. In a letter, the chairman of George Wimpey told me:

"Whilst I appreciate the concerns expressed in your letter it is the opinion of the management within Wimpey Homes and their planning advisers that the site in question will make a sensible rounding off of the present village envelope and that the proposed development would not detract from the high quality environment."

As if that was not enough, George Wimpey put in an application on 20 December to build 193 houses in the South Brent area, which is on the edge of the Dartmoor national park.

My hon. Friend the Minister should say something about the importance of local plans, how they are sacrosanct and how he would, through his planning inspectors, resist any attempt to breach them as George Wimpey would wish him to do.

I have spoken for 20 minutes about two aspects of the planning laws that are in disarray. We need to hear from the Minister today that the Government will be robust. Whenever I see my hon. Friend on the Front Bench, I am encouraged because I know that he is a man after my own heart. He will agree that preserving and keeping the environment is uppermost in our minds. I look forward to hearing what he has to say.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): As always, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) for his contribution to the debate about planning. He has made his contribution with his customary vigour and he was as persuasive as ever.

I must state at the outset that while last year I had more specific responsibilities for planning, my responsibilities this year have more to do with housing and local government finance. However, that does not mean that I have not had the opportunity to discuss these isues with my hon. Friend as frequently as I did——

Mr. Steen: Perhaps the wrong Minister is here today.

Mr. Chope: In one sense perhaps the wrong Minister is present. I am here because the Minister with specific responsibility for these matters, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), has a problem with his teeth. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams will excuse his absence from the Chamber today. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East will read the report of our debate with interest. Needless to say, I have been well briefed to respond to my hon. Friend's concerns.

My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the difficulties experienced by his local planning authority—South Hams district council—particularly in connection with enforcement. The Government recognise that there are difficulties with enforcement and that those difficulties are not unique to south Devon, the area which my hon. Friend has the good fortune to represent.

I want to refer briefly to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams about the problems in the constituency represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). Planning enforcement is a responsibility for local authorities. If they choose not to employ anyone to carry out that planning enforcement, local citizens should look to the local authority because that is where the blame lies. In May 1990 the citizens of Ealing will have an opportunity to express their views through the ballot box.

I emphasise that, much criticised though they are, the present enforcement powers in part V of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, are not so defective in practice as some critics would have us believe. Indeed, one of the unfortunate results of the repeated criticism of the present

powers is that those responsible in planning authorities for using them sometimes too readily assume—and say publicly—that nothing can be done. That becomes a self-defeating attitude because it encourages some of the least law-abiding developers—who are a fairly small minority in any area—to defy the planning laws.

The experience of some planning authorities is that, despite certain shortcomings, the present enforcement provisions can be made to operate to good effect, provided that the planning authority is determined in its approach to dealing with breaches of planning control and is seen —especially by those who may be tempted to carry out unlawful development—to move quickly into action when it is essential to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams referred to a report prepared by Robert Carnwath QC. When my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was Secretary of State for the Environment, he commissioned the Carnwath report because of the Government's concern about certain shortcomings on the enforcement side of planning. As my hon. Friend is aware, Robert Carnwath is a highly respected barrister with a thorough knowledge of planning law. His report was published last April and it has been generally welcomed during the consultation exercise which my Department set in hand immediately following the report's publication.

The Government very warmly welcome the recommendations in that report. Some of the Carnwath recommendations deal with the precise concerns expressed by my hon. Friend. For example, there are recommendations that stop notices should be allowed to have immediate effect in special cases, by which Mr. Carnwath means cases in which serious harm to the local environment is occurring.

Mr. Carnwath also recommends that stop notices should in future be able to prohibit the unlawful stationing of a caravan on land that is being used for residential purposes. Because many planning authorities still fear the potential compensation liability if they serve a stop notice and the accompanying enforcement notice is later quashed on appeal, on "legal grounds", there is a recommendation that the extent of the compensation liability be made more precise, and be strictly limited when the developer fails to provide adequate information about his activities on land on which a breach of planning control is occurring.

Among other helpful recommendations, perhaps the most important to my hon. Friend is Mr. Carnwath's suggestion that the planning authority should be able to obtain an injunction to restrain a threatened as well as an actual breach of planning control. That is really a further extension of authorities' existing powers in section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972, but it is the application of the power to a threatened breach which is vital in the context of some of the problems to which my hon. Friend has referred.

My hon. Friend referred also to problems with serving enforcement notices. He will know that on page 75 of the Carnwath report there is a recommendation to amend the law dealing with that problem. The recommendations have been made, and the Government accept them. The remaining issue is when legislation can be brought before the House. My hon. Friend referred to the Environment Protection Bill. That is not a planning Bill. The Government hoped that it would be possible to bring forward a planning Bill this Session, but it so happened that there was insufficient parliamentary time for that to happen. I hope that we shall be able to bring forward a planning Bill next Session and that my hon. Friend's concerns can be dealt with in that legislation. On amendments to the Environment Protection Bill, my hon. Friend will need to consider that matter in the light of the basis of the Bill. I would not seek to advise him about that. However, I will report his comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

My hon. Friend also mentioned his concern about the difficulties caused by the submission of dual planning applications. I certainly understand that concern. Among other things, the practice is wasteful of local authorities' time and potentially confusing for members of the public who are interested in the proposed development.

Many developers submit duplicate applications for the same proposal so that if the local planning authority fails to reach a decision within the statutory period, they can appeal in respect of one application while continuing to negotiate on the other. It appears that the purpose of that "twin tracking" is to spur the local planning authority to make a decision on the second application before the first has been decided on appeal, in which case the appeal can be withdrawn.

Developers have been encouraged to submit dual applications by the fact that once a case has gone to appeal under section 37 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 because the local planning authority has not determined it within the statutory period, the authority ceases to have any jurisdiction over the application. That problem would largely disappear if all local planning authorities were to meet the Government's target of deciding 80 per cent. of their applications within eight weeks. However, we must obviously address the fact that, unfortunately, many authorities fail to perform as well as that. My hon. Friend's own district council of South Hams is still falling well short of that target.

Mr. Steen: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Government have also been failing? Only 50·8 per cent. of all cases on appeal have been fulfilled within the period set down by the town and country planning inquiries procedure rules? The Government are only 50 per cent. as good as they should be.

Mr. Chope: I would be the first to accept that there have been shortages of resources on both sides. My hon. Friend has referred to the dramatic increase in the volume of planning appeals, partly engendered as a result of the slowness of local authorities and the number of appeals that have come forward through non-determination. We have put substantial additional resources into the appeals system. For example, we have appointed many new inspectors. I hope that that will result in improved performance in the coming months. We are not complacent about that, and I am prepared to accept my hon. Friend's criticism.

In the time available it is not possible to examine in detail all the cases to which my hon. Friend referred. In any event, he will probably recognise the formula that, because my right hon. Friend sits in a quasi-judicial capacity as an appellate authority, it is not possible for him to comment on individual cases.

My hon. Friend said that he would like to say a little about local plans. The Government have encouraged local authorities to develop local plans and I am delighted that my hon. Friend's own authority has been quick to come

[Mr. Chope]

forward with a clear local plan. The effect of that should be that there is a greater awareness locally of the developments that are likely to be acceptable and the developments that are not. I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that there is quite a lot of evidence to suggest that, as a result of having a local plan, South Hams has a lower percentage appeals success rate. That means that fewer people are appealing successfully against my hon. Friend's local authority because it has a local plan. That should be an example to other authorities who complain about the volume of appeals. If they introduce a local plan, fewer appeals should be made against them in future.

Bus Routes (London)

3 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I was intending to start by saying that it falls to me to make the last Back-Bench speech not only of 1989 but of the decade. It will not be the speech of the decade, but I had thought that it would give me a minor place in history at least. Selfless as I am, however, I have given that honour to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). This will be a double act on behalf of Newham, and my hon. Friend will have the last word unless my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) rushes in with a last-minute point of order. If he does, Mr. Speaker, I hope that you will show him no mercy whatever.

The decade has not been a good one for London. I am afraid that during the past 10 years homelessness and poverty in the capital city have doubled so that cardboard boxes and begging have become very much the symbols of Thatcherism in London. With the abolition of the GLC, London became the only capital city in Europe without a citywide local authority and, whatever the Minister and Conservative Members may say, that shows in the largely unco-ordinated planning that we now have in London. Many of our roads resemble ploughed fields and traffic congestion is appalling. Recently the Government announced their proposals for red routes. What we need in London is a bit of red terror to go with those red routes. The extent to which people park on double yellow lines and at bus stops is appalling. It is anarchy, in traffic terms, out on the streets of London, and parking laws are largely unenforced.

This may be the time of good will, and the spirit of Christmas may be all around us, but I have no good will whatever towards selfish parkers in London. Rather than having their cars clamped, I should be in favour of having their cars towed away to the car crusher straight away and sending them the bill afterwards. That is how strongly I feel about selfish parkers.

I want to discuss transport in London. The policies pursued by the Government during the past decade have resulted in London's having probably the most understaffed, unreliable, overcrowded, dirty and inefficient transport system in Europe, and certainly the worst that London has had. London seems to many of us to be going backwards from developed status towards less-developed status.

Earlier this week, the Secretary of State for Transport announced the phasing out of revenue subsidies for British Rail's Network SouthEast. It is ridiculous that whereas the French, German, Belgian and Dutch Governments are all giving more subsidies to their urban transport system, the British Government are taking away revenue support. They talk about capital investment in transport in London and elsewhere, but most of that capital investment comes from internally generated sources within British Rail and co-operative schemes with private enterprise.

If we had a beter transport system than the Belgians, the Dutch or the French, the Government might have a case to argue for their policy. But we do not. We obviously —manifestly—have a far worse transport system in London and elsewhere than any of those countries, and everyone knows it.

Only today, I noticed in the newspapers that London Regional Transport, in response to excess demand, has announced that there will be fare increases each year for the next five years at least above the rate of inflation to "deter passengers because soaring numbers cannot safely be accommodated."

What sort of system is that? If one had a restaurant where people wanted more tables, or if one were selling things from a market stall and there was great demand, one would not try to kill off that demand, but to expand the capacity and produce more goods, and so continue to increase revenue. One would not try to kill off revenue, but that is what LRT will do by imposing increases to deter passengers. That is absurd. What sane commercial undertaking would pursue such a course? The Government are not fit to run a market stall despite the spiv-like tendency of a number of Conservative Members. I exonerate from that accusation, of course, the young and handsome Minister for Public Transport, who will reply from the Dispatch Box.

London, and especially London transport, have become a sick joke. Passengers are treated as if they were an inconvenience getting in the way of running an efficient transport system. The blame for that attitude lies wholly with the Government and their inefficient and purblind transport policies. A classic example of the chaotic nature of London transport may be seen in the system of tendering for bus routes currently being operated by LRT, at the insistence of the Government themselves. Tendering has been taking place since 1985. The system is designed to try to cut the cost of bus operations by inviting various companies to undercut each other in a bid to win contracts.

For the workers, tendering means lower wages, worse conditions and longer hours. The passengers do not benefit from lower fares because the same fares apply on the tendered routes as on the routes operated by London Buses. Passengers will notice that the service is far less efficient in many cases than on the routes operated by London Buses. Many of the companies use older vehicles to save money which leads to more breakdowns and unreliability. Low wages mean staff shortages, the cancellation of buses and longer waits for passengers at bus stops. Safety standards are also much reduced. Private bus companies simply do not demand the same level of safety as does London Buses and they do not carry out the same medical checks on staff. London Buses has a good reputation for ensuring that the most rigorous health checks are carried out on its drivers. Some people who have previously been rejected by LRT or who have been discharged by LRT as being unfit to drive end up as bus drivers on some of the tendered routes. That cannot be good for the safety of passengers in London.

Tendering is not full privatisation, but it is a form of sub-contracting. I find it especially objectionable that London ratepayers and passengers have to pay the bills. All London Regional Transport has done is to say that it will give companies a certain amount of money to operate bus routes. London ratepayers and the London travelling public have to pay the full cost.

The tenders are decided in secret and we do not know how the system operates or what is taken into account. It is said that no one is entitled to know that because of commercial confidentiality. When the Greater London council used to run the London transport system, we would not have been able to get away with that. There were part 2s on our agendas so that matters of commercial consideration would be respected by members, but members would know about them and would be accountable for what they did. There is no accountability now, which is one of the most objectionable aspects of tendering for bus routes that I have discovered so far.

I shall take us on a little trip around some of the routes in London that have been put out to tender, so that we can see what has happened to them. On route 317, from Enfield to Upshire the tender was awarded to Samson Coaches. Unfortunately, because of its policy of low wages and the use of old buses, it simply could not get the staff, and after one year, LRT was forced to take back the route.

Route 250, which runs from Romford to Hornchurch, was awarded to Front Runner. The company had to bus its drivers down from the midlands to drive in London because the low wages and poor conditions that it offered did not attract drivers from London. The knowledge that such drivers had of the routes in London was not as good as that of native Londoners, but that is not a matter of any consideration for LRT and the Department of Transport. That route was taken back from Front Runner and awarded to Ensign Bus Company. Let us hope that it is slightly more successful.

Route 200 runs from Kingston to Streatham and route 196 runs from Crystal Palace to Brixton. They were awarded to a company called Cityrama on a three-year contract basis. Route 200 was taken back after two years by LRT and handed back to London Buses. Route 196 was taken back in October this year and awarded to a company called London and Country Buses.

Route 403, from Coulsdon to Epsom, and route 197 and 197A, from Caterham to Croydon, were also awarded to that company, but, because of staff shortages brought about through poor pay and long hours, the service was appalling. Many complaints were received not only by LRT but by Members of Parliament representing Croydon. In August this year, LRT asked Croydon garage to provide evening and Saturday services for those routes. On 26 October, it was asked to take over the routes completely.

On the same day, London and Country Buses was asked to take over the 196 route. That is madness. Here is a company that is manifestly incapable of running an efficient bus service for the people of south London, particularly the people of Croydon, with whom you have more than a passing acquaintance, Mr Speaker. Having failed to run that service, it was still offered another service by LRT and a service that had been taken away from another inefficient private company. Is this the way to run a bus service in London? The question is rhetorical, because no one who uses London buses would say that it was the right way. Dogma cannot drive buses, but that is what the Government, through LRT, are attempting to do.

I would give a great deal to inspect the finances behind the No. 24 route. This is a prestigious route, which stands alone in comparison with the other tendered-out routes. That route is important, and goes right by the House of Commons. Many distinguished Members of Parliament use it. That route is a fiddle—I am convinced of that. Something has happened between LRT, the company that runs it—Grey-Green—and the Department of Transport. I hope that the Minister will say that he is prepared to let me go over the books so that I can see how the tender was awarded.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

London buses are in a mess. I know that the Minister will say that bus miles are at an all-time record. I do not know how often he uses buses, but those bus miles are being kept up in several ways. The first is by the use of the small feeder buses—hoppers. One cannot make a comparison between those buses and enormous double-decker buses. Secondly, because many double-decker buses run into congestion problems on the streets of London they are being told to run empty with "Special" in the destination window. They go past bus stops with passengers waiting for them. Many passengers say that they wish that they could live in a place called "Special service" because there seem to be so many buses on their way to it. That is nonsense and it goes back to the point that I made earlier. We now have an organisation running London's transport which thinks that passengers get in the way of the operation of an efficient transport system. That is the madness that the decade has brought us to on the buses and in London's transport generally.

London used to have one of the best bus systems in the world, but it is now reduced to an overpriced slow and unreliable patchwork quilt of a service. After a decade of authoritarian second-rate government, the Government cannot even share the boast of a previous dictator, in justification for what he was doing, that the trains have been made to run on time.

I cannot allow my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South to intervene without wishing you and your family, Mr. Speaker, the happiest Christmas and, on behalf of my colleagues on the packed Benches on both sides of the House, I offer our thanks to all the staff of the House of Commons who have worked so hard over the year and over the decade to provide us with the sort of service that we have come to expect. We may have a rotten bus service out there, but we have high standards in here. We make sure of that. I should like to see the standards that we operate here operating on London buses as well. On behalf of all my colleagues, I thank them for all the services that they have given us.

I can now wish you, Mr. Speaker, a happy decade to come. I hope that that decade will see the restoration of a Labour Government; Labour Members translated to the Government Benches. Who knows, I and my hon. Friends may be making a speech from the Dispatch Box at the last knockings of another decade. There would certainly be a better country and a better capital city in which to live because we would restore Londonwide government to London.

I hope also that we shall be able to say that as the 1990s draw to a close we have an efficient, properly run and comfortable transport system in London, which is something that Londoners want and deserve.

3.17 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) in wishing you, Mr. Speaker, and the staff of the House who have served us so well a happy Christmas and new year.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me a few minutes in which to contribute to the debate. We in east London are particularly dependent on public transport. Car ownership is our area is, understandably, rather lower than elsewhere and that has the advantage of not adding to congestion.

My hon. Friend referred to the great London transport system of the 1930s which was brought about by the London Passenger Transport Act 1933—a bipartisan measure. That organisation became the envy of the world. The former boroughs of East Ham and West Ham and the former London county council willingly gave up their tramway services, locally controlled to help local people, in order to provide that very service.

Now we find the reverse tendency. My hon. Friend referred to the red buses. Alas, there are now 11 companies ready to be split up and no doubt privatised if the Government so wish. The ability to do that is contained in legislation. Some of the minibuses to which my hon. Friend referred belong to London Buses Ltd. and some are organised by private contractors, not even subject to London Regional Transport which has a statutory duty to co-ordinate transport. They are clearly designed to undercut the existing comprehensive service, in 11 parts though it be, and it is no doubt the Government's ultimate intention to have a sort of Hong Kong situation, a territory in which they are rather interested at the moment.

In Newham there have been bus route changes without effective consultation with the council, leading to many problems for elderly people, particularly going to the Canning Town shopping centre. The zones, which are very useful for persons with through tickets, have been changed. If people want to go to the Asda supermarket, they now have to cross a zone boundary within the borough. I took up the matter with London Buses. I was told that this was to protect revenue. That sort of nonsense is spreading like wildfire throughout the city.

The Routemaster buses are coming towards the end of their useful life. It is a reflection on this Government's priorities, in terms of production as against services, that London Regional Transport contemplates obtaining engines for the buses—which were made entirely in London at Park Royal—from Poland, Italy and, believe it or not, from India. That is the state to which the Government have brought the country's manufacturing capability. We know what they have done to public services. There was an earlier debate about ambulances. The Government have destroyed the concept of public service.

The Prime Minister was right when she said that the House should call the Administration to account over legislation and taxation. However, her policies are wrong. I believe that the verdict on the Thatcher decade will be that the Government's social and economic policies have been disastrous.

3.20 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I thank the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for what has turned out to be a historic debate. I had not fully appreciated its significance. I feel sorry for anyone who switched on their television set at 3.15, hoping to see the Prime Minister, and ended up watching me. However, anyone who switched on their set because they wanted to see the Leader of the Opposition but saw instead the hon. Members for Newham, North-West, and for Newham, South will have been delighted by the

substitution. Their remarks provide me with an opportunity to extend good wishes for Christmas to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Officers of the House.

The hon. Member for Newham, South is concerned about transport in east London. If he were to be entirely fair, I think that he would be willing to admit that I have given a great deal of personal attention to transport in east London. I am very concerned about it. The Jubilee line extension to docklands and to the east end of London, including the constituencies of the hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Newham, South was approved by the Government. We look forward to that extension becoming a reality. They also know that the east-west cross rail, which will be of particular benefit to Stratford, is being urgently considered by the Government and may be the line for which a Bill is introduced next year.

A number of privately operated minibuses are now used in docklands. They benefit the constituents of both hon. Gentlemen. They could not have been provided without the liberalisation of transport under this Government. The main theme of the debate is about bus services that have gone out to tender, but it would be wrong not to say a word or two about the opening remarks of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West concerning revenue support and investment. As a former chairman of the Greater London council, he is in a very good position to appreciate the greatly increased investment in London Regional Transport and in the railways. It is much higher today than it was when the GLC had control of London Regional Transport. Today's investment in London Regional Transport is about double what it was under the GLC.

We propose to reduce Network SouthEast's subsidy from £100 million today to zero in about 1992. The network agrees that that is an objective which can be achieved. However, the £100 million reduction in subsidy has to be compared with the £5 billion investment programme in the network over the coming year. There is no comparison between a £100 million loss of subsidy and £5 billion of investment. Investment leads to the railway of tomorrow, new rolling stock and the better stations that many people in the south-east are now beginning to enjoy.

That investment will require a partnership between the taxpayer on the one hand and the farepayer on the other, or taxpayers—many of them from outside London—would have to bear the full brunt of British Rail's future investment in the London area.

I want to concentrate on tendering. Tendering of London bus services has led to increased reliability. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was rather anecdotal, so I shall give some figures. Tendering has led to an increase in the number of bus miles run, a decrease in the costs of the services and meant, therefore—

Mr. Spearing: Fares have gone up.

Mr. Portillo: But, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West pointed out, the fares are the same whether on a tendered service or on a normal service. The costs that have been saved have been ploughed back into better service.

I dispute the idea that there has been a compromise on safety. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West said that standards in the private sector were lower than in the public sector. All these services are subject to the public service vehicle operation conditions which are laid down by the Department of Transport. Those are the minimum conditions and all the people who run bus services are required to meet those standards, whether they are in the private or public sector. If the hon. Gentleman knows of instances of bus drivers operating below those nationally set standards or of operators disobeying the law, he would draw that to my attention, because we would certainly want to know all about it.

Accessibility for the disabled and the elderly has been greatly improved under the tendered services. During bus strikes, the tendered services in London have continued to run. That gravely undermines any case that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West might care to make about wages being in some way unsatisfactory in the private sector on tendered services. The evidence shows that industrial relations have been better in that sector and that in those tendered services the public have been able to rely on a service when the rest of the network has been shut down.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was trying to have it both ways. He said that the services tended to run old, unreliable buses. When he came across a service where that was palpably not true—the No. 24, with new buses and where the public enjoy a good service—the only response he could make was that in some way it was a fiddle. That suggestion was not worthy of the hon. Gentleman. As for whether these matters are investigated, all the tendering processes are subject to strict audit. I receive many complaints from private sector companies saying that they believe that the system is tilted in favour of London Buses Ltd. They may have some justification on the face of it in that 103 of the 176 routes put out to tender so far—58 per cent.—have been won by subsidiaries of London Buses Ltd.

The Government strongly believe in the fairness of the system. Our auditors tell us that it works fairly. We are satisfied that even where London Buses Ltd. wins a tender in fair competition, it tends to act more competitively and show more respect and concern for the customer than before. The figures showing much better reliability of bus services apply not only to tenders that have been won by the private sector but to those won by London Buses Ltd. Operating in that more competitive environment, even London Buses Ltd. appears to wish to raise the standard of its services in order to compete.

LRT, which is responsible for judging the tenders, wishes to be sure that the record of the operator that is applying for the tender does not disqualify it from the competition, so it obviously takes account of previous performance. LRT wants to ensure also that the wages offered are set on a realistic basis and are likely to enable the tenderer to operate a reliable service with a reasonably contented staff. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and these services have continued to run when non-tendered services have been out on strike. The tender documents specify that the buses should be seven years old or less, so it is likely that these services will run by newer, better buses than traditionally run on other services.

There have been great benefits to the travelling public. There have been shorter waiting times for buses and the public have been able to rely more on buses turning up. The fact that the buses used by the tendering companies generally conform to the standards laid down by my Department's advisory committee on disabled passengers

[Mr. Portillo]

means that there is a better prospect that the steps and handrails will be designed to help the elderly or disabled passenger.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was right on one point—this is only a halfway stage. It will be right in due course to press on to the privatisation of London's buses and full deregulation in London so that these great services, which are restricted at present, can be enjoyed by all.

Mr. Speaker: Before adjourning the House after the last debate of this decade, I should like to thank the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), the Minister and the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville)—who has been faithfully in his place on the Treasury Bench—and echo the comment of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West about the staff of the House. We are deeply grateful to the staff for the service that they give us throughout the year. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West also mentioned the high standards that we have—I think that he meant standards of service from the staff. I echo his points. We have a reputation for other high standards—high standards of behaviour in the House, which I am sure we shall see in the new decade.

Question put and agreed to.

It being half-past Three o'clock, Mr. Speaker *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to Order [8 December] and the Resolution yesterday till Monday 8 January.*

House of Commons

Monday 8 January 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL

Orders for consideration of Lords amendments read.
To be considered on Thursday.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

AIDS

1. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been made to the social fund since its inception for loans and grants by people with AIDS; and how many of these have been refused.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I am afraid that the information requested is not available. Applications for social fund payments are quite properly not required to give any information about their medical condition, and thus data on the number of applications from people suffering from a particular medical condition is not collected.

Mr. Strang: When will the Government accept that the social fund has been a social disaster for the poor? Is the Minister aware that people with AIDS are among those who are suffering most as a result of the abolition in April 1988 of the weekly additions and special payments?

Mr. Scott: The Government have demonstrated their concern for AIDS sufferers and the terminally ill by announcing the intention to extend entitlement to attendance allowance. Far from being a failure, the social fund has been a success because of the help that it has given at the margins of the social security system to those most in need of help. It is certainly a great deal better than the system that it replaced.

Mr. Key: I acknowledge the work that the Government have done for AIDS sufferers. However, will my right hon. Friend ensure that social security officers in local offices receive training on aspects of AIDS and how it may apply to the social fund? Will he also have a word with our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary about what help prisoners on discharge receive if they leave prison HIV positive?

Mr. Scott: I shall note those points and have a word with my right hon. and learned Friend about the matter. We seek to see that staff in our local offices are trained to deal with the range of sensitive issues with which they are presented, and I shall look at the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) in relation to that.

Mr. Heffer: I recognise that the Government have moved some way in relation to AIDS sufferers, some of whom, of course, were not in any way personally responsible for what has happened to them. However, is it not scandalous that some Conservative Members have said that it was quite right for AIDS sufferers to be treated in the way that they are, when in many cases the sufferers were not personally responsible for contracting the virus? Even if it was the sufferer's fault, it is not right for them to be treated as they are and I ask the Government to have another look at the whole matter.

Mr. Scott: Those matters are generally outwith my responsibility and are rather for health Ministers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the first

tranche of money for the Macfarlane Trust for haemophiliacs suffering from AIDS, and recently an extra £19 million has been provided for that trust.

Sir George Young: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there has been a welcome transformation over the past few years of the public's attitude to AIDS sufferers which has moved from ignorance and prejudice towards sympathy and understanding? The Government should take some credit for that. Will my right hon. Friend ensure, through his Department, that where possible his local offices give help promptly to AIDS sufferers so that they do not have to wait unduly for any assistance that is available to them?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend's first point about the public's attitude and I welcome that, as he has. The removal of the six-month waiting limit for the terminally ill is a significant move towards meeting my hon. Friend's second point.

Pensioners (Charter)

2. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent meetings he has had with pensioners' representatives to discuss the pensioners' charter; and if he will make a statement.

11. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards the pensioners' charter; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): While I am not aware of any current request for such a meeting, our policies will continue to reflect our concern with pensioners' needs—as was clearly shown, for example, by the extra help given last October to some 2·5 million of the disabled or older pensioners who are least well off.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, and a lot of those people have written to hon. Members, particularly Opposition Members, to tell them that they did not get a penny piece out of those so-called improvements. Why does not the Secretary of State do something about the pensioners' charter? There is all this waffle and talk about the social charter. Let us give the pensioners a square deal by abolishing standing charges and introducing concessionary fares for all pensioners. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not repay the £12 a week that has been stolen from every single pensioner in the land by this Tory Government in the past 10 years?

Mr. Newton: Many hon. Members will recognise that what most effectively damages pensioners is a roaring rate of inflation such as we had during the latter part of the 1970s. Opposition Members cannot disguise the extent to which pensioners' average real incomes have risen faster under this Government than under the previous Labour Government, principally because the rate of inflation has been so much lower.

Mr. Winnick: Why does not the Secretary of State understand the bitter resentment felt by so many pensioners at the way in which they are treated? Is it not the case that if pensions had been increased in line with earnings—an arrangement which was discontinued in 1980—married pensioners would be almost £21 a week better off and single pensioners £13 a week better off next April? Why should Britain's pensioners be among the poorest in the Common Market?

Mr. Newton: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's proposition for reasons that relate to the absurd experience of what happened when the previous Labour Government pursued those policies. At the same time, and partly as a result of those policies, they generated a rate of inflation which seriously damaged pensioners and which meant that their incomes rose less fast in real terms than they have under the present Government.

Mr. David Nicholson: I am glad that my right hon. Friend mentioned that point. Many retired people in my constituency and in the constituencies of my hon. Friends face difficulty, because they thought that they had made provision for their retirement through savings or modest occupational pension schemes. They found that inflation in the 1970s, under a Labour Government who could not even keep the promises that they made to pensioners, destroyed those savings. I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue his efforts to ensure that pensioners, particularly those in need, continue to receive better benefits.

Mr Newton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. His point is encapsulated in the fact, which is becoming increasingly well known, that whereas pensioners' income from savings has risen by 64 per cent. under the present Government, it fell by 16 per cent. under the previous Labour Government. Not all pensioners have the advantage of having savings. It is precisely for that reason that last October we directed so much additional help to the older and more disabled pensioners who are least well off.

Mr. Squire: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that when the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) reach retirement age, they will be entitled, like the majority of people who have employment pensions provided for them, to a generous pension? Does he agree that by concentrating some £200 million last October on the poorer pensioners, the Government are tackling the problem the right way rather than trying to give everyone, including the fairly well off, a much smaller amount?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. I am grateful for the way in which he put his point.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Secretary of State mentioned his genuine concern for pensioners. Does he accept that many elderly and handicapped people still face the choice between heating and eating? Would not one way forward be for the Government to provide an allowance for the heating needs of the elderly during the winter months rather than rely on the strange system that we have now, which does not have a good level of uptake?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the hon. Lady has forgotten that when the changes were made to the old supplementary benefit system and when the current income support system was introduced, the value of heating additions was much reflected in the premiums paid to precisely those groups of pensioners about which she is rightly concerned. In other words, they are reflected in the regular weekly payment of benefit in the form of premiums for pensioners and disabled people.

Mr. Meacher: Why is it that the 2 million poorest pensioners who depend solely on state benefits have had a zero real increase in their pensions under this Government in the Thatcher decade, while the parliamentary pay of Cabinet Ministers has been increased in real terms by no less than 79 per cent? Why is it that Cabinet Ministers have looked after themselves so handsomely, while reneging on their commitment to enable the poorest of pensioners to keep pace with rising living standards?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept for a moment the way in which the hon. Gentleman advanced his argument. He knows well that we have adhered faithfully to our commitment to increase the basic retirement pension in line with prices year in, year out, and we shall do it again next April. As I have said at least twice in this exchange, we acted last October to give significant extra help to about 2·5 million of the older and more disabled pensioners who are least well off. That reflects our concern and determination to continue doing whatever we can to help.

Unmarried Mothers

3. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the level of social security payments made to unmarried mothers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): At May 1988, the annual cost of income support for families headed by an unmarried lone mother was estimated to be about £700 million. Information by marital status on other benefits paid to those families is not available.

Mr. Favell: Has my hon. Friend anything to say about recent newspaper reports that payments to single mothers are now in excess of £1,000 million? The traditional family has no resentment when it comes to maintaining mothers who have been deserted by their husbands or treated badly by them, but what of those who leave their husbands for no good reason? What about those who have never been married, who have children? Is it not true that a young woman having a baby need not work until the child is 16 years of age, is entitled to free council housing accommodation, and costs other people about £70,000 to bring up her child until the age of 16?

Mrs. Shephard: The Government are concerned about the increasing numbers of lone-parent families, including unmarried mothers, and their reliance on benefit. We are constantly examining the benefit arrangements for them and those for other groups. It is important that the benefit system should not create incentives for lone parenthood or for dependence on benefits, but it should provide support for those who are in need. Of course, fathers should pay maintenance for their children, whether or not they are married to their mothers. The Department takes action to try to secure maintenance and it is considering actively how to make its procedures more effective. I remind my hon. Friend that decisions on maintenance payments are made by the courts.

Mr. Frank Field: Why do the Government continue to stir up apathy on this issue? Are the Government aware that the proportion of young single mothers drawing benefit who gain help from the fathers has halved during the past 10 years? When will the Government bring forward new plans for the House to discuss, so that mothers can make over maintenance orders to the state, with the state taking responsibility for collecting the money and paying it regularly, weekly or monthly, if the mothers want that? When are we to hear about plans on those lines? They would reinforce parental responsibilities and increase the freedom of single mothers.

Mrs. Shephard: As always, the hon. Gentleman makes an interesting contribution to the debate. He is, at least partly, describing what is happening in Australia. The findings from a recent visit to Australia are being closely studied by my Department. I repeat that the Department is continuing actively to review how to make its own recovery of maintenance payments from fathers more effective. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Department has commissioned some independent research, involving lone parents who are served by 44 local offices, to examine the motivations and perceptions of lone parents. When the research is completed, the results will be fully examined.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend consider taking as many increased powers as may be necessary to pursue fathers through the courts and, if necessary, genetic testing to prove paternity where there is doubt?

Mrs. Shephard: The measures that my hon. Friend describes are more suitable for consideration by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Ms. Short: Will the Minister give an assurance that the Government will not adopt a punitive attitude to lone parents? After all, a significant number of the members of the Cabinet have created lone parents themselves—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] That is true. We heard the comments of the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), and Conservative Members should not have double standards. Is the Minister aware that the number of parents dependent on benefit has grown under the present Government because their benefits policies and cuts have created many poverty traps? Many lone parents cannot take a job because that would reduce their income. Is not the answer to restore child benefit to a proper level, to implement a national minimum wage and to allow lone parents to offset child care costs when they want to work? The Government are trapping lone parents into dependency on benefit, which is not what those parents want—and it should not be allowed.

Mrs. Shephard: Nothing that I have said in reply to questions so far has suggested that the Department wants to take a punitive attitude towards lone parents. It simply does not want to create perverse incentives. I remind the hon. Lady that incentives for lone parents to work already exist within the benefits system. There is an earnings disregard within income support, the same adult credit is given for single lone parents as for couples in family credit, and an increase in the housing benefit earnings disregard from £15 to £25 was recently announced.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend take it from me that many of my married constituents who pay to bring up their own children resent additional taxation to pay for bringing up other people's children? Can she state the amount of subsidy to local authorities through the rate support system because of the number of unmarried mothers in their areas? That situation is highlighted in my

constituency, where Middlesbrough council receives millions of pounds more than Langbaurgh council, solely because of the number of one-parent families that Middlesbrough must support.

Mrs. Shephard: I have already mentioned the Government's concern at the increasing number of all lone-parent families. Matters relating to the rate support grant are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Social Fund

4. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the cash limit for social fund loans and grants from Department of Social Security offices at Finsbury park and Highgate for 1989-90 and the amount expended by 18 December in the current year.

Mr. Scott: Information on social fund allocations to local offices is placed in the Library. Finsbury park and Highgate are included. That information is updated monthly.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister has not given much information that would be of help to anyone. Why is it that in the case of Finsbury park social security office, of the 139 applications for community care made grants during December, 31 were allowed but 61—nearly half—were disallowed, and the remainder carried forward to the next month? That has been happening month after month in the two offices named in my question. Will the Minister put a stop to the practice of carrying forward applications from one month to another so that applicants have to wait longer and longer for desperately needed community care grants? No increase in the cash limit is made available the following year, so in reality the amount of money available for grants to people in my area, as in many other areas of inner London, decreases year on year. People desperately in need of community care grants cannot obtain them, and they suffer as a consequence.

Mr. Scott: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will avail himself of the information that has been placed in the Library to help all right hon. and hon. Members assess the situation at their local social security offices. Some applications in any local office will inevitably slip from one month to the next if they are made late in the month. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not mention in his supplementary question that an extra £3 million was allocated recently to some local offices under particular pressure. Highgate office was one of the beneficiaries.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Can my right hon. Friend tell me whether anyone has applied for a social fund loan at the Finsbury park office, who has contracted AIDS as a result of an operation or a blood transfusion, but who is not a haemophiliac? If so, will he put those people into the same category as haemophiliacs, and ensure that they receive the welcome assistance that is now being given to haemophiliacs?

Mr. Scott: I suspect that my hon. Friend will not expect me to know whether there are such applications at the Finsbury office, but I shall consider the matter that she raised.

Mr. Frank Field: Would not the position in Finsbury park, Highgate and other offices be massively improved if the Government allowed local offices, as they collect back loans, to keep them to add to the social fund?

Mr. Scott: Of course, the rate of recovery of money from loans affects the national kitty, and resources available nationally. The allocation to local offices is best met by an assessment by us, at the centre, the likely burden, and of the level of need in the local area. I should be reluctant to link the rate of recovery specifically to the resources available in local offices, as that might not reflect the level of need as well as the present system of allocation does.

Child Benefit

6. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters he has received supporting the decision not to uprate child benefit in the coming year.

Mr. Newton: Twenty six.

Mr. Knox: The decision not to uprate child benefit does not appear to be terribly popular. Does my right hon. Friend agree that because of the low take-up of means-tested benefits compared to child benefit, the freezing of child benefit for a three-year period hits poorer families particularly hard?

Mr. Newton: No, I do not agree with that. It is well known that, because of the way in which the system works, an increase in child benefit does nothing for the least well-off families and for those on income-related benefits. What we have been able to do with some of the resources made available is to improve the benefit for the least well off, and for families that includes a quarter of the nation's children. We must recognise that no conceivable increase in child benefit could do as much for low-income families who are in work as family credit now does.

Mr. Orme: Does the Secretary of State agree that he was one of the supporters of child benefit? What has changed? How can he come to the Dispatch Box now and defend the freezing of child benefit?

Mr. Newton: The question whether one is a supporter of child benefit is different from the question whether to increase child benefit as opposed to the other steps that could be taken with the money available. What I was able to do, as I set out in the uprating statement, was to give far more help to the least well-off families than an increase in child benefit would have done, and it did far more for disabled people and families with disabled children.

Mr. Rathbone: I applaud my right hon. Friend's intention to help the least well off. Will he assure the House that more than 50 per cent. of those who are due to receive benefits under the new system are getting them?

Mr. Newton: I assure my hon. Friend that the take-up campaign that we waged last spring was extremely effective in raising the number of people receiving family credit, and I welcome that. The number increased by some 40,000 to about 320,000, and we are currently running a further advertising campaign, which I hope will contribute to making the benefit as effective as we would like it to be.

Mrs. Mahon: Does the Secretary of State accept that child benefit is a universal benefit, with almost 100 per

cent. take-up, and that it is paid to the mother? It is often the only income that she has to herself, of right. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not say, even at this late stage, that he was wrong to cave in to the Prime Minister's Victorian attitude, and that he will uprate child benefit?

Mr. Newton: Family credit is also normally paid to the mother. The average payment of family credit is now £25 or £26 a week, and over a third of the payments are more than £30 a week. There is no doubt that family credit does more for low-income families in work than child benefit could.

Centenarians

7. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of sending greetings telegrams to centenarians in 1988, 11 and 16 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am pleased to say that in 1988 the Department sent a total of 2,142 telemessages to centenarians at an estimated cost of about £11 each. The cost includes the message itself and local and national staffing costs. The cost of sending telegrams in 1972 and 1977 is not readily available; however, 1,283 were sent in 1972 and 1,510 in 1977.

Mr. Greenway: As centenarians already receive a telegram from the Queen, will my hon. Friend gladden that special day in the lives of those who achieve their century by offering them a choice between the departmental telegram, a certificate of age, a bottle of champagne, whisky, brandy or parsnip wine and a tin of House of Commons fudge?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend lent a happy note to this first Question Time of the New Year. Today is the birthday of seven centenarians, and given his obvious good spirits my hon. Friend will no doubt wish to join me in congratulating them. As for his specific suggestions, may I make a positive suggestion to him? If I give him the names and addresses of those seven centenarians, he may wish to conduct a straw poll to establish whether they would prefer a certificate of age, a bottle of whisky or brandy or—in particular—some House of Commons fudge!

Mr. Haynes: Mr. Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "Declare your interest."] Yes, I declare my interest. I am retiring at the next general election, but that is another matter.

I ask the Minister to ignore the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway): all that he is on about is grabbing money. The people who receive the telegrams are entitled to them. The hon. Gentleman should be pointing out that the welfare state, is responsible for the fact that people are living longer. That lot over there are trying to destroy the welfare state, but when we are sitting where they are we shall put that right, and defend it.

Mrs. Shephard: Let me merely say to the hon. Gentleman, who has made his customary interesting intervention, that the increase in the number of congratulatory telemessages speaks for itself, demonstrating the Thatcher achievements in welfare.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend will know that the oldest person in Britain lives in my constituency. She is 112¼, and has received more telegrams than anyone else; she enjoys and looks forward to receiving them. May I suggest that my hon. Friend does as I do, and takes her a bottle of whisky every time she has a birthday?

Mrs. Shephard: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) will take the advice of his hon. Friend.

Mr. Wilson: As there is a precedent for the Department of Social Security to send people telegrams on special days in their lives, will the Minister consider extending the principle to those who reach their 16th birthdays without jobs, YTS places or entitlement to social security benefit? Will she consider the report published today by the Family Policies Study Centre, which has found independently that many of those youngsters face destitution because of the Government's evil decision to withdraw benefit entitlement? Will the Government please repent of that decision, which is causing poverty and hardship for so many 16 and 17-year-olds on the streets of our cities?

Mrs. Shephard: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity in asking such a supplementary to a question about centenarians. I remind him that there is no need for any 16 or 17-year-old to be without income: each and every one is entitled to a YTS place and the accompanying payment.

Couples (Benefits)

8. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the financial effect on couples who live apart for employment or educational reasons, of their treatment under the income support, family credit or housing benefit regulations as if they were living together.

Mr. Newton: The financial effect on individual couples will vary according to individual circumstances. As a general rule, as long as both partners normally live in the household, temporary absences are ignored for the purposes of entitlement to income-related benefits.

Mr. Stern: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in a small minority of cases the rule that he has just outlined may lead to one family having two sets of living expenses that often have to be paid for out of one set of benefits? A reduction in a particular benefit can bring that family way below the poverty line, purely because one member of the family has decided to seek training or education as a means of bettering himself or herself.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that my hon. Friend is absolutely right about training and education. There are special housing benefit arrangements for couples who have to live apart because one of the partners is a student or is on a training course. In those circumstances, housing benefit can be paid for an unlimited period for both homes.

Mr. Pike: Does not the Secretary of State accept that there are some anomalies? If one of the partners has to undergo education or training in order to try to return to employment, on many occasions the couple loses money. Will he undertake to examine the anomalies and ensure that that deterrent to either party returning to education or training is ended and that they do not lose money?

Mr. Newton: I have already referred to one aspect of the way in which the system seeks to take account of that kind

of problem. The hon. Gentleman has made his point fairly and reasonably. I accept that this is a difficult area. These cases are relatively rare and the circumstances can be quite complicated. If there is a particular case that the hon. Gentleman would like to draw to my attention, I shall certainly have a look at it.

Social Fund

10. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current backlog of social fund loans and grant applications in Department of Social Security offices in London.

Mr. Scott: The latest information available is for November. In London as a whole, 8,500 applications were brought forward as uncleared from October. These were made up of 2,400 community care grant applications and 6,100 budgeting loan applications. There were no outstanding crisis loan applications.

Mr. Banks: The Minister surely knows that the Government are saving a vast amount of money under the new system, as opposed to the old single payments system. It is totally unacceptable that such a backlog should be allowed to develop. Will he please look again at the possibility of introducing more flexibility into the system as a whole? It is ludicrous that certain offices underspend their social fund budget, although applications are outstanding. As that money cannot be carried over to the next financial year, it is lost. There should be some means of transferring money between offices so as to match overspend and underspend. I ask the Minister to look again at the system to see what flexibility can be introduced.

Mr. Scott: We do, of course, monitor very carefully the social fund. It is worth pointing out that the figure that I gave to the hon. Gentleman means that, on average, 35 community care grant applications and 97 loan applications in London's local offices were carried forward. If one bears in mind that in the case of some of those loan applications the client or the applicant had already been offered a loan but had not yet accepted it, that is not too bad a record in all the circumstances. However, as I have already said, we monitor the social fund very carefully.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister look carefully at the report that has been sent to him by the leader of Southwark council—a report which received all-party support in Southwark—requesting a meeting but highlighting cases where loans had been requested but grants had been refused? Is not the system far too inflexible? Many people are turned away when they are totally impecunious. They are told that they cannot have money for a cooker, or furnishings and the rest, so they keep on coming back, hoping, believing and expecting that there must be something in the system that will provide them with the money with which to survive. At the moment, much of the delay is caused because people have to return for money since they have none, on account of the system not allowing them to have grants when they need them.

Mr. Scott: The vast majority of refusals under the social fund are because the applicants do not meet the basic eligibility criteria. Under 10 per cent. of the refusals relate to insufficient priority being accorded to the application; less than 2 per cent. of refusals are because it is judged that the individual cannot pay. In those circumstances, money, advice or other guidance is given to the individual concerned. I shall of course look carefully at what Southwark is sending me, but it is worth saying that in 218,000 cases where loans have been refused, community care grants have been given instead. However, those loan refusal cases are still included in the statistics.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware of the independent report by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux which says that 49 per cent. of pensioners' applications to the social fund were refused and that the applications of up to 80 per cent. of young persons and unemployed people were refused? Is he further aware that among those refused was a young woman who was due to have a baby in two days' time? She was refused a grant for a bed on the excuse that she could sleep on the floor, a disabled couple were refused a grant for a cooker on the ground that they could eat out, and a crisis loan was refused to a young man on the ground that he could eat out in soup kitchens? Is this a success?

Mr. Scott: I shall study with interest what NACAB has produced. The report was a small snapshot of a limited number of people who have been in touch with citizens advice bureaux. Moreover, the survey was taken in the first year of the social fund's operation, which I do not believe is typical of its operation since then. Our figures suggest that, far from 55 per cent. of applications being refused, 39 per cent. are refused. That compares favourably with the level of refusals which were 42 per cent. in the last year of the single payments scheme.

Social Security Offices (Sussex)

12. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about staffing levels in local social security offices in Sussex.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Staffing levels in local social security offices in the Department are calculated using an agreed complementing system which aims to match staffing to work load. Under the system, staffing resources are allocated to regional offices where local circumstances are taken into account before these resources are distributed individually to local officers.

Mr. Rathbone: I appreciate the existence of that formula, but is my hon. Friend aware that, too often, too little attention is paid to the difficulties confronted by staff in local offices who have to introduce new benefits, use new methods, co-ordinate with local government and overcome difficulties with upgrading their offices? Can she build into the equation a greater appreciation of that, and the need to delegate to managers so that they can manage more effectively?

Mrs. Shephard: There have been difficulties at the Lewes local office during the year. Additional help in the form of casual staff, overtime, regional reserves and staff on detached duty has been made available to offset the shortfall. A new complementing system is to be introduced in April 1990. It will take account of the point raised by my hon. Friend, by being more sensitive to local office needs and taking account of local circumstances. I remind my

hon. Friend that an additional £25 million was made available during the year to help local offices with their increased workload.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Company Fraud

25. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General when he next expects to meet the director of the Serious Fraud Office to discuss company fraud; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I shall meet the director of the Serious Fraud Office shortly to discuss matters of departmental interest.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Attorney-General discuss with the director the Ferranti case and the fact that the directors allowed a £250 million sting to take place right under their noses? Does the Attorney-General expect us to believe that that happened without any fraud being involved?

Will the Attorney-General also discuss with the director the £4,000 that went through the checkout that resulted in a young mother and her baby finishing up in prison for six months? If the Attorney-General wants some equality in Britain, why does he not take Judge Pickles off cases involving young black women and their babies and stick him on City cases and let him loose there?

The Attorney-General: With his well-known concern not to anticipate any inquiry by jumping to a conclusion, the hon. Gentleman would not want me to anticipate the result of an investigation that has been put in train by the director of the Serious Fraud Office and the Director of Public Prosecutions into matters which, among other things, are connected with Ferranti, to which the hon. Gentleman's question relates.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is my right hon. and learned Friend at all concerned about the rather extraordinary delay in the inquiries being made by the Serious Fraud Office into matters raised by the House of Fraser report?

Is he worried about the Department of Trade and Industry's decision not to refer that unpublished report to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which means that even if serious fraud is identified and proved, there is nothing that he or anyone else can do about that company's assets?

The Attorney-General: The previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told the other place that he was very anxious to publish the report. I am certain that exactly the same is true of his successor. Equally, however, my hon. Friend will know of the affidavit evidence sworn by the two directors of the Serious Fraud Office and the Director of Public Prosecution to the effect that they believed that the interests of justice required that publication of the report should be held up pending investigations which are in train. The investigations have not been limited to this country but have had to take place overseas. It is my earnest hope that they will be completed shortly and a decision taken as to their publication.

Mr. Fraser: Is the Attorney-General aware that if a small-time punter provides false information to obtain a loan or a job, a charge of obtaining a pecuniary advantage by deception will often result? What is the difference in principle between that and giving false information to the European Commission to get a merger clearance for BL, except that the pecuniary advantage is much greater and will he be asking the director of the Serious Fraud Office to look into that?

The Attorney-General: I am afraid that most uncharacteristically the hon. Gentleman is jumping to conclusions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has said that he and his Department will be happy to answer any questions from the Commission about the sale of the Government shareholding in the Rover group. Discussions at an official level are continuing.

Legal Aid

27. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General what estimate he has made of legal aid payments in the current financial year; and how much was paid *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years ago.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The provision for all legal aid expenditure in the current Supply Estimates is £557 million. Five years ago expenditure was £273 million and 10 years ago it was £99 million.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend and his Department on that substantial increase. Can he confirm that many more poor people are covered in legal cases by that increased expenditure, and can he explain why solicitors' and lawyers' charges are so high? Why did the cost of the Aldington case come to £1 million?

The Solicitor-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his recognition, which deserved to be more widely understood, of the large increases in the money made available for legal aid in the past 10 years. Referring to the costs in legal aid cases, the fees paid to solicitors and lawyers vary on a scale appropriate to the weight and experience necessary for the lawyer or lawyers dealing with the case in question. The Aldington case, which was an unusual case, was a libel case and legal aid is not available for libel. However, the number of people receiving help from legal aid in the past 10 years, judged by the number of legal aid applications granted, has risen from fewer than 200,000 in 1979-80 to some 259,000 this year.

Mr. McFall: Notwithstanding the figures that the Solicitor-General has just given, compared with 10 years ago legal aid is now available to 14 million fewer people. Poor people have been discriminated against. The less money they have the less chance they have of obtaining justice. That is the situation we are facing in 1990.

The Solicitor-General: No. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's assumptions are correct, although I know where they come from. He will also have recognised and no doubt welcomed the announcement by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor providing extra availability of legal aid, particularly in personal injury cases and cases involving children and pensioners which are likely to increase the numbers by up to 10 million people.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is also considerable disquiet about the

working of the scheme among the legal profession—in which of course I declare an interest—particularly about the rate of remuneration for legal aid? The delays in payment and the circumstances in which it is granted are resulting in a reduction in the number of solicitors who are willing to carry out legal aid work. Will he consider what effect that is likely to have on the Government's commitment to improved access to the legal system for poorer people in society?

The Solicitor-General: Over the past year and a half, I have been made well aware of the concerns about the matters that my hon. and learned Friend raised. He will recognise that considerable advances have been made in improving rates of remuneration. The Legal Aid Board is urgently tackling the question of promptness of payment and the other administrative matters which are important if legal aid is to be given effectively.

Security Services

28. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he was consulted over the publication of the book relating to the security services written by Mr. John Day.

The Attorney-General: I understand that Mr. Day, in accordance with his duty, sought and obtained authority to publish his book.

Mr. Winnick: Will not Mr. John Day, who is a former senior official of MI5, recommend in his book independent oversight of the security services along lines that have been repeatedly rejected by the Government? Is the Attorney-General aware that we should at least be pleased that, unlike the Wright farce, there will be no objection to Mr. Day publishing his book, and that hence there will be a considerable saving to public funds?

The Attorney-General: I have not read Mr. Day's book, but any question on the oversight of the security services should be put to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I take issue with the hon. Gentleman's description of the proceedings brought by the Government on the publication of Mr. Wright's book, "Spycatcher". I recommend that he reads a note written by Professor Birks of Oxford university in the current edition of the *Law Quarterly Review*, in which he describes the "battle", as he put it, to suppress the book as one in which the Government were victorious on all points of principle.

Serious Fraud Office

29. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General when he next meets the director of the Serious Fraud Office, what matters he will discuss.

The Attorney-General: Matters of departmental interest, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: I thank the Attorney-General for his most courteous letter in answer to my request that Law Officers might help hon. Members serving on the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill. Will he reflect on the position of Coopers and Lybrand and discuss with the Serious Fraud Office whether some of those who have been commissioned to write a report for the Government should become involved in a potential management buy-out of the Crown Suppliers? Is that not terribly near to insider trading, and should not the Attorney-General's Office consider the ethics involved?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful for the kind words with which the hon. Gentleman began his supplementary question. Matters concerning insider dealing are, in the first instance, for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, whose Department is the prosecuting Department for the offence known as insider dealing. I shall consider the matter that the hon. Gentleman raised and draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cambodia

30. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on multilateral and bilateral aid to Cambodia.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): Following the very useful visit of two British officials to Cambodia in December, I have decided to provide a further £1 million to multilateral agencies for their programmes inside Cambodia in 1990-91. There has been a further meeting with non-governmental organisations' representatives in London to discuss new project proposals, and I have let the Voluntary Service Overseas know that we should be happy to support the opening of a volunteer programme in Cambodia.

Mr. Strang: Can the Minister be sure that that aid will not go indirectly to the Khmer Rouge? There is growing concern among hon. Members about the escalating war in Cambodia. Do not recent statements by the non-Communist factions of the coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea make it clear that they are now fighting in collaboration with the Khmer Rouge? Is it not, therefore, high time that the Government ceased all direct aid to the non-Communist resistance if they are to comply with their declared policy of giving no aid directly or indirectly to the Khmer Rouge?

Mrs. Chalker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we have been given repeated assurances by the United Nations Border Relief Organisation that British aid is not being used by the Khmer Rouge. In the light of recent events, I again sought and received confirmation of the position from UNBRO. I join the hon. Gentleman in his concern about the war and the reported happenings over the past few days. We want to see a political solution and free elections, and we are working for that with the interested parties, especially the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. There is such confusion at times about what the three aspects of the resistance movement are saying that I do not feel that I can respond to the hon. Gentleman's last question, but he can be in no doubt that we will not give, have not given and have no intention of giving any support to the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Lester: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her prompt response to the report by the two diplomats who visited Phnom Penh and on the provision of the extra £1 million. I beg her to use her considerable influence with her colleagues in the Foreign Office to continue to search for

a solution to the war. There is no point in an enlarged programme for Cambodia unless the war ends. We read in today's newspapers of the bombardment of Battambang, the second largest city in Cambodia. There is a desperate need for a new road from Phnom Penh to Battambang, but there is no point in constructing it until the war ends. Will my right hon. Friend use her influence with the Security Council to achieve that end?

Mrs. Chalker: I thoroughly agree with my right hon. Friend that unless a lasting political solution is found, there is no way in which the aid, which we will willingly give, can be properly used for the benefit of the people. We will continue the efforts that we have been making in recent months.

Mrs. Clwyd: I welcome the Minister's announcement of additional aid to Cambodia. Does she recognise the widespread concern of the British people on the issue of Cambodia and Government policy? Is she aware that a petition was handed in today at the Foreign Office by Oxfam supporters and an all-party delegation which voiced their worry and asked the Government to reconsider their policy? We all agree that a political solution should be found. Can the right hon. Lady give us a categorical assurance that United Nations Border Relief Organisation food aid, to which we all contribute, is properly monitored? She has received reports from Oxfam supporters who have seen what is happening in the Khmer Rouge camps on the Thai border. Some of that food is parcelled up by people in those camps and goes directly to the military, including the Khmer Rouge, who are fighting inside Cambodia against the Cambodian Government.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand the hon. Lady's anxiety about the potential issue which was reported to me by Frank Judd of Oxfam at a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and me on 14 November. We have repeatedly gone to UNBRO for these assurances. I shall not be entirely satisfied as long as hon. Members and the British people remain concerned about this matter. I shall continue asking for assurances and do all I can to ensure that the food intended for families and ordinary people in Cambodia is not sent to the Khmer Rouge. But I am here in London—not in the camps or in Cambodia—and I cannot say hand on heart that none of the food has gone through.

I was aware of the petition that the hon. Lady, my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) delivered this morning to the Foreign Office. One can have endless petitions, but a political solution is needed. With the help of United Nations Security Council members, I hope that we can bring that about as soon as possible.

Commodity Prices

31. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy in respect of commodity prices is adopted by United Kingdom representatives to the Lomé convention.

Mrs. Chalker: The Lomé convention has no direct role in commodity pricing, but helps commodity dependent African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries through aid for improved production and diversification. ACP states can also get help under the Stabex scheme, if they face shortfalls in export earnings from certain agricultural products, and under the Sysmin scheme if they face shortfalls in production or earnings from a list of minerals.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister accept that the attitude of the EEC and of North American countries towards commodity prices has been a major contributory factor in the debt crisis in much of the world? Does she agree that the latest round of Lomé convention prices on exports from ACP countries has resulted in virtually the lowest real terms prices ever achieved by those countries? They are worried about the way in which they have been treated by the EEC. Is the right hon. Lady aware that exports from ACP countries to the European Community are at their lowest level for 25 years? Those countries and many of us are worried about the growing crisis faced by the poorer countries because the richer industrial countries are closing their markets to them and forcing them into debt and low commodity prices.

Mrs. Chalker: The answer to the hon. Gentlemen's first question is no. The answer to his second is that the Lomé convention contains no provision on commodity prices or participation in international commodity agreements. The three main areas of co-operation in commodities matters in the convention are the national indicative programmes, Stabex and Sysmin and the consultations. It is through the national indicative programmes that we seek to help countries that are heavily commodity dependent. Resources for diversification, including aid for processing, marketing, distribution and transport, are considered when individual country programmes are drawn up, and that will be happening this year.

The best way in which to help commodity-dependent countries is to enable markets to work efficiently and openly and to strengthen and restructure the countries' economies. That we are doing, not only through the EEC but directly.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: How on earth can it help to have economies working more openly when the EEC is spending £220 million every week simply destroying food and dumping it at crazy low prices, with the sole consequence of spreading death, starvation and destruction throughout the Third world? Given her responsibility for overseas development, will the Minister make it abundantly clear that she will do everything in her power to fight against this dreadful policy of dumping food on the Third world at crazy low prices and spending lots of our taxpayers' money on dumping high-tar tobacco in places such as Africa, which in my view, is an affront to the civilised world.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend knows that I have always been against subsidising the overproduction and dumping of food. I hope that he realises that Lomé agreement EDF VII, which represents a 46 per cent. increase on EDF VI, gives the largest ever United Kingdom commitment to the Lomé countries. We are doing our best—through the EC programme and bilaterally, through the economic reform programmes—to help the countries, especially those that have been commodity dependent. Nevertheless, I agree with my hon. Friend that dumping excess provision created in Europe is no way to solve the problem.

Mr. Foulkes: But, specifically, does the Minister accept the importance of bananas to the economies of the West Indian islands, and the threat posed by the ending of the banana protocol in 1992? Does she recall the pledge of the Prime Minister in Jamaica in July 1987 to fight to protect their position? Will she say how far the Government have been able to fulfil that pledge?

Mrs. Chalker: That has nothing to do with commodity prices. The hon. Gentleman will know, however, that it was the British Government who fought hard for the banana producers during the recent negotiations on Lomé. The response that I have had from the banana producers has been one of gratitude for what Britain was able to achieve under the EDF discussions and the Lomé convention.

Ambulance Dispute

3.32 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you make it clear to me, to the House and to anyone else who may read about or watch events here that you have had no request from the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement this afternoon, at the start of the new year's parliamentary business and in the 18th week of the ambulance dispute? It is now quite clear—and not only in my area—from statements by leading doctors and medical personnel that people are dying because of the Government's pig-headedness in refusing to settle the dispute.

Mr. Speaker: I can confirm that I have no notification that there is to be a statement about that today.

BILLS PRESENTED

Raoul Wallenberg (Memorial)

Mr. David Amess, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Michael Latham, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Peter Archer, Mr. David Atkinson and Mr David Sumberg, presented a Bill to enable the Secretary of State for the Environment to set aside land, not being Crown land, within the Greater London area, for the erection of a permanent memorial to Raoul Wallenberg: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 March and to be printed. [Bill 38.]

Licensing

Mr. Edward Leigh presented a Bill to reform the law governing licensed premises: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 20 April and to be printed. [Bill 39.]

Sunday Trading

Mr. James Couchman presented a Bill to reform the law governing retail trade on Sundays: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 27 April and to be printed. [Bill 40.]

Road Traffic Regulation (Speed Limits)

Mr. John Bowis presented a Bill to amend the law relating to speed limits on roads and motorways: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 11 May and to be printed. [Bill 41.]

Indecent Displays

Mr. David Sumberg presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the display of pornographic material in public places: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 4 May and to be printed. [Bill 42.]

National Service

Mr. Tony Marlow presented a Bill to enable the Secretary of State for Defence to introduce a scheme allowing young people between the ages of 16 and 21 years to volunteer to fulfil a period of national community service for a period not exceeding 18 months: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 6 July and to be printed. [Bill 43.]

Performing Animals

Mr. Andrew Mitchell presented a Bill to amend the law governing public exhibitions by performing animals: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 30 March and to be printed. [Bill 44.]

Reform of the House of Lords

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to abolish the House of Lords as presently composed and to provide for a new directly elected membership based on parliamentary constituencies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 26 January and to be printed. [Bill 37.]

Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders)

Mr. Harry Greenway, supported by Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. Stuart Randall, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Ronnie Fearn, Mr. Michael Colvin, Mr. Robin Cook, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. Terence L. Higgins and Mr. Gerald Bermingham, presented a Bill to secure the wearing of protective headgear by minors while horse riding; to prescribe offences and penalties; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 February and to be printed. [Bill 45.]

CALDEY ISLAND BILL

Ordered,

That the Caldey Island Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Orders of the Day

Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.35 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is the first since 1975 to make changes to the statutory framework for public service superannuation provided by the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 and the Superannuation Act 1972. The present system of public service superannuation has stood the test of time well and there is no need for major changes. However, there will always be a need from time to time to make minor adaptations and alterations. We have to make such changes now to meet our Community obligations on equal treatment in occupational pensions.

The Bill also provides an opportunity to make other detailed and technical changes of a tidying-up nature. I do not think that there is anything in this largely technical and tidying-up Bill that needs to be controversial along party-political lines, and it is in that spirit that I commend it to the House.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): My hon. Friend has referred to our Community obligations. Can he reassure the House that the Bill is the result of a decision by Her Majesty's Government and not by any folk in Brussels?

Mr. Ryder: The Bill is the result of a direct decision taken a long time ago by the House. I assure my hon. Friend that there is nothing in it that would in any way prevent him from having the early dinner that he so richly deserves.

Until the 1970s the rules of public service superannuation schemes were generally contained in primary legislation. Public service pensions were increased to compensate for inflation on an ad hoc basis by various Pensions (Increase) Acts passed between 1920 and 1969. In 1971, the Pensions (Increase) Act provided for public service pensions to be regularly increased by statutory instrument. The Act was amended in 1972 and 1974 to lower the minimum qualifying age for pensions increase from 60 to 55 and to provide for all pensions paid to widows of scheme members to be increased. The system was adapted by the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 to allow for the introduction of the state earnings-related pension scheme and contracting out by public service pension schemes.

The Superannuation Act 1972 provided for local government, teachers and National Health Service schemes to be contained in regulations and gave the then Minister for the Civil Service the power to make, maintain and administer Civil Service pension schemes. No major changes to that Act have been made since then, but similar provisions were made for the police pension scheme by the Police Pensions Act 1976.

The Bill is essential to meet the requirements of an EC directive on equal treatment. Occupational pension schemes have traditionally operated on the old-fashioned assumption that women are dependants and that men are bread winners. That assumption is no longer valid and the Bill provides for men and women pensioners to be treated the same regarding the increase in their pensions under the Pensions (Increase) Act.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will those working for the Property Services Agency receive the same benefits as other civil servants?

Mr. Ryder: All civil servants will be treated in the same way under this——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: When the PSA is privatised?

Mr. Ryder: Yes, under this legislation. As my hon. Friend is aware, special measures must be taken at the time of privatisation, but at the moment all public servants are treated in the same way under the terms of this legislation.

As I have said, the Bill provides for men and women pensioners to be treated in the same way with regard to the increase in their pensions under the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971. The Bill also makes other minor changes to the legislative framework for public service pensions. It does not make major amendments to the existing law, and we see no reason to make any changes now, because there is no longer any need to use primary legislation to amend the rules of most public service pension schemes. Regulations made under the relevant statutes can cover most changes that we may wish to make. We also consider the existing statutory arrangements for public service superannuation to be generally satisfactory. Of course, there will always be individual grievances about pension schemes and their administration. That is inevitable. Everyone would always like higher benefits and we should all like to pay less for them. But those are not matters that we can settle by changing the system. Public service pensioners also have the greater opportunities, which this Government have made available to occupational pensioners generally, to make personal pension provision or to pay additional voluntary contributions.

Therefore, the days of large and technically detailed superannuation Acts are, I am pleased to say, long past. However, that does not mean that there will never be a need to legislate. From time to time there will be a need to tidy up the statutory framework and this Bill fulfils that more modest ambition. It will rectify a few anomalies and minor unintended consequences which may have emerged since the early 1970s. It will also make some minor but none the less desirable adjustments to the statutory framework, including some minor consequential amendments occasioned by the wider scope for making additional voluntary contributions introduced following the Social Security Act 1986. It will also extend the powers of the Secretary of State in relation to the determination of employers' contributions in the teachers' and NHS schemes and the payment of injury benefits to teachers.

Hon. Members will have seen the explanatory and financial memorandum and the Bill itself and will, I am sure, appreciate that many of the clauses are complex and technical. I shall give detailed explanations of each clause in Committee, but today I shall concentrate my remarks on the reasons behind the clauses in the Bill and briefly sketch the effect of each clause.

Before I explain the contents of the Bill in more detail, I should make two more general points. First, the Bill does not directly alter the provisions of any pension scheme. The provisions of the schemes concerned are given in the

[Mr. Ryder]

rules made under the Superannuation Act 1972. The second is that, although the amendments to the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 and the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 will alter the amounts by which some pensions will be increased, the changes do not affect whether a pension is paid. That is a matter governed by the rules of each pension scheme, not by the Pensions (Increase) Act.

Clause 1 is the main clause in the Bill. Public service pensions are increased in line with prices provided certain qualifying conditions are satisfied, and this clause amends those conditions. There are three separate changes. First, the clause provides for the phasing out from 1 January 1993 of a condition under which retired female scheme members with dependent children qualify for pensions increase even if they are below the normal qualifying age of 55. That concession does not apply to male pensioners and the proposed change is needed to comply with EC directive 86/378 which requires member states to introduce equal treatment for men and women into occupational pension schemes. At present, very few women qualify for pensions increase under that condition—we know of only eight in the centrally administered schemes for which data is available. However, if it were applied to men, approximately 7,000 police pensions would have to be increased, and, in addition, if analogous arrangements were introduced in the armed forces pension scheme, it is thought possible that some 50,000 armed forces pensions would have to be increased.

The Government do not consider that it would be appropriate to make a major extension of that kind to the conditions for pensions increase, which would result in the pensions paid to those who retire at comparatively young ages and can enjoy second careers being increased. Equal treatment for both sexes can therefore be secured only by repealing the relevant provision of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971. The Bill does that, but ensures that the accrued rights relating to service rendered before 1 January 1993 of the very few current and future female pensioners who benefit from this provision are fully protected.

Second, the clause provides for all pensions paid to survivors of scheme members to be increased in line with prices. At present, widows' and children's pensions are increased, but pensions paid to widowers and other adult dependants are increased only if the survivor is over 55 or physically or mentally incapacitated or, if a woman, has a dependent child. Most public service schemes have now aligned their rules on widowers' pensions with their rules on widows' pensions, and it is appropriate, therefore, that widowers' pensions should now be increased under the same conditions that apply to widows' pensions. It is possible also in some public service schemes for pensions to be paid to adult dependants who are not widows or widowers of scheme members if certain conditions are satisfied, or if the scheme member surrenders part of his or her pension. There are very few pensions in these categories and most are already increased because of the pensioner's age or state of health. We think that it is appropriate therefore to simplify the conditions for pensions increase and to introduce equal treatment by providing for all those pensions to be increased.

I emphasise that, in practice, these provisions affect very few women and men receiving, or expecting to receive, public service pensions. No one will lose any accrued rights. There is little extension of existing provisions. In that sense, it represents a practical, cost-effective and reasonable response to the problem of equal treatment and the requirements of the EC directive to which I referred.

Third, two minor extensions have been made to the conditions under which injury benefits paid by pension schemes are increased. In practice, public service pension schemes increase almost all injury benefits, even though the beneficiary may not be regarded as having finally retired on ill-health grounds or as being completely incapacitated. This clause makes sure that such payments of pensions increase in those cases are covered by the Pensions (Increase) Act.

Clauses 2, 3 and 10 make changes to the Acts to rectify some problems that have emerged since the early 1970s. For example, clause 2 amends the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 to bring the law on two small, technical aspects of pensions increase into line with the practice followed by public service pension schemes since 1965. Clause 3 amends the Pensions (Increase) Act to end a provision that gives rise to extremely small payments to pensioners but with a disproportionate administrative burden for the Department concerned.

Clause 10 amends part of the Superannuation Act 1972 to clarify the protection given to re-employed scheme members if changes that are potentially detrimental to them are made to regulations for local government, teachers and NHS schemes.

Clause 4 enables the Secretary of State to make regulations for teachers' and NHS schemes under which the costs of pensions increase may be recovered from employers through the contributions they already pay towards the cost of basic benefits. If and when the necessary regulations are made, the Government Actuary will advise on the appropriate contribution rates for employers. Employees' contributions will not be affected.

Clause 5 amends a provision in the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 under which some widows have part of their pension indexed by both the public service pensions scheme and by SERPS.

Clauses 7, 8 and 9 make some minor technical amendments connected with the wider scope for making additional voluntary contributions introduced following the Social Security Act 1986. Clause 7 makes sure that money purchase benefits arising from additional voluntary contributions paid by scheme members are not indexed by public service pension schemes. Clause 8 relieves certain schemes of a responsibility to pay annuities purchased by scheme members where the scheme member himself has the chosen the company that will provide the annuity. Clause 9 brings money purchase pension schemes for civil servants within the scope of the existing arrangements for agreeing amendments to Civil Service pension schemes that may adversely affect the accrued rights of scheme members or pensioners.

Clause 11 allows the Secretary of State to make regulations under which injury benefits can be paid to teachers by their employers. At present, these benefits can be paid only by the Secretary of State. It is more appropriate for those benefits to be paid by the employer than the pension scheme. This clause makes that possible, and allows existing arrangements made by some local education authorities to continue until any regulations are made.

The House will see from this brief description of the Bill that it is almost wholly concerned with making minor, largely technical, adjustments to the existing legislative framework governing public service pension schemes. There are no substantial changes to that framework which has stood the test of time well. This short, modest but useful Bill will ensure that the relevant Acts can continue to provide sound framework for public service pension schemes in future years. I commend it to the House.

3.50 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Bill appears to be modest and non-controversial, but on close examination it is seen to contain clear signposts of the Government's rather wayward policy on pensions. Unfortunately, all the signposts point backwards. Bills such as this are rare, but they give the House a chance to examine the drift of Government policy.

Unfortunately the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is no longer in his place. The rather convoluted answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about whether we were acting as a result of a European directive should have been that we are acting as a result of action from Europe. That is because the European Community which was once denounced as a rich man's club is now laying down minimum standards of fairness and justice and, sad to say, Britain is having difficulty keeping up with those. The Bill is very much part of that process.

Public service pensions, and especially Civil Service pensions, have blazed a trail for all other pensioners. With our customary magnanimity I welcome the beneficial parts of the Bill and thank Ministers for the unusual generosity that they displayed and the way that they co-operated during work on the Bill. There were special difficulties because work on it spanned the Christmas recess.

Clause 1 has both negative and positive aspects. The positive proposition is the extension of increases to widowers' pensions. At first sight that looks generous but that is not a trait that we instantly associate with the Government. The matter that is being tackled has been the subject of some controversy in the House. Early-day motion 600 put down on 15 March 1989 was signed by 121 hon. Members including six Conservative Members and asked for just such a reform.

The Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association contacted me today expressing some concern. Although that trade union has a membership of more than 130,000 and has waged a vigorous campaign on the issue, the only information that it had about the change was received today. It was only because of the wonders of the fax machine that I have had documents from the association on this matter. The association says that its formal consultative group, the teachers' superannuation working party, which is maintained by the Government, has not considered the Bill's proposals. The association tells me that as far as it can tell none of the trade unions represented on the working party has been consulted about the Bill or notified about its contents. Perhaps we shall hear more about that later in the debate.

Since April 1988 all contracted-out schemes have been obliged to provide a guaranteed minimum pension for widowers as well as widows. The Civil Service scheme previously provided widows' pensions as an optional extra for women civil servants, and for that an extra 1·5 per cent. contribution was paid. From April 1988 the 1·5 per cent. contribution was made compulsory for men and women. They have been paying for the advantage that has been offered today for some considerable time. The Government have no alternative but to give to widowers the same pension increases that widows receive.

The negative aspect of the Bill has alarming repercussions. It is the abolition of pension increases for retired women under the age of 55 with dependent children. In the Civil Service superannuation scheme the minimum pension age is now 50. The only circumstances in which a woman would retire under the age of 55, other than on medical grounds—where pension increases are payable regardless of age—are redundancy, approved early retirement or retirement on an actuarially reduced pension. Some mothers under the age of 50 with dependent children may draw pensions from other public sector schemes with a lower pensionable age, such as the police scheme, but they are likely to be few in number. The Minister confirmed part of that today.

The numbers involved are low, but if that is so, why bother to deprive people of the pension increases that they now enjoy? The Government's excuse is that the increases discriminate against men. That is one of the signposts in the Bill. More major decisions will have to be made in future to comply with the progressive European directive —and future directives—which says that we cannot discriminate between men and women. An enormous discrepancy which the Government must tackle before long is the age at which men and women can draw a state pension. At present there is discrimination because for women it is 60 and for men it is 65.

It seems that the Government's reaction to the call for an end to discrimination is, not to spread the advantages, but to take advantages away from one sex so that both sexes are discriminated against. In their view, that is a reasonable way to achieve discrimination. However, the Government are discriminating down rather than spreading the advantages.

To extend pension increases to fathers under the age of 55 would achieve equal treatment and would be a reasonable step to take. We suggest that the Government should do that instead of taking the increases away from mothers. The cost would be relatively small because at 55 fathers already qualify for a pension at the higher rate. That would be reached by annual increases.

In principle there is no case for paying unindexed pensions to men or women of any age without children. There is room for argument about the age at which a pension should be payable and under what conditions. However, once it has been decided that someone is entitled to a pension, it makes no sense to allow that pension to be eroded by inflation. Either the person needs the pension or he does not. If he does, he needs to have its real value preserved.

The Bill is part of a long and, in most aspects, honourable history of providing decent pensions for civil servants. The present Civil Service scheme dates back to the Superannuation Act 1859. Richard Titmuss wrote 25 years ago:

> "The civil servants were the first large organised group of workers to obtain security in their old age. The foundation of the system firmly settled by the Act of 1859, remains today; the governing principles applied more generously with the passage of time, still rule authoritatively. In 1963, the system was still a model and a goal for the vast majority of British workers."

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

In 1990 that still remains true. Much progress has been made in pension provision for other occupational groups. The public service as a whole has attained pension rights comparable to the Civil Service. Increasingly, occupational pension schemes in the private sector have been modelled on Civil Service advantages, with pensions based on individual earnings in the final year or the years before retirement. Where they have lagged behind is in inflation-proofing pensions and in shielding rights for people who change jobs. Sadly millions of people are still exposed and vulnerable without the strength of an occupational scheme behind them. They include the 3·5 million people who have been induced by a heavy cocktail of bribery and misleading propaganda to take out the so-called personal pension schemes. They may well rue that decision if they stay in the schemes for longer than five years.

The greatest leap forward to the goal described by Titmuss in 1964 for securing pensions for the majority of workers comparable to those in the Civil Service was taken in 1975 when the then Labour Government's Social Security Pensions Act introduced the state earnings-related pension scheme. The scheme was based on a plan which was first published in 1957, and Titmuss was one of the authors. Its inspiration was firmly rooted in the Civil Service scheme, which had been created a century earlier and had been tried and proved.

The comparison with Europe still prevailed. Most of our European partners now have schemes that are based on the principle that pensions should be related to previous earnings. That is one of the main reasons why our pensions lag so pathetically behind those in the rest of Europe. British pensioners still rely on a flat-rate pension for the bulk of their state pension.

The Social Security Pensions Act 1975 was a pensions revolution. It transformed the retirement prospects of the great majority of the working population. It was a considerable achievement to confer on half the working population—it was previously not covered—new pension rights comparable to final salary occupational schemes. As important but not so widely recognised was the secondary achievement of the 1975 legislation, and that was to confront the cumulative destruction caused by inflation of pension values. Again, the model was the public sector.

The Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 had the effect that public sector pensions were automatically inflation proofed. The 1975 Act protected state earnings-related pensions from the ravages of inflation and the State undertook the inflation-proofing of the guaranteed minimum pension by contracted-out occupational schemes. Thus the pensions of millions in the private sector were brought nearer to the higher standards set by the public sector. The Bill is important for the changes in the pension rights that are directly affected by it, and the reverberations will spread wider to all provisions for retirement. That is why the Opposition are convinced that it is entirely appropriate that a spokesperson on social security should participate in the debate.

Clause 7 excludes money-purchase benefits earned by additional voluntary contributions from the provisions of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971. A money-purchase pension is the annuity that can be brought from the amount of money that is available at pension age from the approved contributions plus investment income. In theory, on reaching pension age a person can choose to buy an index-linked annuity, but it is unlikely that many people will do so. That is because an unindexed annuity will have a much higher initial value.

Encouraging people to pay into money-purchase schemes, which is favoured strongly by the Government, is likely to result in payments of pensions that are fixed in cash terms with no protection from inflation. That is true of personal pension schemes too, except where there is a requirement to provide annuities rising by 3 per cent. a year. Even that applies only to annuities purchased that meet the minimum contribution that is required for contracting out. It would not be sensible to object to clause 7, but it illustrates a significant problem that will inevitably arise again and again from the proliferation of money-purchase schemes under which the Government are now acting. A complexity has been introduced into pension schemes that will require a great deal more legislation in future.

There has been a remarkable change in the indexation of pensions in the past decade. In the early days of the Thatcher Government it was known that the Prime Minister thought of the Civil Service as a grossly over privileged group, and that the privilege that the right hon. Lady begrudged more than any other was the right of Civil Servants to index-linked, inflation-proofed pensions. The repeal of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 was high on her hit list. Then the emphasis changed suddenly from abolishing indexation to asking civil servants to pay for it.

Exactly 10 years ago today, on 8 January, *The Guardian* published an article by Ian Aitken under the headline,

"Search for way to end pension-inflation linking may be dropped".

The lady was for turning. The story confirmed that the Prime Minister wanted to end index linking and social benefits in general, especially for public services. Ian Aitken wrote:

"Ministers now seem to be agreed that an arbitrary cut off in inflation proofed pensions would have wide effects throughout the public services and in some cases would involve a breach of contract."

Right hon. and hon. Members may recall that in February 1981, Sir Bernard Scott's committee dealt a bitter blow to the Prime Minister's plans when he found that the pensions deductions made from civil servants' wages were nearly twice those made from the earnings of employees in the private sector, so civil servants were enjoying no bargain whatsoever. More importantly, Sir Bernard not only made the point that index-linked pensions were not an indefensible privilege to the public sector—far from it—but that they should be extended to the population as a whole. The committee reported:

"It is highly desirable as a social objective that the standard of living of those in retirement should be protected. This is clearly recognised in countries like France and West Germany, where the benefits enjoyed by pensioners are superior to those of this country and the benefits of index linking extend alike to both public and private sectors. In the United Kingdom, the full cost of protecting pensioners has yet to be recognised and fully shouldered during working life. We believe that there may be helpful lessons to be drawn from our work for the private sector pensions and their financing, as well as for the public sector."

Nothing has changed. The report makes two crucial points on European practice and on index linking that are intimately germane to the Bill. How are we doing nine years later?

It is notoriously difficult fairly to compare pensions in different countries, but the European Commission recently made a brave attempt at doing so. It took as a standard the amount paid to a new pensioner who had worked for an average wage in manufacturing industry. Two different methods of comparison were used. I have urged the Government to adopt them both, but so far they have declined. The first method is to convert the cash amount into ecus by using a standard rate of exchange known as the purchasing power standard, which takes full account of the cost of living in each country. The pension is thus related to the value of purchases that can be made locally.

Not surprisingly, and as was the case nine years ago, the United Kingdom came out badly by comparison. The British pension of £53 is almost half the £104 paid in Luxembourg and barely half the £101 paid in the Netherlands. Britain is only beaten into bottom place by Ireland, with £43. I must be fair and give details also of the Commission's second comparison, which takes the pension as an average of manufacturing industry earnings in each country, after taking account of tax. That system is known as net replacement ratio, and it uses the figure of 100 to represent average manufacturing earnings.

The best countries pay pensions of nearly 90 per cent. of average earnings, while the United Kingdom and Ireland pay less than half of pre-retirement earnings, with a pension of 46 per cent. It seems extraordinary that the neglect of the basic pension in particular should continue.

The index linking of state pensions introduced in the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 was once challenged, but that provision managed to survive. It would not have done so had the proposals in the June 1985 Green Paper, "The Reform of Social Security—Programme for Action" been implemented. It was the Government's clear intention to abolish SERPS, and with it the inflation-proofing mechanism, but their nerve again failed them. The scheme was savagely cut by the Social Security Act 1985, but the inflation-proofing provision remained intact. Contracted-out schemes must now provide inflation proofing of the guaranteed minimum pension up to 3 per cent., instead of the state scheme doing that for them. The state scheme still makes provision above that level.

The Government's newly found enthusiasm for index linking—provided that someone else bears the cost—is about to bear fruit in the next social security Bill, which will require limited indexation of occupational schemes above the guaranteed minimum pension level—but apparently, only when a scheme is about to be wound up.

The first Civil Service pension was granted in 1684 to Martin Horsham, a land waiter in the Port of London, who, in the memorable words of the Treasury Warrant at the time, was paid it because he was:

"so much indisposed by a great melancholy that he is at present unfit for business".

There is little in the Bill or the Government's pension policy that would have lifted Martin Horsham's melancholy and, sadly, there is much that would have deepened it.

This is a mean-spirited, patch and prop Bill. In the past, Britain has led the world to liberate retired people from the anxiety of deep poverty. Europe is now leading Britain, coaxing and coercing the Government out of their obsolete fixations. The Bill continues a Government pension policy that is wasteful, confused and mean.

4.9 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I have to declare a financial interest in the Bill as I am a beneficiary of the arrangements that it makes for public service pensions by virtue of service in the colonial administration of Nigeria.

I welcome the Bill. We should all support the details of the Bill, and I was distressed to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), whose judgment is usually quite sound, appear to cast some doubt on the merits of the Bill because some of its proposals have apparently been prompted by events within the European Community. If that is so, it is a jolly good thing.

Women's equality is not a subject on which I normally speak at great length, or with enthusiasm, because women may be equal but they are also different. However, there can be no doubt that the small amendments proposed in the Bill are good ones for women and I am surprised that they have not been made before. They are mostly self-evident and logical, because the pound paid by a woman civil servant is as good as the pound paid by a man during their service, and there seems to be no reason for discrimination between the sexes and in that respect the proposals in the Bill are to be commended.

Apart from amending injustices and anomalies and improving pensions for public officers, there is a need for the Bill and for all pension arrangements to be index linked due to inflation—the evil and the scourge of modern times. Inflation distorts economies and causes great misery and cruelty, and it should remain the enemy of all Governments. If we can beat inflation, we shall not need to introduce measures constantly to reappraise the value of pensions to people who have earned what they are paid at the end of their service in a pension because of the contributions that they have made or that have been notionally made for them during their service. The Government should bear in mind that the financial burden of the Bill can be eased by the extent to which they are successful with their anti-inflation policy.

A number of other more detailed matters come to mind when we discuss public service pensions. Many British citizens, resident in Britain, are pensioners of a public service that is, in fact if not in law, under the Government of the United Kingdom. For example, the pension rights of people who served in the colonial service under the Government of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland were secured on the basis that employers' contributions would be made by the Governments concerned—successor Governments, where transfers have taken place. The value of such pensions was therefore tied to agreements between Governments, which has meant in practice that many former British civil servants serving in our overseas territories must live on a pittance. The value of their pensions has not benefited from inclusion in the general arrangements covered by the Bill, because technically their employer was not the United Kingdom Government but the result of arrangements between the United Kingdom and other countries—or for other similar reasons.

To their credit, the Government have recently eased the problem concerning the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland by making an ex gratia payment into the fund, which has enabled pensions to be increased. That, however, is merely a stopgap measure, welcome though it

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

was at the time, and I hope that it will eventually be replaced by a provision consistent with the spirit of the Bill.

Civil servants in Hong Kong are among those with similar problems. The colonial or overseas Government—not the United Kingdom Government—are bound to a pension obligation unless an arrangement has been made between the two Governments for the money to be transferred to the United Kingdom Treasury. The United Kingdom and Nigerian Governments reached such an arrangement for my pension, but, as the Hong Kong Administration are within the British colonial empire, pension arrangements are still governed by Hong Kong regulations.

The main difficulty is that the value of Hong Kong pensions is established by the prevailing exchange rate, and the Hong Kong dollar is inclined to fluctuate. At present it is notoriously subject to the influence of world events, and to other matters that have nothing to do with the interests of the people involved. Such influences do nothing to assure those people that they will receive an appropriate retirement income, whether or not they have already retired. We want them to stay in Hong Kong, but there is still the problem of their pensions.

Expatriate staff of the Hong Kong Administration who are on pensionable establishment will in due course retire, and their pensions will be determined by the value of the Hong Kong dollar. Surely the United Kingdom Government have a moral obligation to ensure that those people do not suffer because of the instability of future foreign exchange conditions, but are guaranteed the full value of their pensions—uprated by arrangements in the legislation referred to in the Bill—so that they need not fear the suffering experienced by other colonial service pensioners in, for instance, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

Part of our imperial responsibility is still the obligation to protect those who have served the Crown, often in an inclement climate and unhealthy circumstances. The conditions of people who maintained and controlled the government of the empire and our remaining colonies should not be prejudiced by the fact that their service was notionally directed towards a Government separate from the United Kingdom. I appreciate that this precise point is not strictly covered by the Bill, but I am sure that the Minister is well aware of it and that he will ensure that those who are responsible for taking this overview of our obligations to all British public servants abroad will take their cases into account so that this injustice is remedied.

4.20 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I endorse everything said by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). The Government ought to examine carefully the provisions that have been made for former colonial servants of Her Majesty's Government. The hon. Gentleman may be right that the long and short titles of the Bill will make it difficult for the Standing Committee to consider amendments covering that point, but I hope that the Government will deal with the plight of former Crown servants. The hon. Gentleman has made a valuable contribution to the debate.

I am worried about the way in which pensions legislation in general is enacted by the House. The explanatory and financial memorandum refers to the Bill rectifying

"certain anomalies and unintended consequences"

in previous legislation. The parliamentary draftsmen are doing no service to public servants who are in receipt of public service pensions by drafting legislation that is technically flawed and which, to lay persons, is completely unintelligible.

I hope that the Government will consolidate some of the pensions legislation. I recognise that a different series of Acts governs public service pensions. They are quite distinct from the Acts that apply to most pensions, but there is an overlap between the Treasury's responsibility for public service pensions and the Department of Social Security's responsibility for other pensions.

Has any consideration been given to the systematic and cohesive consolidation of all the statutes relating to pensions in all their different aspects? It would then be easier to understand the ramifications of the legislation, some of which has been in place since public service pensions were first given in the year 1684, as the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) has told us.

The hon. Gentleman also made a valuable point when he suggested that the House should examine carefully how the Government are seeking to cope with requests from the European Community, or anyone else, for a pensions system that would eliminate discrimination between males and females. Such a move would be welcomed. It is long overdue.

The Government pick and choose between benefits. Some they are prepared to level up, while others they level down. They are breaking the spirit of European Community directives that place an obligation on member states to end discrimination. By and large, the Government are levelling down all the time. I speak as a humble Scots solicitor. I am not an expert in pensions legislation. It can be argued that what I have described breaches the spirit of the directive and could be challengeable through the European legal system. The Government must make it clear what principles they will adopt when they approach the problems that they will experience with ending discrimination between males and females.

My overall impression, on skimming through the Bill, is that the Treasury has done a quick trawl to see where it can save the odd bob or two. The Minister shakes his head. I am more sceptical than he obviously is. Some of these provisions will save money. With his usual eloquence and competence, the Minister skipped over the fact that it was mooted that the police, fire and armed services should receive additional benefits. The idea was given careful consideration, but the decision went against them. Nevertheless, the sum involved must also be weighed in the balance.

The pensions industry has studied the Bill. I give it a cautious welcome. On balance, it improves things. However, the Government can be accused of looking for quick ways to save the odd buck, and the House should examine that carefully before giving it a Second Reading.

As I have already said, there is confusion about pensions legislation. Clause 2 contains quite a substantial element of retrospection. There may be reasons or cases that justify retrospection in some circumstances, but the

Minister did not mention them. Any retrospective legislation, especially if it affects pensions, should not be accepted casually.

I shall put my Scots solicitor's hat back on and draw attention to clause 2(5). It amends the Pensions (Increase) Act 1965, but that Act was repealed by the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971. That is a very good trick if it can be done, but I think that it is an example of technical incompetence. I am sure that it will interest the hon. Member for Orpington, who is a distinguished observer of these matters. No doubt the Treasury has more solicitors than I could muster on this Bench. Indeed, I can muster the support of only my party leader—but that is quite considerable support, although perhaps not on pensions legislation. He is neither a Scot nor a solicitor. I am worried about slipping through legislation that purports to amendment an Act which was repealed yonks ago. We should have a word about that from the Minister.

Clauses 3, 5 and 7 are a bit petty, but clauses 5 and 7 make sensible changes. Although I have accused the Treasury of trying to save money, I must observe that the changes in clauses 5 and 7 are justified because the double benefits that were previously available were overgenerous.

It is all very well for the Minister to say that the Bill is tidying up various pieces of legislation and that it is all minor and technical. Given enough time—preferably not during the Christmas recess which included Hogmanay which is a much more important festival north of the border—and given the opportunity in Standing Committee I could certainly provide a whole list of minor or consequential amendments that will certainly cost the Treasury money. I shall suggest one now.

I am the joint secretary and treasurer of the all-party committee on pensioners, and the most obvious case that has come to my attention concerns the changes to the Civil Service pension in 1978. Civil Service widows' pensions were not made payable to widows of post-retirement marriages until the pensions legislation of 1978. That gives rise to an anomaly because widows of post-retirement marriages after 1978 are now treated much more generously than those who were widowed before then. I cannot believe that the Treasury objects to that on financial grounds because it must cost a relatively tiny sum compared with some of the other savings being made in other parts of the Bill. That is a clear example of another anomaly which could have been tidied up in the Bill. It would have had a substantial effect and removed an important anomaly which has been causing quite legitimate and justified concern among those who observe the comings and goings of the Civil Service pension funds and schemes.

I said earlier that the hon. Member for Orpington had made a valuable contribution concerning colonial pensions. Again through the all-party committee on pensioners I have received representations from a host of different organisations. On the last day of last year I received one from the consultative committee of the Kenya local authorities superannuation fund again complaining about matters such as those raised by the hon. Member for Orpington. Technically, they may not be capable of rectification under the short title of the Bill, but given a bit of good will from the Government and a slightly longer short title, the Bill could have addressed some of those problems. They would have required some subvention from central Government funds into certain outstanding funds which are leaving former colonial servants in dire financial circumstances. It is a missed opportunity. Small items such as that make it impossible for the Minister to say that the Bill is simply a minor and technical matter.

The Bill embraces some important issues, and the Minister will have to convince the House of some of the financial aspects and consequences of the provisions of the Bill before I shall be entirely comfortable with it. However, I shall certainly recommend to my colleagues that on balance the Bill deserves a Second Reading.

4.33 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I wish to take part in this short debate mainly to voice my concern that sometimes the House passes legislation such as this late in the evening or, as on this occasion, soon after the holidays without hon. Members understanding the full significance of the Government's intention in future years to use the legislation as a principle. I wish to discuss the principle of discrimination. I seek assurances about the Government's intentions, whether in future it will be used for levelling down rather than levelling up and whether they attach importance to the Bill in respect of pension matters before the European Commission.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) said that by clause 1(2)(b) the Government seek to amend a provision that currently discriminates against men who retire before the age of 55 on grounds other than ill health but who cannot take advantage of the specific arrangements by which women with dependants can retire before the age of 55 on grounds other than ill health. The Government aim to end discrimination against male contributors to the fund, but in so doing women's rights will be removed.

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West, the Minister attempted to use the numbers game in respect of the number of women who currently benefit, and said that the figure is derisory. He gave a more important answer in relation to the number of men who could qualify if the Government ended discrimination more positively by allowing equal pension entitlement for men and women.

The Minister may argue that in calculating for the fire and police services and other employees tens of thousands of men may benefit, but that raises an issue of principle in relation to pension entitlement. Far too often when the Government have been faced with an issue of discrimination from the European Community they have chosen to remove the rights of one group to end discrimination against another.

I signed early-day motion 88, which argued for the ending of discrimination against men who reach retirement age at 65, whereas women benefit at 60. Those who have been involved in ending that discrimination foresee under this legislation the possibility of the Government establishing the principle of levelling down by removing the rights of women rather than legislating for a universal pension age for men and women. That is a controversial matter within the European Community, and at some stage the House will return to it. The debate is continuing not only here but outside, and the Government are receiving advice from pension actuaries and others about amendments that the European Community may force on them at a later stage. Although

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

the amendments might affect few women, they could have significant repercussions on the debate on pension entitlement in future years.

As I understand it, those in the pensions business who currently advise the Government say that a reduction in the male pension age to 60 would be expensive and would lead to a significant reduction in the net contribution. Therefore, rather than reduce the pension age for men, over stages the Government will increase it for women to 65. The basic pension and the state earnings-related pension scheme will be available to women aged between 60 and 65, and those retiring at 60 will receive the equivalent of two thirds of the full state pension. Women will lose their current pension entitlement at 60. Labour Members believe that to legislate for the worst elements of a scheme but to remove its best elements is no way to end discrimination between men and women.

The principle embodied in clause 1(2)(b) will put pressure on the Government to introduce a phased arrangement under which women's entitlement to full pension at 60 will be obliterated. Women who are currently aged about 50 will retain their entitlement to full pension at 60, but those aged between 40 and 50 will see their entitlement to a full pension changed to between 61 and 64. Women under 40 years of age will have to wait until they are 65 before getting a full state pension. That means of ending so-called discrimination is unacceptable.

Legislation covering care in the community is going through the House. More than 90 per cent. of those who care in the community are women who, voluntarily or involuntarily, give up their employment at an early age to look after an aged or severely disabled relative. It is ironic —indeed, I can find no precedent—that the House is considering legislation that will make it easier for people to care for others but a clause in this Bill will prevent women from retiring before they are 55 to look after a dependent relative and they will lose the benefits that they are currently enjoying.

The House would not expect this or any other Government to allow such discrimination. Over the coming decades, a growing number of women will be asked to take on the job of caring in the community. They will apply to their employers to retire before they reach 55, not on medical grounds involving themselves but on medical grounds relating to a dependent husband, mother or father or child. Changes in medical techniques mean that children are living beyond their teenage years with severe physical and mental disabilities.

The Minister may believe that this is a small, insignificant group of women. Legislation must take account not only of what is happening now but of what will happen in 10, 20 or 30 years. One of the damning features of clause 1 is that it fails to recognise changing trends and the needs of people who will be required to care for their elderly and dependent relatives.

I have spoken in the House on behalf of fire authorities, as their honorary parliamentary adviser. Because of the nature of fire fighters' work, a significant number would benefit from an early retirement age, but restrictions imposed under current legislation mean that they cannot. They would have liked an amendment to allow them the same rights as women who retire below the age of 55. Not only are these fire fighters not included in the Bill but—we never expected this—women who are now covered by legislation will be excluded.

Although there will not be a Division on the Bill, the House must return to the long-term fundamental issues of equal opportunities and pensions. The Opposition and a significant number of Conservative Members will not accept legislation that operates on the spurious ground that removing the rights of one group of pensioners whether male or female, is equalised by the ending of discrimination against another group. That is no way to proceed with legislation. I shall not seek to divide the House—I see that you are smiling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thinking, "Thank God for that"—but I am not satisfied with the legislation.

4.44 pm

Mr. Ryder: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to speak again. I am grateful to hon. Members for the attention and interest that they have shown in this largely detailed and technical Bill, but I should like to stress again that it is a modest Bill and has modest scope. It amends the statutory framework in which the regulations for public service pension schemes are made. Apart from some adjustments at the margin to the law prescribing the index linking of public service pensions, the Bill does not directly alter the rules of any pension scheme. Changes to these rules will continue to be made in the usual ways, which are prescribed in the Superannuation Act 1972.

There can be no fear that the Bill will seriously affect the pensions of those who have retired after many years of public service. I assure the House that there is no cause for such concern. The proposed changes to the qualifying conditions for pension increases—clause 1—will be introduced in a way that fully protects the accrued rights of serving public servants and those already retired. The double indexation of part of the pensions paid to surviving spouses will be phased out gradually and only the widows and widowers of scheme members not yet retired will lose this anomalous and unintended benefit. That is covered by clause 5. The ending of the extremely small payments of pensions increase on additional lump sums will be introduced for future retirements only, and this is covered by clause 3.

I assure the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) that we are not alone in work of this kind. Other European countries are affected by the 1986 directive. I know that that will be of interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). The hon. Member for Newport, West asked whether there had been consultation with various interest groups. I believe that all interest groups support the measures in the Bill, but if any have suggestions to improve it, let us have a look at them.

I understand that the Department of Education and Science is holding discussions with teachers' representatives all the time and that a joint working party on pensions is operating now. The hon. Members for Newport, West and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) asked why we did not "level-up" pension increases for retired male scheme members so that those under 55 with dependent children could receive pensions increase. As the hon. Gentlemen know, this would be a costly improvement to superannuation benefits for which either employers or employees would have to pay. During my

opening speech I set out details of how many people would be affected one way or the other. If we went down the road advocated by the hon. Members for Newport, West and for Makerfield, an estimated 7,000 retired policemen and fire fighters would be affected and it has been said that, on a conservative estimate, about 50,000 retired service personnel would benefit if payments were also made in armed forces schemes. The ultimate cost would be more than £100 million a year—for the police about £14 million and for the armed forces about £100 million.

Mr. McCartney: Surely, in considering whether to amend the legislation, the principle should be whether the current position of women is right. We should ask whether this is a proper aspect to include in pension provisions. The Opposition say yes, in principle. We should therefore consider how it can be applied to all members of the scheme. The Minister has implied that if amendments caused a huge influx in the number of people included in the scheme, the Government might have difficulty in finding the resources needed. The Government should turn to the second, more feasible option and introduce a sheme of phasing in arrangements rather than phasing out the current arrangements for women.

Mr. Ryder: I explained earlier why we have drafted the Bill along these lines. The hon. Gentleman will know that, for the reasons that I gave then, we believe that this is the right course. As I said, we understand that very few people will be affected. We know of only eight teachers who will be affected by the provision, although there may be more.

I referred to the initial cost of taking the course that the hon. Gentleman advocates, which is to level up. I gave that cost as over £1 million a year, and I shall be happy to supply him with the details of that figure if he wishes.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) knows that any proposal to phase in pensions increase for male pensioners under 55 with dependent children would be equally vulnerable to a challenge that it did not meet the requirements of EC directive 86/378, to which I referred in my opening remarks.

The hon. Member for Newport, West answered his own question about clause 7. An additional voluntary contribution can buy an index-linked annuity if the individual so chooses. The Government support the personal pension developments but also wish to continue good occupational pension schemes, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has for several years campaigned assiduously for the concession of an additional pension for war service of former colonial expatriate civil servants. I have followed his campaign with interest for longer than the six months for which I have held my present position.

The benefits and qualifying conditions of the colonial scheme have been modelled on those of the United Kingdom public service schemes—in particular, the provisions applying to home civil servants. There can be no special relaxation of the rules for colonial Civil Service pensioners.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington also drew the attention of the House to arrangements in Hong Kong. Ministers have said, as he may know, that we do not rule out the possibility of public officers' agreements in due course, although it is not clear whether, in the unique circumstances of Hong Kong, there may be other ways of achieving these ends. It may help if I explain that as other former colonies went into independence, the question of sterling safeguards was settled much closer to the time of constitutional change. This question is one of the matters that the Government are keeping under careful review in consultation with the Hong Kong Government. On present evidence, we are not persuaded that the current arrangements work to the disadvantage of Hong Kong pensioners.

Ministers have stated that the Government fully recognise the particular concern of HMOCS officers in Hong Kong and will continue to keep their interests in mind in the years leading up to 1997. Particular considerations apply in respect of Hong Kong—for example, guarantees under the joint declaration that expatriates may continue to serve after 1997. No firm decisions have yet been made on special measures, such as compensation, that might be appropriate in Hong Kong's unique circumstances.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked about consolidation. I agree that simplicity and comprehensibility are important in any pension schemes and underlying legislation. There are already some important consolidation measures on the statute book—for example, the Superannuation Act 1972 of which he may have even closer knowledge than I. We need to be careful that attempts to produce statutes of near-universal coverage do not make the position more complicated. I am not convinced that the time of the House would be well spent on further pensions consolidation at present. As I have said, the Bill represents a relatively simple and straightforward correction of a few minor anomalies in existing legislation.

With his customary acuteness, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire highlighted clause 2. He is quite right that the clause is retrospective. It aligns the law with the practice of schemes. It brings the law into line with what it was thought and intended to be. I stress, emphasise and underline that no pensioner will lose out as a result of clause 2.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire wondered whether the position of police and fire personnel had been looked into. The answer is yes, and no anomalies in the way in which legislation affected them were identified.

If I have not covered any detailed points, I shall be happy to write to hon. Members or to talk to them before the Bill progresses further.

Mr. McCartney: Some Government Departments are considering setting up agencies to deal with their work. Will any changes have to be made in the legislation in respect of civil servants who, from this year, may be working for agencies, which although attached to the Civil Service are technically outside it?

Mr. Ryder: Not as far as I know. All public servants are treated the same under the Bill, whoever they work for and whatever the circumstances in which they work. I shall certainly let the hon. Gentleman know if I am wrong in that judgment.

As I explained in opening, the Bill is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. It is intended not to replace a system that has worked well for nearly 20 years but to adapt and improve it to meet the needs of the 1990s in a way that is fair to pensioners and current employees. Against that

[Mr. Ryder]

background, I commend the Bill to the House. I thank those hon. Members who have taken part in the debate—especially my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington, who has given the Bill his support, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, who spoke on behalf of the Liberal party, and the hon. Member for Makerfield. If any points need to be clarified, I shall be happy to clarify them during the next few days.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Committee tomorrow.

PENSIONS (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL [*Money*]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill ("the Act") it is expedient to authorise the following—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any increase in the cost of providing increases under or by virtue of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 in official pensions and in other pensions within the meaning of that Act;

(b) any increase in the cost of providing pensions, allowances and gratuities payable under section 1, 7, 9 or 10 of the Superannuation Act 1972;

(c) any increase in the sums payable under any other enactment which is attributable to increased expenditure by any authority in consequence of—

(i) any such increase as is mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) above;

(ii) any provisions of the Act requiring the payment of contributions towards the cost of providing increases under Part I of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 in official pensions payable under section 9 or 10 of the Superannuation Act 1972; or

(iii) the provision of benefits for teachers in connection with injuries sustained, or diseases contracted, in the course of their employment;

(d) any administrative expenses of a Minister of the Crown attributable to the Act;

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums received by a Minister of the Crown by virtue of the Act;

and in this Resolution—

"official pension" has the same meaning as it has in the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971; and

"teacher" has the same meaning as it has in section 9 of the Superannuation Act 1972.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Government Trading Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.58 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The main purpose of the Bill is to extend the enabling powers under the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 to establish trading funds. The new powers will be a major contribution to Civil Service management changes, and thus to the benefits that the Government expect from the Next Steps initiative—the creation of agencies—and the fundamental reform of the Civil Service management and financial management.

To illustrate the links between the Bill and the wider processes of management improvement, we have published the White Paper, "The Financing and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies". The House, through the Select Committees that have so far taken most interest in Next Steps—the Public Accounts Committee and the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee—has generally supported the Next Steps initiative, and I hope that the Bill will commend itself to hon. Members on both sides of the House. The Bill and White Paper are designed to strengthen the performance of Government Departments by encouraging civil servants to take a more businesslike approach to the efficiency and quality of the delivery of Government services.

The White Paper sets out the background to the Bill. As it says, although the powers to set up trading funds are not limited to Next Steps agencies, it is expected that future trading funds will be entirely, or almost entirely, drawn from agencies. Thus the Bill takes forward the objectives underlying the Government's whole strategy for public service reform—greater freedom for managers, coupled with greater accountability for delivering agreed objectives. It will allow more organisations to operate as trading funds, which will give them greater financial freedom and greater disciplines akin to those of private sector organisations.

It may be helpful if I explain how trading fund status will help to promote those objectives. As paragraph 4.2 of the White Paper stated:

"A 'trading fund' provides a financing framework which covers operating costs and receipts, capital expenditure, borrowing and net cash flow. It has powers to borrow to meet capital expenditure and working capital requirements, and to establish reserves out of surpluses. Within this framework, it can meet outgoings without detailed cash flows passing through Vote accounting arrangements."

At present only some 20 per cent. of the running costs of Government Departments are offset by related receipts. It follows that the majority of Government activities will not be suitable to become trading funds. That does not mean that agencies dealing with those activities are second-class citizens. Indeed, much of the White Paper is devoted to improving arrangements for them. It is important that all agencies that could benefit from the more commercial discipline of a trading fund should be able to do so. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor informed the House on 1 February 1989, when he was Chief Secretary, the main purpose of the Bill is to widen the enabling powers under the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 to cover bodies that are directed by statute to provide a service and where the fees are fixed by

regulation. As bodies such as the vehicle inspectorate and Companies house do not fall within existing powers, the main purpose of the Bill is to extend the 1973 Act enabling powers to such cases.

Trading fund status will make possible a much more businesslike approach to the delivery of Government services. However, it has one characteristic that will rightly cause the House carefully to consider an extension of the Government's powers to use that particular financial mechanism. It is that the detailed cash flows of trading funds are outside the full processes of the supply system through which Parliament authorises and controls expenditure. In recognition of that, the 1973 Act rightly requires that no trading fund can be set up without Parliament debating each proposal on an affirmative resolution order. That principle is extremely important, and it is maintained in the Bill.

The other characteristic of the original legislation, which is strengthened in the Bill, is the statutory requirement for accounting to Parliament. That is much stronger for trading funds than for the remainder of the Civil Service, and the accountability operates direct from the trading fund to Parliament.

The Government Trading Funds Act 1973 arose from an early precursor of the Government's management reforms. That was the concept of units of accountable management proposed in the 1968 report of the Fulton committee on the Civil Service and the 1970 Conservative Administration's White Paper "The Reorganisation of Central Government". Although the concept is similar to that underlying changes implemented by the Government, it never really took off in the 1970s. The 1973 Act and the three trading funds still established under it—Her Majesty's Stationery Office, the Royal Mint and the Crown Suppliers—are almost the sole surviving relics.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): How do these proposals fit in with those for the PSA and Crown Suppliers Bill that we shall begin discussing in Committee tomorrow?

Mr. Lamont: The proposals for the Crown Suppliers and its possible privatisation are entirely matters for the Committee considering the Bill. If that Bill is enacted and the Crown Suppliers are ultimately privatised, it would cease to be a trading fund. The Crown Suppliers was one of the products of the original legislation, but it is being dealt with separately by the Bill to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

During the 1980s the Government have pursued a series of initiatives designed to secure better value for money. Government Departments have had a continuing programme of efficiency scrutinies run under the supervision of the Prime Minister's efficiency unit. The central unit on purchasing has encouraged development of better methods and greater professional skills. In the Health Service, cost improvement programmes have encouraged health authorities to identify and implement ways of providing services to patients more cost-effectively. The result of those measures alone has been total savings to date of some £3 billion. Such savings have helped to finance steady increases in priority areas of spending as well as reducing costs to the taxpayer.

Improved management can deliver better services at less cost. There is no conflict between greater efficiency and improving the quality of the service. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said when he was Chief Secretary:

> "Shoddy public services should not be an option. Nor should they be tolerated."

A key element in the Government's value-for-money strategy has been the delegation of budgets and financial control to units of management and, wherever possible, to individuals. For the Civil Service, the starting point was the financial management initiative. It had one major purpose—to place responsibility for decisions on both spending and costs at the level where operations and activities are managed and delivered. The units concerned, and the people in them, were then to be accountable for the results.

The statement of principle might be simple, but implementation is more complex and difficult. It has required a major change in attitudes throughout the Civil Service, which has responded enthusiastically to the new opportunities and challenges. It has also required a great deal of hard work in redesigning systems and procedures.

Government Departments are large, varied and complex businesses combining policy and executive functions. Those factors have sometimes made it difficult to delegate down the line, to managers at working level, the clear authority to enable them to make the changes that would deliver improved value for money.

Those issues were addressed in the efficiency unit report entitled "Improving Management in Government: the Next Steps". The key recommendation, accepted by the Prime Minister in her statement to the House on 18 February 1988, was that

> "to the greatest extent practicable the executive functions of Government, as distinct from policy advice, should be carried out by units clearly designated within Departments, referred to in the report as 'agencies'. Responsibility for the day-to-day operations of each agency should be delegated to a chief executive. He would be responsible for management within a framework of policy objectives and resources set by the responsible Minister, in consultation with the Treasury." —[*Official Report*, 18 February 1988; Vol. 127, c. 1149.]

The Next Steps initiative builds on the financial management initiative. It is a major step in delegating responsibility to Civil Service managers within clear parameters. It is designed to deliver services more efficiently and effectively, within available resources, for the benefit of taxpayers, customers and staff. It provides a clear framework for delegation and accountability. That makes possible increased delegation to an agency, and through the agency right down to those directly responsible for service delivery, coupled with accountability for the results achieved. The agencies already set up and the announced candidates are listed in annex A to the White Paper. Taken together, they cover about one-third of the Civil Service. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, will reply to the debate and will deal with any issues that hon. Members may wish to raise on Next Steps agencies, possible candidates and the future for them.

When an agency is set up, it is necessary to look in detail at the financial controls and accountability arrangements within which it will operate. The wide variety of Government functions means that that inevitably has to be done on a case-by-case basis. But the early experience with Next Steps has enabled us to formulate the key general principles that are set out in the White Paper. The Government Trading Bill deals with the aspects of that policy which require primary legislation to implement, and it may assist the House if I outline briefly the coverage of the Bill.

[Mr. Lamont]

Clause 1 repeals sections 1 and 2 of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 and inserts five new sections in it. Section 1 deals with the new powers, which are the central change introduced by the Bill. They would, if Parliament approves the necessary affirmative resolution in each case, allow a trading fund to be established where its revenue consists principally of receipts in respect of goods or services provided, and where it would lead to improved management efficiency and effectiveness. The White Paper —in paragraphs 4.15 to 4.19—explain how in policy terms the Government propose that those new powers would be used.

Use of the powers would be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is therefore not possible to set out in advance a clear list of candidates. However, among existing agencies, early candidates for consideration as trading funds are expected to include the vehicle inspectorate, Companies house, the historic royal palaces and Warren Springs laboratory.

Section 2 deals with how the originating debt of a trading fund is determined. In particular, it allows for the possibility of varying the originating debt to take account of subsequent changes in assets and liabilities of a fund. Section 2A deals with the issue of public dividend capital to a trading fund. Annex B to the White Paper explains the circumstances in which that might be used. Section 2B deals with borrowing by funds, and in particular allows funds to borrow from Votes as an alternative to borrowing from the national loans fund. It is envisaged that the majority of borrowing by trading funds in the future will be from Votes.

Section 4A deals with winding up funds. There have been suggestions in some press reports that increased use of trading funds is designed to prepare more activities for privatisation. There is a grain of truth in this, but only a very small grain in that trading funds are a suitable regime only for the more commercially-oriented Government activities, and it is commercially-oriented activities that are likely to be most suitable for privatisation. But as the White Paper makes clear, the policy remains that described by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 24 October 1988:

> "'Next Steps' is primarily about those operations which are to remain within Government. I cannot rule out, however, that after a period of years agencies, like other Government activities, may be suitable for privatisation".—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. *14*.]

I should therefore make clear that section 4A is intended to deal only with cases where activities cease altogether, where funds are merged, or where they are better financed by other means within the public sector, and not with privatisation.

Mr. Dalyell: What does the Minister mean by this see-sawing? How does that proposal fit in with the proposals for the Property Services Agency?

Mr. Lamont: The Bill does not cover the Property Services Agency privatisation and the PSA is not listed in the annex. The PSA is the subject of separate legislation and my comments do not apply to it; they apply to the bodies covered in the annex.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): That is an important point. Will the PSA not be run as a Government trading fund before it is privatised?

Mr. Lamont: It will not. The PSA and the Crown Suppliers are subject to separate legislation and a separate policy which will be considered in Standing Committee.

Clause 2 deals mainly with minor and consequential amendments, but it and clause 3 also deal with important improvements in reporting and accounting arrangements.

Clause 4 deals with a separate matter which has been encompassed conveniently within the Bill. Clause 4 takes advantage of the opportunity to remove from the statute book a 1946 power over private sector corporate borrowing which is largely a dead letter already, and will be wholly a dead letter from next April. Clause 5 deals with the short title, savings, repeals and extent.

I want to conclude by drawing the attention of the House to the important provisions relating to reports and accounts. A major objective of the Next Steps initiative is to reinforce accountability to Ministers and to Parliament by clarifying managerial responsibilities. That applies to all agencies, whether or not they become trading funds. The enhanced role and accountability of agency chief executives and the introduction of framework documents are essential parts of this.

For trading funds, the 1973 Act provided for each fund to produce annual commercial-style accounts which are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and laid before Parliament. The Government consider that the opportunity should now be taken to strengthen those reporting and accounting arrangements. The Bill therefore proposes bringing the Treasury's powers of direction over accounts into line with those in more recent legislation and it contains a new requirement for the production and publication of annual reports. Such reports will include, in particular, a review of performance against financial, efficiency and quality of service targets. Parliament will thus have available to it consistent annual reports and accounts for each trading fund.

For agencies that are not trading funds, the Bill would extend section 5 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1921 in a way that would give the Treasury powers to require the production of commercial-style accounts for any agency. Those would be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and laid before Parliament. As the White Paper explains, the aim would be to use these powers so that agencies which were not trading funds would supplement the appropriation accounts by commercial-style accounts prepared on an accruals basis and including balance sheets.

The proposals will increase the information available to Parliament and to the general public. The way agencies are run and managed will become more open, and their performance against the targets that they have been set will be made clear. This is an important step in increasing accountability to Parliament and more widely, and one which I believe will be welcomed by this House. The Bill may appear to be narrow and technical, but I hope that I have made it clear that it has major implications for the working of Government Departments and for the public sector. As such, I commend it to the House.

5.18 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that the Bill may appear to be narrow and technical, but it nevertheless has important consequences for the way in which the Civil Service is run. I agree with him. In some respects, the Bill has come before the House

as a result of a deficiency in the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 and because it is not as easy to set up Government trading funds as the Government would like.

The Chief Secretary outlined his view of the proposals. His interpretation of the Bill may be correct. However, another view may follow from the fact that the Government are obsessed with their dogma of privatisation. If the Tories win another election, perhaps many Government agencies will be liable for privatisation in subsequent Parliaments. *[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friends say, there is not much chance of that. But anything, however unlikely, is possible. It is true that, no matter how unprofitable it may be for the country, if something can be sold or even given away with an added backhander if necessary—for example, a green dowry which may cost about £1 billion, or a sweetener if Rover or British Aerospace is involved—the Government believe that the sooner the plans are laid to do so the better.

The second view is that the Bill is a step along the road to breaking up the Civil Service and preparing large sections of it for eventual privatisation. There is also a third view. It follows from the premise not that the Government are obsessed by their privatisation dogma but that they are obsessed by their cost-cutting and so-called efficiency dogma.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Shocking.

Dr. Marek: The Chief Secretary says, "Shocking." Nobody is in favour of spending more money than necessary, but there is a trade-off between spending money and delivering a service to the public. *[Interruption.]* Before Conservative Members laugh too readily, they should remember that anybody who has wanted a passport in the past year or two will not understand what they are laughing at. People returning from the continent must wait for an hour at Dover because there are not enough Customs officials. They will not understand why Conservative Members are laughing about this important matter. It is not about spending as little money as possible. It is about spending the right amount and giving the right service to the public.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one good way of ensuring that we spend the right amount of money on a service is to create just the sort of trading fund that the Bill would allow?

Dr. Marek: I will come to that point because it is the whole object of the Bill. Certain things will be acceptable in certain circumstances if a fund is run correctly and if there are clear guidelines on how a chief executive should run it. Such an agency could deliver a service and be subject to greater scrutiny by the House. I am not prepared to believe that the Government will do anything along those lines. The Government's intention is to try to save as much money as possible.

The third view is that even this Government cannot privatise large sections of the Civil Service and that their ultimate intention is to commercialise services that are presently provided by the Civil Service.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service officers charge farmers, even though it may discourage some farmers from using that service and could also be to the detriment of the farming industry and the public. A system of low charges may ensure that farmers do not capriciously or unnecessarily seek advice, but if a trading fund is formed, such services must be operated taking one year with another without making a loss. Charges could become very high and farmers would not use services as much as they should. Without any shadow of doubt, that would be detrimental not only to the farming industry but to the public as a whole.

The third view is that charges will be increased by the Government from time to time so that people will eventually pay the total cost of services provided and a commercial operation will result. We have heard that Government trading funds will set certain Civil Service activities on a more commercial basis. Of course we could set activities on a more commercial basis, but would the service to the public become better or worse? Several documents have been published over the past three or four years, but that point has not been addressed by the Government.

The Opposition are hostile to the Bill in so far as it seeks to achieve any of the aims expressed in the second or third views to which I have referred. We are profoundly suspicious about the first view which the Chief Secretary pressed upon us. There will be some advantages in some situations, and I will comment on them later.

Let us assume that the first view is correct and the Government have no intentions in respect of overtly commercial activities by agencies operating trading funds. It is all very well considering matters case by case, but we have no clear idea of how much of the Civil Service the Government want to turn into agencies, although figures such as three quarters have been given in evidence to various committees in the past. Equally, we have not heard how many trading funds will be instituted. The passport office is one candidate [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Again many Conservative Members shout, "Hear, hear." There is a fee for passports. At present, there is an unacceptably long delay for new or renewed passports. Of course that delay does not apply to Members of Parliament, because the Home Office manages to provide us with a 24-hour service. Hon. Members have nothing to complain about, but the public have a lot to complain about. Except in cases of extreme urgency, people must wait weeks on end.

Let us suppose that the passport office is to be run as a trading fund. What will be the cost of a passport? At the moment, primary legislation would be required to change the cost of a passport. I hope that the Government will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that primary legislation would be required to change one of the crucial ingredients of the operation of a trading fund in the Home Office. Who will decide the level of charges? A certain sum was decided many years ago, and no doubt inflation has taken its toll and somebody in the Treasury advises the Home Office from time to time on what it should be in future.

If a trading fund is instituted, the passport offices would have to look after themselves and take one year with another and not make a loss. The cost of a passport could be prohibitive. If the cost of passports is not to be prohibitive, members of the public will have to wait an unconscionably long time. Most members of the public would say that a week's delay would be reasonable in the case of a new passport and they would not see any reason why a renewed passport could not be delivered by return post or perhaps one extra day at most. Because the work is seasonal, an accountant managing the trading fund would advise a month or six months waiting time in spring

[Dr. Marek]

or summer and would say that the backlog could be made up in the winter. That is largely what happens at present and if there were a trading fund, where would there be an incentive to do anything different? It would be a choice between providing a service for the public or being able to operate the trading fund so as to have a black figure on the bottom line.

Perhaps the cost of issuing a passport could be deemed to be too high and it might be decided to pass the total cost to the public. If that happened, the Government would have to provide funds out of general taxation to avoid a permanent backlog. The ultimate horror would be a two-tier system. Those who wanted a passport quickly and by return of post would have to pay double or treble for the privilege. Of course such things are not unknown under the Government because those who have the money are able to take advantage of such services while the rest of us have to wait.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend is speaking about a trading fund. The Minister answered my hon. Friend's query by saying that the PSA was not relevant. Paragraph 8 of the Property Services Agency's report on the management of the civil estate says:

"The Property Services Agency are considering the introduction of commercial accounts and a trading fund to give clear information to clients and Parliament. Improvements in their information systems are necessary, however, and although significant interim improvements are being made their strategy is unlikely to be implemented before the 1990s."

That shows that my hon. Friend's question is highly pertinent to the debate.

Dr. Marek: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a pertinent and important question, and I am glad that the Chief Secretary said that there is no intention of running the PSA with a trading fund, before it is privatised. There has been some confusion about that, but now we have a clear answer which helps many people and not just hon. Members.

I was speaking about the passport offices and how they would be run with a trading fund. The Government do not approve of public expenditure and because of that I suspect that a long waiting list would be permanent and inevitable. The central issues are whether the service should be self-financing and what are the trade-offs between the cost of the service and its proper performance. There is no point in supplying new passports within a week if proper checks are not made about the applicants.

There is no point in making a service self-financing if it is deemed beneficial for it to be used but it is too expensive for the average man or woman. Women have the right to a free smear test for cervical cancer. I hope that no hon. Member can think of any circumstances in which there should be a charge for such a test because it is patently and clearly in the interests of the country as a whole that that service should be free.

As I have said, I could be convinced that some of the pitfalls and difficulties could be avoided and that the passport offices could begin to provide a proper service and have a trading fund at the same time. However—and this is crucial—it is not the trading fund that is vital but having properly paid and properly motivated civil servants. If there are enough of them and they have a high regard for their work and are efficient, thorough, precise and accurate, people will have a good service. That has little to do with a commercial trading fund about which the Government are seeking to persuade us.

We have to decide whether a proposed charge for a passport is fair and reasonable and whether it is possible and sensible to operate a trading fund on a quasi-commercial basis and provide a first-class service to the public. It would be wrong to set up a fund, commercialise the passport offices, and charge the necessary amount. Passport offices make inquiries about applicants for passports. If they use the police, will the police charge for their activities? Perhaps the police already do that. I will give way to any hon. Member who knows about that. In some cases there would be an incentive for such checks to be minimal and that would be detrimental to the proper functioning of the Civil Service and thus to the country.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend speaks about the police. In one aspect of police work a new system is being brought in. For the first time in police history there is a system of paying for certain forensic science services. That is a new issue of principle. I am very interested in the forensic laboratories and to me the matter is serious.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is right. That matter was next in my notes. The Government are interested in charges and cost cutting and eventual privatisation. Forensic science laboratories now have to receive money from the police when the police send them work to do. As a result, less work will be sent to them by the police. The police will be overstretched and will hesitate to send work to the laboratories. Perhaps eventually the forensic laboratories will have trading funds. Crime that should be solved will be unsolved. There should be no question of an accountant looking at unsolved crime and saying that at least thousands of pounds have been saved; I suspect that if we go too far towards trading funds and agencies we will end up in precisely that situation. When that happens it will provide work for many accountants. If the Government were to remain in office for a long time I would advise youngsters at school to train to be accountants. However, that is hypothetical because the Government will not be in power much longer. Much Government legislation is for the welfare of accountants and not for the good of the country or its expeditious and efficient governance.

I shall not dwell on my next two examples in the way I have dwelt on the passport example. Revenue received by Customs and Excise is well in excess of the cost of providing the service because the revenue comes from such things as value added tax and stamp duty. Let us consider ports of entry to the United Kingdom. Can one imagine Customs officers becoming really zealous in their tasks if items seized could be sold to contribute directly to the trading fund? That is certainly not beyond the bounds of possibility. Customs officers in Dover could say, "We are not making a profit for the trading fund and it is nearly the end of the month. We had better search everybody leaving the ships and make them wait for an hour or two." That example may be far fetched, but the principle is sound. The commercial activity that the Government seek to encourage among civil servants is precisely that which I am describing.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the searches to which he refers involve contraband, drugs and so forth, none of which can

be used to contribute to the trading fund? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's example is a little wild in the context of the Bill.

Dr. Marek: I would not defend my arguments all the way along the road. However, to some extent my argument highlights the philosophy of the Government. Perhaps not contraband or heroin but the odd bottle of whisky or item of clothing from Hong Kong may be taken through Customs without being declared.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Before the hon. Gentleman gets too carried away, has he noticed paragraph 4.14 of the White Paper which says:

"Thus for example the delivery of social security benefits, and tax assessment and collection are outside the powers"?

Dr. Marek: I have noticed that and that is why I have restricted my argument to the Customs and Excise which does not carry out tax collection in the strict sense in which the Chief Secretary means it. When goods are declared that is what the Customs and Excise does, but I was talking about the aspect of Customs work that involves detecting goods coming into the country which are not declared where there is an intention to defraud on the part of the persons bringing in the goods.

I do not wish to dwell on the Customs and Excise. Suffice it to say that it is not just about detecting contraband. Most of its task is to collect tax on goods which are properly declared. There is a trade-off between stopping the importation of illegal articles and ensuring that the proper duties are paid on other articles. It is also the job of the Customs officers at ports of entry to be civil to and not to inconvenience unduly the travelling public at ports of entry. At present there are long queues and much inconvenience is caused at ports of entry. It is tempting to say that any other system must be better, but that is not the answer. Nor is a trading fund the answer. Let ports of entry be properly staffed. Let there be more than one desk at immigration when 300 people come off a jumbo jet. Let the Government employ a few more Customs officers so that motorists taking their cars off the ferries at Dover, Folkestone and elsewhere can go through the formalities without waiting for one or two hours as they have to do on many occasions. That is the answer.

The Government have said that the vehicle inspectorate is a number one candidate for a trading fund. A balance will have to be struck between charging for the services that it provides and proper attention to and testing of vehicles to ensure that the public are safe and can be assured that the inspectorate is performing its functions properly. If there is a trading fund, the chief executive will be given powers to run the inspectorate at a profit. There is a danger that if he deems that it would be difficult to set charges at the market level or a high enough level he will be tempted to cut corners and tell his employees, "Do not spend half an hour testing this vehicle. Can you not do it in 20 or 25 minutes?" The Government must address the danger that corners will be cut. They must assure Opposition Members and the country that it will not happen.

The White Paper says on page 6 in paragraph 2.2:

"The main aim of the Next Steps initiative is to deliver services more efficiently and effectively".

We can call that phrase weasel words. I think that at one time or another we have all used that phrase. Such concepts are not easily defined. We interpret them in our own way. I have my own interpretation of performing a service efficiently and effectively. If we read on, we see that the paragraph says,

"within available resources for the benefit of taxpayers".

There we have another example of the Government's cost-cutting ethos. It is the Government who set the resources. They will set them at too low a level and will then set the impossible task—not only to the chief executive—to carry out the functions of the agency properly and responsibly. The Government will put enormous pressure on the civil servants in the agency. Employees will have to struggle simply to keep their jobs and do them properly and accurately.

The same paragraph of the Command Paper says that agencies represent a new and distinctive development. That is what the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said in his opening remarks. There are problems with agencies. They depend on the director. A bad manager will mean, by and large, that we shall have a bad agency, if not immediately, certainly in due course.

Mr. Hind: This argument equally applies to civil servants at present.

Dr. Marek: I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me in that argument. If we are to have agencies it is crucial that the chief executives are of high calibre and have management skills to enable them to make a success of running the day-to-day affairs of the agency. They must also have sufficient integrity not to buckle to the Minister at his every whim.

Government trading funds are intended for many agencies. Some agencies were not necessarily set up as a result of the Fulton committee but partly in an attempt to reduce the pay of civil servants. Agencies will result in regionalisation of pay, local pay additions and a lack of mobility for civil servants. Employees will not be able to transfer from one agency to another or return to the Civil Service as easily as they did in the past. I may be overstating the ease with which they could move in the past, but the onus is on the Government to assure us that if the Bill reaches the statute book and if agencies are set up, some with Government trading funds, the mobility of civil servants will be no worse than before.

Mr. Kemp, the project manager of the Next Steps project, is effusive in his protestations that agencies will provide a better service to the public and improve morale in the Civil Service. I have no reason to believe that he does not believe that that will be so. However, it is implied that pay will have to be differentiated on geographical grounds. That has been demonstrated. There is a hidden implication that agencies would make the Civil Service a more commercial organisation, dedicated to making a profit at the expense of the public. Sometimes that is a precursor to privatisation in a future Parliament.

All the factors that I have mentioned are worrying. Many people believe that the confrontation between management, which pursues profits, and employees has caused our economic decline this century. There is a danger that that confrontation will be introduced into the Civil Service.

To take an example of what is wrong with British industry, at the end of last week the ambulance workers' unions suggested that there should be a 15-minute stoppage of work. They did not say, "Everybody out. It does not matter what the employers say." They said, "Let us stop work for 15 minutes. Ask your employer if he or

[Dr. Marek]

she will allow you to stop work. If that is acceptable, stop for 15 minutes." What did British industry do? It did not say, "All right, we agree. we do not think that the ambulance men and women are right and a stoppage of 15 minutes would be detrimental to the country generally, but we agree that something should be done to tell the ambulance men and women and the Government to get together and to reach an agreement." They did not say, "Production cannot be stopped in essential industries." Nor did they say, "We do not mind, but work 15 minutes later." Instead, the Institute of Directors and the CBI said to industry, "You can sue the unions if they stop work for 15 minutes."

That is an ethos which I do not want to see within the Civil Service. I do not want to see that confrontational style. By and large, the Civil Service is still administering the country on the bases of fairness and accuracy. By and large, civil servants take a pride in their work and aim for excellence in every respect. The Government have attacked that approach and made life difficult wherever possible.

When the Government took office, the pay review unit was cancelled. There was an attempt to privatise the National Engineering Laboratory. A ban was placed on trade unions at GCHQ. Research institutes became demoralised. The Bill's provisions propose the spread of agencies and trading funds. I shall need much convincing by the Government that the Bill's provisions are not merely another way of cutting staff, introducing regional pay and more contracting out, and ending national pay bargaining.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): All good things.

Dr. Marek: There we have it. The hon. Gentleman says, "All good things." He is honest. I hope that what I am saying does not constitute the Government's intent. I hope also that Conservative Members will disown the hon. Gentleman's intervention. As I have said, I believe that the Bill signals the ending of national terms and conditions of service.

A code of ethics is to be introduced for the Civil Service. The loyalty of a civil servant to his or her Minister is to be absolute. I do not know how that can work. For example, Inland Revenue civil servants have statutory duties when they are dealing with the tax affairs of members of the public. Lawyers have legal obligations when discharging their functions. Statisticians have professional duties. How would we resolve a potential conflict?

The Government are not interested in fairness, justice or morality. Thank goodness there are not many bent civil servants. Under the Government, however, many decent people will have to continue to wrestle with their conscience, as did Clive Ponting. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will agree that if a civil servant improperly authorises the release of letters written by the Attorney-General——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying wide of the terms of the Bill.

Dr. Marek: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am coming to the end of my remarks.

If a civil servant improperly authorises the release of letters——

Mr. Dalyell: What my hon. Friend says is especially relevant to the fact, which I believe is unprecedented, that the First Division Association has formally protested to the Government about the new guidelines for relations between civil servants and the Government. It has argued that the Crown comes into the matter at some stage. Is it not extraordinary that the First Division Association should have complained about its treatment by any British Government?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend has made an important intervention. What he says is symptomatic of the Government's attack upon the Civil Service over the past 10 years. It is certain that a civil servant who improperly authorises the release of letters written by the Attorney-General is as bent as the Minister who asks him to do it. I do not believe that civil servants should be put in difficult positions of that sort. We are to have trading funds——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to relate the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the Bill.

Dr. Marek: I shall seek to explain why they relate to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There may be cost cutting in the operation of a trading fund. Vehicles may not be inspected properly, for example, because of the pressures that are on the trading fund. The chief executive may say, "We are not making a profit for the fund." That will put the civil servant in the same difficulty that other civil servants have faced in other areas of the Civil Service. That has been happening throughout the Government's existence. We are not faced with an isolated problem with the introduction and spread of trading funds. If the Government are serious, I accept that it is possible that trading funds could work in some instances, but the Government must convince Opposition Members that they are not pursuing their old dogma and attacks on the Civil Service of the sort that we have witnessed over the past 10 years. That is the central issue.

The Bill will not do much for the Civil Service or the public. We suspect that clear intentions lie behind its introduction, and if that is so they will warrant unlimited opposition. Mr. Kemp, the Next Steps project manager, envisages three quarters of the Civil Service eventually being organised on an agency basis. When the agencies have been set up and the framework agreements instituted, the unions have not been consulted. Any hon. Member who wishes to pursue that matter a little further has to read only page 7 of House of Commons Paper No. 420, the 38th report of the Public Accounts Committee. It is there made pretty clear that the unions were not consulted properly.

The next Labour Government will put matters right. Mr. Kemp will be given something else to do when that Administration takes office.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman for three quarters of an hour and I have not been able to establish so far whether it is the Opposition's intention to oppose the Bill. Will he make that clear?

Dr. Marek: I shall come to that.

The next Labour Government will not disband the agencies that have already been created but in all probability we shall not create any more. I say that because the nation's economy is in such a mess that there are many important actions that the next Labour

Government will have to take. We shall then see how the agencies and the trading funds have operated. At that stage we may be able to take a more considered view.

There is nothing wrong with the accountability to Parliament that is provided by the Bill. I have no quarrel with that. Besides publishing accounts, however, there should be scrutiny by Parliament over the day-to-day affairs of chief executives of agencies. That can be carried out by the Public Accounts Committee. Better still, however, the scrutiny should be available to every Member of this place. That could be provided for but at the moment I am not sure of the Government's intentions. I refer to page 18 of the White Paper. At the end of paragraph 5.10 there appears the following:

"The exact format of individual reports, and their degree of detail, will be for the responsible Minister and the Chief Executive to decide in the light of circumstances and objectives."

That is not good enough. I should like a more forthright statement about the Government's readiness to accept, first, accountability, and, secondly, scrutiny.

There is one other initiative that the next Labour Government will take because the Bill says little about responsibility to the consumer. It makes mention of delivering a service but not of accountability. Agencies could be vehicles for a much better service to the public. It will be possible to give agencies guidelines on how they should go about their activities. Such guidelines would not be dictated solely by commercial considerations, and because of the nature of the agencies it will be easier both for Parliament and the public to judge them and their success—or otherwise. That particular aspect is one to which a Labour Government will pay close attention.

The Bill has some good points, depending on which Government are responsible for enforcing its provisions. For that reason, the Government should publish a list of trading fund candidates as they have in respect of agencies. The Government should declare also how much privatisation is envisaged for the long term.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have done so.

Dr. Marek: I am speaking of the long term. I do not wish to delay the House, but there are quotations from the Prime Minister in which she stated that it was not possible to reveal what will and will not be privatised in the long term.

As to the question of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), if the Bill receives its Second Reading, we shall press the Government in Committee on all the issues that I mentioned.

6 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on his short and effective presentation of the Bill, in just 20 minutes. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) spoke for nearly 50 minutes, and I feel sure that even his own right hon. and hon. Friends would like to see him shunted off into a trading fund. We might then be able to get on with our business.

The Bill is an important, albeit technical, measure. At present there are 10 executive agencies employing 7,000 staff. The Bill makes provision for a further 42 agencies involving perhaps 190,000 people, so we are talking big business. I welcome the Bill, which is entirely in line with Government policy. Such services need to be more business oriented and geared to consumer demand and market forces. If matters of managerial judgment are involved, why should not more flexible arrangements be made in the agencies?

Annex A of the White Paper "The Financing and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies" presents a long list of the agencies, but few of them concern the Ministry of Defence. One relates to the Royal Air Force, but there is no agency connected with either of the other two services. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will comment on that when he replies to the debate. There is scope within the Ministry of Defence for more initiatives of the kind that we are debating.

The White Paper states that the Next Steps project manager will identify obstacles and tackle them. Can my right hon. Friend state what kind of business experience is available in the manager's office? Will it be manned entirely by civil servants? There is clearly a need for much greater business acumen, and that is particularly relevant in the light of paragraph 2.6 of the White Paper, which reads:

"Before any Agency is established, the need for the activity is reviewed and alternative options, including contracting out the work and privatisation, are examined."

Will there be continuous monitoring of the prospects for privatisation, and will there be sufficient impetus and knowledge of the private sector in the Next Steps office to ensure that trading status is not a convenient and quiet alternative to privatisation? In many instances, privatisation may be the better solution.

Paragraph 2.7 of the White Paper makes it clear that the Bill is a response to the work of the Public Accounts Committee. I take it that the Government are seeking to clarify the managerial role of trading agencies as distinct from the policy role of the relevant Ministers. When my right hon. Friend winds up, perhaps he will say whether all the Committee's recommendations have been implemented. If only some have been implemented, which recommendations have not been implemented?

The outcome of each agency's work will be set out in the framework document and "made available to Parliament". What does that mean? How much scrutiny will there be? I accept, given the different natures of the agencies, that there will be some diversity in their relationships and closeness to Ministers. The key question is whether they will be equally accountable to Parliament.

Under existing arrangements for the Civil Service, Departments are cash limited and subject to scrutiny by the Public Accounts Committee and Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. The new arrangements will be different. The trading funds established in 1973 allowed the Government to finance activities outside normal parliamentary control. Those funds have considerable independence, including the power to borrow. Paragraph 4.3 of the White Paper states:

"Parliamentary control is obtained through:—the affirmative Order establishing each fund—the scrutiny of statutory annual accounts, and the power to examine the fund Accounting Officer."

How much scrutiny of those funds by Parliament has there been? What evidence is there that they have been successful?

The Government Trading Funds Act 1973 established a strictly limited number of well-known trading funds, such as the Royal Mint and her Majesty's Stationery Office. Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the

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much longer list of smaller and lesser-known bodies that will, under the Bill, be allowed to enjoy trading fund status will receive adequate parliamentary scrutiny?

Paragraph 4.6 of the White Paper states:

"Under the 1973 Act the accounts of a trading fund are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General, who is required to lay them before Parliament together with his report. They are then published as a House of Commons Paper. This provides a basis for Parliament to consider the performance of the funds against its financial and other performance targets."

We often hear those comforting words in our debates, but how much parliamentary scrutiny of the trading funds has there really been and how effective was it? I am not saying that I disagree with the Bill, but it is only right for this House to demand more clarification on Second Reading. The Bill is clearly needed, but as it gives the Government enormous powers Parliament has a right to the answers it seeks.

I agree that the present definition of trading status is imprecise and I welcome the new formula, which was originally outlined in paragraph 4.12 of the White Paper. However, is not the new formula so broad as to include virtually anything? That may suit those who share my ideological standpoint, but that degree of breadth may concern other right hon. and hon. Members. It is important that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury reassures them when he replies.

The rules of payment for the use of Government services in respect of social security benefits, for example, apply to fewer than half of all receipts and therefore will not be covered by the Bill. However, I should like to know how the figure of 50 per cent. was arrived at, for no explanation has been given. I would welcome my right hon. Friend's comments on that aspect. Why stick at 50 per cent.? Why not make it less, or more?

I would appreciate further information on the way in which the Government intend to use what is a very generous enabling Bill. Paragraph 4.16 of the White Paper states:

"The first criterion for assessing suitability is whether, as a matter of policy, the Government considers that levels of activity and expenditure should vary in line with demands and receipts."

I do not claim to be a highly intelligent Member of Parliament, but I find it difficult to understand that particular phrase and shall be grateful for my right hon. Friend's elucidation of it. Also, if agency trading comes about, how will the arm's length relationship with other Government Departments be maintained? The White Paper does not provide sufficient assurances. How will staff performance be rewarded? Will there be increased pay or bonuses? That aspect relates to paragraph 18 of the White Paper. Finally, how will the external finance limit restrict business initiative by the staff operating in the trading funds?

I apologise to my right hon. Friend for asking so many questions. In general, I welcome what is a worthwhile and useful Bill, which will do much to increase public confidence in the agencies. I wish the Bill every success in Committee and in its later stages.

6.9 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): This is a useful Bill which will improve the present statutory provision for creating trading accounts within the public service.

I listened for about three quarters of an hour to find out whether Labour Members would vote against the Bill, and I have come to the conclusion that no one will vote against it tonight. I assume that I am correct. It was clearly inadequate to continue to rest the creation of the funds on the basis of the old legislation, and the Government are sensible to introduce the Bill.

Although I assume that it is the case, it is not clear from the face of the Bill whether the creation of any trading fund will require an affirmative resolution of the House. The Government have said that in the White Paper, and I assume that the combined effect of the two Bills is that it will require an affirmative resolution for any fund to be set up. If that is not the case, it should be put right during the passage of the Bill. The Government have said that that is their intention, and I assume that they will keep to that.

A series of possible candidates for trading funds is listed in the White Paper. A number of those listed do not lend themselves to being trading funds because they do not fall within the just-quoted definition of activities in which there can be some variation of expenditure according "to demands and receipts." That applies to a relatively small number.

When the candidates are considered, it is important that not only the trading fund operation is taken into account but how performance standards can be set for the funds. The worry is that agencies will not have adequate performance standards set and that standards will not be monitored. The White Paper says that the

"Agencies will commit themselves to substantial and measurable improvements in performance, in terms of services and their costs".

It should be made clear that the standards will be set at the beginning, and that they will weigh as heavily on the agency as the requirement to balance its books. If that is not so, we will simply get a perpetuation of inadequate standards or worse.

The passport office has been referred to, and I hope that nobody has come to the conclusion that the existing system is working satisfactorily. No one who has observed the work of the Liverpool passport office during the past two or three years can argue that it is working satisfactorily, and that was the case long before the industrial dispute. I am glad that the Government Chief Whip is in his place because he was a Home Office Minister and many of the staff in his office were helpful to hon. Members seeking to chase up passports for constituents who urgently needed them. Passport applications were extracted from a mound of applications that had not been dealt with. I had a number of experiences that led me to believe that the organisation was not being run as a commercial organisation would be run.

Late one Saturday afternoon I was on the telephone to an official in the Minister's office at the Home Office. I was working on a passport application. The Minister and civil servants in London were working on a passport application but no member of the management was in the Liverpool office to find out what had happened to it. I expect that they were out watching Liverpool or Everton. In any commercial organisation, in the middle of an industrial dispute, when it was unable to meet its requirements, the management would have been working

at the weekends. That was not happening in the passport office. Long before the industrial dispute arose—and there were good reasons for that dispute—there was a state of near chaos in the Liverpool passport office, and they were unable to meet the heavy summer demand.

The candidate organisations are generally monopolies and it is therefore important to ensure that there is a system to set performance standards. One cannot get a passport from anywhere other than a passport office. Those people who were shrewd enough to send their applications to the Belfast office before the dispute arose got their passports on time. In that respect it is not a monopoly, but one can get a passport only from the Government. A vehicle can be validly examined only by an inspector authorised by the Government. Many of the organisations listed in the White Paper are monopolies. We cannot simply create trading funds, and allow them to exploit their monopoly position to continue to provide a bad or an inadequate service. Therefore, it is important that trading requirements and strong performance standards are set and that they can be monitored by Parliament.

Some of the organisations that are already working under the trading fund arrangements—for example, Her Majesty's Stationery Office—would not survive for long in the real market place, or the public sector, if they engaged in the pricing arrangements that they have now. The White Paper, "The Financing and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies" is printed by HMSO, which claims that it has 29 pages. It has only 25 pages, as four are blank. The price of those 25 pages is £4·60. That is supposed to be commercial enterprise working in the public service. Clearly there is a long way to go to get the level of efficiency that a non-monopoly commercial organisation has to achieve to survive, and I would welcome any attempt to achieve that.

I emphasise that it is the monopolistic position that many organisations enjoy that makes it insufficient merely to set up a trading fund. If the Government-appointed agency is the only supplier—as it has to be for some things—it will take more than a trading fund requirement to ensure that the public get a satisfactory service, and that is what the Bill is about. The public should get satisfactory service at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayer, and the present situation does not ensure that.

Dr. Marek: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to reconsider his words. A satisfactory service is perhaps too low a standard. Let us have a good, first-class service for the public.

Mr. Beith: I am prepared to accept that qualification, although to my mind a satisfactory service would be getting a passport within a week, but a good service is to get it by return of post. The way that the terms have been used shows how standards have slipped over the years. The currency has become debased. I accept that a stronger term than "satisfactory" is needed. We want to ensure that a good service can be provided at reasonable cost. The present arrangements in many areas of the public service have not ensured that.

The trading funds system is appropriate to some areas of public service, but it will have to be backed up by strong performance standards, particularly when the Government are the monopoly suppliers.

6.17 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I believe that most right hon. and hon. Members welcome the Bill because it recognises that the role of the Civil Service is vital to Britain but cannot be divorced from the needs of the public; that has been one of the cornerstones of Government policy.

The Bill goes a long way towards trying to relate the structure of the Civil Service more closely to the needs of the people through the various trading funds and the staff that manage them. I think that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was trying to make that point in his lucid speech.

The Bill sets out to expose Civil Service practice to some of the pressures of commercial practice, although it cannot be 100 per cent. successful in achieving that.

We listened for more than 50 minutes to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and he made a lot of spurious points. One was the work of ADAS, which does not appear in annex A of the trading funds. Many of the points the hon. Gentleman made demonstrated that he does not know much about the subject.

ADAS, in fact, brought in a charging mechanism to demonstrate the wealth of advice from a range of private bodies that is available to farmers, whatever the activity in which they are involved. Its introduction has shown that farmers, once they have to pay, prefer to pay for advice from private bodies that have kept up with modern developments in technology and work systems: the problem is not the charges, but the evidence that has emerged that what was required was not being provided. The hon. Gentleman should, perhaps, consult his hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), his party's spokesman on agriculture, I do not think that he will find much evidence of support for the suggestion of a subsidy to enable ADAS to provide a free service, as it used to.

It has become fashionable to regard civil servants as a cohesive group. We should not do so, however, for they are involved in a range of different activities, as is demonstrated by the number of possible agencies listed in annex A. They may be research or investigative scientists, clerks, historians, administrators or members of many other disciplines, and thus cannot be lumped together. All the agencies and candidate agencies have some impact on the public, and most have a considerable impact: the vast majority of staff are in employment or social security offices.

The overwhelming majority of civil servants are highly competent and capable. I do not subscribe to the theory that they are workshy and could not survive in the private and commercial sectors, although I know that many people hold that view; I had a good deal to do with civil servants in certain sectors before I came to the House, and I believe that the Bill will show that they are as competent as I consider them to be. The problems of poor service and insufficient accountability have been caused by the system that has operated for so many years—a system that stultifies initiative, discourages innovation of any kind and encourages people to believe themselves immune from accountability, disciplinary measures and even dismissal.

By allowing trading funds to be set up, the Bill will go a long way towards solving those problems, although it is bound to cause uncertainty among staff: everyone fears change, and many civil servants will doubtless wonder

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what that change holds for them. While I do not dismiss their anxiety, I believe that in time it will be shown to be groundless. Trading funds will help to improve accountability, and will create conditions much more akin to those in the private and commercial sectors—conditions in which the individual can prosper. They will assist personal development and encourage the innovative processes that are so essential to a commercial operation.

I have, however, some anxieties about the Bill. First, I am keen that, where appropriate, civil servants who run the trading funds should be given terms and conditions of employment comparable with private-sector operations in the same sphere. However, while that may involve a considerable review of salary structure, it may also mean a weakening of the position of such staff—for instance, their protection against dismissal. We should remember that the Ibbs report criticised the centralised pay and conditions rules of the Civil Service for being outside the control of most managers and

"structured to fit everything in general and nothing in particular".

I hope that the Government will not simply conclude that, with agency status, those responsible for operating the trading funds will still be civil servants, with Civil Service conditions and pay scales. Some of the agencies will have to compete for staff and in terms of the quality of their service, just like private-sector operations.

My other concern is competition. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed has already made some of the points that I wanted to make. Simple responsibility for a fund will not achieve all that we would wish; financial targets—for returns on investment, for example—will not bring about all the desired results. We must go as far as we can towards creating competition, perhaps even breaking down some of the agencies into two or more groups so that they can compete among themselves—on a regional basis, for instance. We must try to engender competition wherever possible.

After a few years we may find that some of the agencies are not really needed, at least within the public sector, and if that happens so be it. The hon. Member for Wrexham wanted an assurance that the Government's proposal was not the precursor of privatisation or even abandonment. Perhaps, in view of the party that I represent, it is not surprising that I find it difficult to understand the ideology that the agencies should continue regardless, and that we should not consider privatising them. Such is the rate of change in Labour's policies that before many moons have passed its members may well suggest privatisation themselves—not, I hasten to add, that they will have the opportunity to do so.

I feel that we should question some aspects of the agencies listed in annex A, which will be prime candidates for the establishment of trading funds. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed mentioned Her Majesty's Stationery Office, and I should like to know why it is necessary for such an organisation to be in the public sector. As the hon. Gentleman emphasised, some of its provision can hardly compete with what we would expect from a private-sector equivalent.

I also wonder—this will be dear to the heart of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Civil Service—why we need a special college for civil servants. If we wish to encourage civil servants to operate in a commercial environment, they should be trained by people who already work in such an environment, rather than by people trained under the system that we are trying to change.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Is not investment in the training of British managers in the private sector very low compared with our European competitors? The private sector's record of investing in the training of British managers is very poor.

Mr. Paice: As one would expect, the hon. Gentleman's comments are some years out of date. Management training in the United Kingdom has gone forward by leaps and bounds during the past few years. Private sector investment in training has increased by at least 50 per cent. in the last three or four years. That fact cannot be disputed. The hon. Gentleman needs only to check with the Confederation of British Industry, if he doubts it.

I do not suggest that British industrial management training right across the board is adequate. However, the ability of commercial training firms to train to the highest level has been proved throughout the United Kingdom. The companies that provide private sector management training could also provide it for civil servants.

The Queen Elizabeth II conference centre is a building of renown, especially to those of us whose offices are in Dean's yard or elsewhere in the conference centre's vicinity. I was surprised to find that it is listed. I wonder why the public sector is running the conference centre. I hope that in the near future it will be funded by a trading fund, to be followed shortly afterwards by privatisation.

I have already referred to the employment service as being one of the most important potential candidates for financing through a trading fund. It employs 34,000 civil servants and it is involved with the public. Members of Parliament receive many letters of complaint from constituents. They complain about how they have been dealt with by employment service employees. It is an essential part of the public sector, but it must remember that it is there to serve the public.

The fuel suppliers branch may employ fewer than 50 people, but one has to ask why there should be a fuel suppliers branch to provide a bulk fuel purchasing service to Government Departments. Surely a trading fund ought to be established so that the fuel suppliers branch can be got rid of altogether. A multitude of private sector companies could do that job.

Much has been said about passport office delays, but nothing has been said about Land Registry delays. During the last few years I have received many letters from people who have complained bitterly about Land Registry delays. When people want to move from one part of the country to another—usually to my constituency because of the thriving economy and low levels of unemployment—they find that it is difficult to do so. Delays are due to lack of accountability. Improvements must be made.

Property Holdings, which is responsible for the management of the Government's property portfolio, ought to be run in the same way as the private sector runs such a business. If it is cost effective for the Government to have their own property holdings, that is fine; I have no fundamental objection to that. However, if it is to be cost effective, Property Holdings must be staffed and run in

such a way as to make it competitive with the private sector. A trading fund would ensure that it could be compared favourably with the private sector.

As for the Training Agency—formerly the Manpower Services Commission—I had a great deal to do with that organisation before I became a Member of Parliament. The Training Agency is venturing into an area that, so far as I know, is unknown to the rest of the Civil Service. There has been the introduction of private management, through the development of training and enterprise councils. Private industry will set up its own councils. Some members of the Training Agency's staff will be seconded to the training and enterprise councils to carry out administrative, operational and executive functions. Civil servants will be responsible to the private sector management. It will be interesting to watch the experiment over the next few years. It will provide civil servants with the opportunity to demonstrate all those characteristics that I described earlier as being essential if the operation is to be commercial and serve the public.

Despite the implications of some of my remarks, I believe that the majority of civil servants are competent. They have the ability to compete in a much more commercial operation. Ultimately, however, their job is to provide a service to the public, whether it be across the counter at a Department of Social Security office or behind the scenes in a research laboratory. This enabling Bill will allow most of the agencies to operate in a way that will demonstrate clearly how effective and efficient they are. I hope that in a few years time we shall be able to introduce a tranche of Bills to privatise some of the agencies. As a first step towards privatisation, I welcome the Bill.

6.36 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): This enabling Bill will provide the Government with enormous powers. Therefore, we are entitled to probe the Government's intentions. I should like to follow what was said by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) by asking a few detailed questions about some of the entries in the annex to the White Paper.

According to annex A, the Resettlement Agency

"Provides resettlement units for people without settled way of life."

The social security IT services directorate

"Provides computer and communication technology services for the DSS."

The social security benefits administration

"Assesses, issues and administers social security benefits."

According to the Chief Secretary's speech, some of those services could be brought within the ambit of the Bill.

The Government announced in November the relocation of Social Security and Health Service departments to Leeds, involving 2,000 members of staff, from the chief executive down. That move has been welcomed in Leeds, and I hope that it is a sign of the Government's commitment to a regional policy. It is a key regional centre and the staff will get a warm Yorkshire welcome when they arrive in Leeds.

The Chief Secretary said that Government Departments are complex. Will the Resettlement Agency and the social security IT services directorate and the social security benefits administration, which are candidates for agencies in under Next Steps, be funded as trading agencies? Is it intended that commercial-style accountancy should be introduced in those departments?

The Resettlement Agency provides homes for people with no fixed abode. They will pay rent, for which they will get a receipt. Paragraph 4.14 of the White Paper says:

"The powers extend only to bodies which generate receipts in respect of goods or services provided. Where there are no such receipts the powers could not be used. The effect is to exclude areas of Government where the payment is not directly related to the provision of the goods or services, or where such payments constitute less than half of the body's revenue . . . Thus for example the delivery of social security benefits, and tax assessment and collections are outside the powers."

I wonder whether the reference to collection only involves tax and whether all social security benefits are clearly outside the remit.

The social fund was a shift of policy from benefit as grant to benefit as loan—a loan which has to be repaid from benefit. I hope that there will not be a shift to commercial-style accounting in that area. Social security offices should offer a fair, efficient and just service to claimants who, through no fault of their own, need to make a claim. They have often been made to feel that they are victims or that they have committed an offence.

In a leader last January, *The Times* said:

"Last year one of the brighter sparks in the Social Security Department introduced an impressive prospectus for change. It proposed to remove from London the processing and basic clerical tasks occasioned by claims for income support . . . It also urged the treatment of claimants not as enemies of the system but as citizens deserving efficient administration."

I hope that that will indeed be the case. The Department of Social Security recently introduced a new logo for its leaflets. It appeared as a smile. Some might argue in other debates that that smile is somewhat ironic in the light of benefit reductions. But as the Department is to move to the friendlier location of Leeds, let us hope that the service will be much more efficient and friendly rather than shift towards a business intent on shaming those who claim benefits. That is the type of improved management and efficiency that we would like.

I should be most grateful if the Chief Secretary would assure me that the Government have absolutely no intention, now or in the future, that any part of social security provision should be covered by this Bill.

6.42 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): This is an excellent Bill. It takes forward much of what the Government have already done to reorganise the Civil Service. I fully support it and urge the House to vote for its Second Reading.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was at pains to tell us that the Bill is worrying. More than anything else, the Bill shows up the differences of attitude between the two sides of the House. We look for efficiency and better cost management and see a role for the private sector. The Opposition want central control and maintain that the civil servant is always right and, as a result, must be left alone. If the hon. Gentleman plans to be a Minister, I urge him to be subjected to a compulsory session of "Yes Minister". Sir Humphrey Appleby could teach him quite a bit. Civil Servants can look after themselves extremely well.

When we consider the delivery of necessary services by the Government, the need for improvement is hammered home to us. I am a lawyer and must say that the Land Registry is a complete shambles. Solicitors carrying out

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conveyancing experience great difficulty getting the proper documents, and getting certificates for leases takes far too long. House transfers are delayed most unnecessarily.

The same can be said for the driver and vehicle licensing centre at Swansea. Any solicitor or barrister who has applied on behalf of his client for a copy of a driver's licence for the magistrates' benefit and anybody who has applied for a new copy of his licence will know of the terrible problems there. The Liverpool passport office is on my constituency's doorstep. Many of my constituents who wanted to go abroad on holiday were caused great anxiety last year by the dispute there. That office has a history of inefficiency. Such difficulties must be tackled. The White Paper is an excellent document, and the Bill based on it is the way forward.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Land Registry. Does he agree that one of the difficulties, to say nothing of the lack of resources for additional staff, is that people who try to sell homes to other people may find that they are involved in litigation about who pays the ground rent? Every day of the week, thousands of transactions involving the sale of ground rents are made in London. That causes huge delays in the Land Registry. The Government have failed to prevent such speculation, which creates difficulties for the Land Registry and the hon. Gentleman's clients.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the transfer of freeholds, when the occupier is a leaseholder, is a big problem. I am sure that he is aware of the Lord Chancellor's proposals, based on the Australian and New Zealand model, to introduce a new style of ownership for flats in London. That will eventually do away with the problem he mentioned. The hon. Gentleman and I experience the same difficulties in our constituencies. The same is true for much of the north of England. I accept the need for reform, as does the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McCartney: The Lord Chancellor's proposals relate exclusively to transactions in London. They do not affect transactions in the rest of the United Kingdom. This is not a party political issue. The House should find time to resolve this difficulty, which affects millions of potential purchasers each year.

Mr. Hind: As an active member of the all-party leasehold reform group, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join us——

Mr. McCartney: I am a member of it.

Mr. Hind: We are working with the Building Societies Association to bring forward a proposal such as that——

Mr. McCartney: I am the assistant secretary.

Mr. Hind: I said that the hon. Gentleman is an active member. He will come along and help.

The examples I have mentioned demonstrate the need for Next Steps agencies. A trading fund is the logical step for many of them—they provide services directly to the public.

The White Paper draws attention to the problems of monopolies. We should consider that problem carefully. I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) said about the list of Next Steps agencies in the back of the White Paper. Do the Government need to be involved in many of the functions listed there? Could they not be done equally well by the private sector? I welcome the fact that the Government are considering privatising those functions in future. Many of them could be carried out just as well in the private sector.

The trading funds that will be set up for the Next Steps agencies will not in any way reduce accountability to Parliament. Paragraph 5(1) of the White Paper states:

> "Next Steps will involve no diminution in Ministerial accountability to Parliament. Indeed, the creation of Agencies will clarify managerial responsibilities and reinforce accountability to Ministers and to Parliament."

The majority of chief executives will be former civil servants. The hon. Member for Wrexham says that chief executives will feel under pressure to produce results and will not feel able to satisfy the public's need for service. But civil servants feel the same pressure and the same need to satisfy the public's requirements at the moment. That will not change except that the agencies will be treated individually. The Comptroller and Auditor General will publish a report which, along with the accounts, will be brought before the House of Commons so that we can scrutinise the operation of that part of the Civil Service. Today, much of it is subsumed into the whole and we never know how efficient individual parts of the Civil Service are. The report will provide us with a good opportunity to look at it. The funds will be created by affirmative order of the House of Commons and the chief executives will be subject to examination by the Comptroller and Auditor General and no doubt will be called before Select Committees when it is considered that matters need to be investigated by the House. In future these matters will be safe in the hands of the House and Ministers.

I now turn to more parochial considerations. Next Steps agencies will be important for the provinces of England, Wales and Scotland because they will be self-contained units with chief executives responsible directly to Ministers, so there is absolutely no reason why they need to operate in the south-east. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who represent northern constituencies will agree that we have a classic opportunity to move those agencies into the provinces to create jobs in areas of high unemployment.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): In Lancashire.

Mr. Hind: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. There is no reason why many of the agencies should not move north. A number of Department of Social Security offices are located in Blackpool and before it was privatised the new headquarters of Girobank was set up in the constituency of the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) close to the constituency of the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). The Government have successfully transferred Civil Service jobs from the south-east to the north. That must continue. Given the technology and the communications that exist today, there is no reason why all the major offices of state should be located in the south-east of England. Next Steps agencies will be the beginning.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Hind: Let me finish this point.

In the past six months I have had the privilege to serve in the Northern Ireland Office as a parliamentary private secretary. A similar situation exists in the Welsh Office where Ministers are based in London but can communicate with civil servants by video and by television link so that they can have meetings with civil servants who are 100 or 200 miles away. Those jobs will provide much-needed prosperity in the regions and should move out of the overcrowded south-east where Conservative Members are desperate to protect the green belt. Up north we have the infrastructure, the housing and the quality of life to absorb those jobs.

I note that the Minister for the Civil Service is in his place. I hope that he will take on board my comments. Part of St. Joseph's college, the seminary at Upholland, is in my constituency. It is available for such an organisation as a Next Steps agency and is close to the M6 and the M58. A Next Steps agency could be set up in a class II listed building, a magnificent Victorian building in 180 acres of parkland providing a superb standard of life, as anyone living in my constituency or in that of the hon. Member for Makerfield would agree.

Mr. McCartney: I agree that hon. Members on both sides of the House should continue their efforts to achieve the transfer of jobs northwards and to create initiatives to provide new jobs in the north. The hon. Gentleman and I have recently been involved in the privatisation of Girobank. He supported the privatisation process which nearly lost us jobs in the north-west from Britoil in Wigan. The battle was not only about privatisation but about retaining the jobs in the north-west after privatisation. The hon. Gentleman was silent in the argument about privatisation and the possibility of jobs being transferred. I shall not go into his difficulties at Upholland and the fact that his constituents are up in arms about the possibility of development, commercial or otherwise, at the seminary. It may be difficult for the hon. Gentleman in view of his small majority which will not be helped by his speech today as most of his majority is probably made up of civil servants in the passport office in Liverpool.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman referred to the problems at Upholland. Perhaps he will appreciate that it is an ideal centre for a Next Steps agency. West Lancashire district council, which is Conservative controlled, has rejected the proposals by the church to develop in green belt and recognises as I do that that college could be more sensibly used for such a development.

The trading fund which underpins the Bill will provide a financial framework which will cover the operating costs, receipts, capital expenditure, borrowing and net cash flow of the Next Steps agencies. Those that are suitable will find that it will provide a more commercial and disciplined approach to the delivery of Government services coupled with a greater accountability to Parliament for the results achieved. Where it is appropriate for such trading funds to be attached to Next Steps agencies—and that will not always be the case—it will result in improved performance and improved provision for the public which they will welcome and which I am sure will be welcomed by all Members of Parliament.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. McCartney. Are you ready?

Mr. McCartney: I was rather surprised because, to be perfectly frank, I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was here before me.

Mr. Speaker: Fair enough. Mr. Dalyell.

6.58 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It is a most unusual compliment, and it will be repaid.

May I make an extremely careful and hesitant comment on one of the matters raised by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind)? He referred to civil servants and jobs in the new agencies. I do not know all the facts, but I should like to ask one question: are we sure that it is ethical these days for Mr. Patrick Brown of the Department of the Environment to go out of the Civil Service to the National Freight Corporation, back into the Civil Service, and now out again to the Property Services Agency? I stress that this is not a personal attack. I do not know all the facts, but it is high time that a Minister made a statement on the new ethics of the Civil Service.

I remember an enormous row when Sir Clifford Jarrett, who was permanent secretary at the Ministry of Pensions, got a job with a pension fund company. The then Cabinet Secretary had to decide whether his appointment was proper. Sir Clifford Jarrett had left the Civil Service, but it now appears possible for people to join, leave and rejoin the Civil Service.

This afternoon I asked the Attorney-General whether he would discuss with the director of the serious fraud office the propriety or otherwise of Coopers and Lybrand being commissioned by the Government to do a report on extremely important institutions—the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers—when certain key people who are former employees of Coopers and Lybrand are the leaders in the management buy-out. That raises some pretty serious questions about governmental ethics. I see the Chief Secretary to the Treasury knitting his brow, but these are extremely delicate matters. A statement should be made on exactly what has changed in Civil Service ethics.

It is not every Saturday evening that I ring No. 10 Downing street, but I did so last Saturday to leave a message with one of the Prime Minister's secretaries. I said that in my opinion she should have made a statement to the House—the Minister of State, Privy Council Office has guessed on what subject—on a matter of enormous sensitivity, the protest by the First Division Association on guidelines. The First Division Association does not lightly protest, so when it does—I am not disparaging the Minister of State or being personally rude to him—the head of the Civil Service should at least make some comment.

In my speech I may ask some naive questions that may appear rather simple, but the Labour party has been in opposition for a long time. There was a time when many Members of the Opposition had recent ministerial experience, but since 1979, for reasons of which we are all aware, there has been a great change. I am not making a party point, but I think that, with the exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), I am the only Opposition Member present who has any experience of government. That lack of experience makes it much harder for Opposition Members to understand the pros and cons of what a Government are doing. Having

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been exiled between 1974 and 1979 over devolution, it is more than 20 years since, as a parliamentary private secretary, I saw the inside of a Ministry.

I hope that hon. Members will forgive a little history, but I am interested in not only the Property Services Agency but the general subject. I recollect clearly—in another context I have had to work on the papers relatively recently—that the late Sir Otto Clark and the late Sir Leo Pliatzky, who were formidable civil servants, thought that they had persuaded a number of members of the Labour Government to set up something equivalent to the Property Services Agency. They certainly succeeded in persuading Lord Armstrong of the Midland bank, not Lord Armstrong of Ilminster. When those people said that the Government had to be themselves involved to make good decisions, they were not making simply a party political point.

There is a further general point to which I hope that the Chief Secretary will respond—I know that he is deeply interested in such matters. I shall leave out the privatisation of businesses because I understand that there is a party political difference over the privatisation of electricity and water, but in the case of the Crown Suppliers and the Property Services Agency, is the Chief Secretary absolutely persuaded that he is not trying to privatise, not a business, but a governmental function? Who will make the judgments that the Government must make?

I refer to a question that the Chief Secretary answered today. It says:

> "To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what architectural and architectural-related staff he has in the Treasury to make technical assessments of decisions by other Departments to use agents other than the Property Services Agency."

The first answer was a holding reply on 21 December. I make no complaint about that other than to say that if those proposals, which will begin to be considered upstairs tomorrow, had been properly thought out the question could easily have been answered. I have received a succession of replies from Ministers at the Department of the Environment saying "I shall answer as soon as possible", but if any thought had been given to the question an easy answer could have been written on the back of a postcard and answers to fairly obvious questions from me would have been unnecessary. The Chief Secretary replied to the question:

> "No staff in such specialisms are currently employed in the Treasury. Where Departments are free to use agents other than PSA for building and maintenance work, it is for them to decide on value for money grounds, and after the usual tendering and contract procedures have been observed, whether such agents, or PSA, should be employed."

Who makes those decisions? The PSA is a function of Government. Leo Pliatzky and many others regarded that as a great problem in the 1960s, and it has not gone away. In order to make sensible decisions there must be some proper expertise.

What are the plans for full commercial accounts for the PSA or its successors from 1991 onwards?

Who will supervise and check work in the private sector? How will an objective assessment be made? If a Department does not have the necessary expertise, I do not see how an objective assessment can be made. The Government's line is that the new agency's main aim is to maximise profits for the owners, but where is the independent source of advice?

The construction industry is not exactly famous for its honesty and integrity. Someone must make judgments about substandard work, shoddy materials and unreliable surveys. I may be referring to ancient history when I say this, but I remember when I was a lowly person in a Department that was run by a formidable lady, Dame Evelyn Sharp. She cried out for expertise which even the Ministry of Housing and Local Government did not have at that time. We seem to be going back to that experience.

I do not claim that the PSA is a perfect organisation. It has done many good things, certainly outside the city of London, and my constituents and many others who work for it are proud of much of what they have done, but because of the nature of their work they are likely to make mistakes. I am asking the Treasury whether, from now on, each Department is to have a commissioning and supervisory section.

Are there to be mini-PSAs in each Department? If the answer is no, how are we to avoid increased costs, undetected corruption and a dramatic lowering of standards? There must be someone who is competent to make judgments. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), who has experience of local government, knows what I am talking about. The same thing applies in the running of a great city as in the running of national Government. There is a big question mark over whether any private agency can do that, let alone over the question of accountability to Parliament.

Let us take a specific example—valuation. We are told by the National Audit Office, and there is no reason to doubt it, that the value of PSA properties in 1982 was £3 billion. I can understand that, given the value of the Whitgift centre in Croydon, St. Christopher's house and Argyll house in Edinburgh and some 8,000 properties, although admittedly some are small. I am told—the Minister may say that I am wrong—that the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill, which is about to be considered in Committee, deals with more than £10 billion. Incidentally, when I have asked questions I have found that many people will talk—but only because post-Ponting they trust me not to reveal sources. I gather that there has been an edict—I do not know whether Ministers are responsible—to the effect that people should not talk about their work in the PSA and issues that relate to current events. That is all very well, but may I just say that we have had certain things to say about eastern Europe and leave it at that. It is unsatisfactory to put a gag on a legitimate subject of debate.

If the PSA is to be abolished, who in government is to decide what additional property is needed by any arm of the Civil Service? Is it to be the Civil Service Department? Surely someone centrally has to decide whether other departmental property may be useful. With privatisation of the PSA come 1992, or whenever it can be sold off—the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill deals with that privatisation—who will make a decision quickly and effectively on the disposal of surplus accommodation? The Treasury may be thought to have had some interest in this aspect.

Who is responsible for the strategy of reducing the amount of vacant space to the minimum possible? Who is to judge the operational fitness of the value of the estate by adequate maintenance?

I shall not go on endlessly but, for reference, will mention "Property Services Agency: Management of the Civil Estate," the summary and conclusions of the National Audit Office report. My impression since 1987 has been that the PSA regional organisations have improved greatly. For all I care, Ministers can take credit for that. But why upset the apple cart and create a situation where no one will do this vital job?

What has happened to the trading fund to give information to clients and Parliament? As for the PRS scheme in 1983 to make Departments aware of the accommodation costs and administration of their policies and programmes, how is it to be achieved, and does the interdepartmental committee remain in operation?

Paragraph 9(c) of the National Audit Office report states:

"as old long-term leases fall to be renewed, the PSA has been faced with greatly increased rents and liabilities to regular five-yearly reviews".

Does that continue? This was a problem for the PSA's investment appraisal unit. Paragraph 9(f) of the National Audit Office report says:

"the PSA's investment appraisal unit reported that in 1986-87 appraisals had been wrongly omitted in 16 out of a test of 35 defence and civil cases."

[Interruption.] Ministers may be becoming impatient, because all this is a bit uncomfortable. The system has been ill-thought-out, and these points are relevant to Ministers and to the legislation. The NAO report says:

"the PSA is considering the introduction of commercial accounts and a trading fund to give clearer information to clients and Parliament."

That brings my point completely into order. The report says:

"the saving on the PRS scheme accommodation charge is intended to provide occupying departments with sufficient incentive to surrender to the agency surplus land and buildings."

The Chief Secretary is wise not to intervene at this stage because this is an extremely difficult question for the Treasury. I am not persuaded that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope)—is more clever or more able than Treasury Ministers. *[Interruption.]* Treasury Ministers are probably thankful that they will not take the Bill through Committee, because it is a can of worms. Paragraph 12 of the NAO report asks whether the Departments

"have sufficient incentive to identify surplus accommodation?"

The answer is no.

The defence estate was managed by the PSA. Who is to manage it now? There was a considerable row in the 1970s, and again in the 1980s, when, apparently, the Prime Minister actually came down on the side of the PSA against the Ministry of Defence managing its own estate.

Ah, we are greatly fortunate to have the Secretary of State for the Environment present, because the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill is his Bill. As the Secretary of State has entered the Chamber, this would be the ideal opportunity to go through with him the Coopers and Lybrand report on what happened in relation to the PSA; I should like to check with him the history of all this.

Is it not true that the first report on the privatisation of the PSA and the Crown Suppliers, undertaken by a Treasury official called Jeannie Turton and her colleagues —I think that those in the Box know something about this —came down against privatisation?

Is it not also true that a second report—which the Government refused to publish—from the central unit in the Treasury also came down against privatisation? And is it not true that Dewi Jones also came down against privatisation, with certain qualifications? I know that I shall be corrected if my history is wrong.

Then the Government strongly told Coopers and Lybrand that the question was not whether the Crown Suppliers—which is a function, not a business—and the PSA should be privatised but how. Those were the terms of the question, on the Government's instructions.

Is it not also true—I am careful about privilege, and I say this, under privilege, in the form of a question—that the person who had most to do with the Coopers and Lybrand report on the TCS was Mr. Bob Etherington? Is it not also true that Mr. Bob Etherington has become the mainspring—the driving force—in the management takeover of the Crown Suppliers? I stand open to correction, and if I am wrong I shall give way to any of the four relevant Ministers who are doing me the courtesy of listening—the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, who is responsible for the Civil Service, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. I ask any one of them to tell me whether I am right or wrong about Mr. Bob Etherington's position. I think that I am properly informed, although I see that a note is coming from the Box.

Let me explain the history of the Coopers and Lybrand report. In March 1987, two reports on the Crown Suppliers were submitted to the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. The first, by Coopers and Lybrand in association with Samuel Montagu, discussed the feasibility of the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers and the second, by Dewi Jones, a consultant, looked into options other than privatisation.

Coopers and Lybrand was asked to determine the prospects for the successful privatisation of all or part of the Crown Suppliers, including the best means and forms of achieving that objective. Coopers and Lybrand took the view that, for the privatisation of the Crown Suppliers to be feasible, its lines of business would have to be capable, first, of commercial viability—sustaining adequate levels of profitability in free competition—and, secondly, of being successfully transferred from the public to the private sector. Do the Government think that those conditions, imposed by Coopers and Lybrand—itself asked to do a job by the Government for reasons, some of us might think, of political dogma—have been met?

In the meantime, Ministers have information, and I should certainly be interested to hear what they have to say about Mr. Bob Etherington's position. I can only assume that silence indicates that I am broadly correct, and so I give notice that I hope that the Secretary of State for the Environment will instruct the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to attend the Committee tomorrow morning and say exactly what the position is. Some of us think delicate questions of Civil Service ethics are involved.

I ought to tell the Secretary of State for the Environment that at Question Time I asked the Attorney-General whether he is prepared to examine the role of Coopers and Lybrand in the privatisation of the

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Crown Suppliers and discuss the ethical position with the director of the serious fraud office. I choose my words with extreme care. All this is extremely close—this is why I have been asking questions—to a variant of insider trading. If the Government are going to get involved in that kind of thing, they had better be extremely careful. As some individuals have found, insider trading is an extremely serious offence in this country. There really ought to be some explanation of how people can do a job for the Civil Service and then seemingly get into a position where it appears that they benefit. I am not in the habit of making personal attacks on individuals—still less, named individuals—under the cloak of privilege, but there ought to be some clear explanation of what is happening.

Coopers and Lybrand was asked to determine the prospects for the successful privatisation of all or part of the Crown Suppliers. The company's report opened with an overview of the Crown Suppliers, its organisation, aims and activities, and divided the organisation into three main divisions—product supply and services, transport and fuel. The prospects for privatising the whole organisation were seen to depend on the sum of the prospects of the three individual divisions rather than on the characteristics of TCS as a single entity. Are the Government happy about the organisation's break-up as a single entity?

I refer to the product supply and services heading. The main business line of the division is the supply of hard furniture. Coopers thought that it would be feasible to privatise that activity, together with the related activities of floorings and furnishings supply and contract furnishing services. Coopers thought that this core business, which would supply both own design and trade pattern products, had the potential to compete successfully within an established furniture distribution industry. It could defend a high share of public sector demand and additionally develop a share of selected markets within the private sector. That was Coopers' view.

Then we had the Second Reading debate. I listened to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), which, although long, was not over-long as it contained matters of considerable substance. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington may not be the most popular Member of the House with Conservative Members, but when he makes long speeches he always deserves an answer. I do not share his views on every subject that he has raised, but over the past few years I have learned that he had better be answered.

During a 50-minute speech on Second Reading, my hon. Friend asked delicate and awkward questions about furniture supply, but until now the answer has been the proverbial lemon. The question has not been answered. The whole purpose of Parliament is to get answers. For all I know, there may be answers to my hon. Friend's questions, but they have not been forthcoming. I am extremely sorry that my hon. Friend cannot serve on the Commitee as he is already serving on the Committee that is considering the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. I give notice to the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State that I will find ways in Committee to go over, point by point, my hon. Friend's questions on furniture. We will not get far until we receive satisfactory answers.

Coopers and Lybrand thought that a major change in operating style between the Crown Suppliers and a privatised core business would be needed to adapt to a commercial environment. The business represented a relatively high proportion of the division's current revenues that could operate within the private sector on a relatively small proportion of current resources and assets. From the Bill it appears to the Opposition—although we may be wrong—that that has not been agreed. It reveals the nature of trading funds and how the Government propose to operate in that sector.

On the basis of Coopers and Lybrand's own conditions, the Government's scheme is unsatisfactory. Not all of the Crown Suppliers' activities could be privatised. For example, the procedures undertaken by the Crown Suppliers reassured customers that procurement was carried out in a manner acceptable to the Government. That added value formed part of all procurement activity and could not be privatised. The Government would not wish to rely on a private sector for that service and compliance with EEC or GATT regulations might not be possible for a private sector company.

The Treasury deals with the EEC on those matters. Have its proposals for the Crown Suppliers gained agreement in Brussels? I am told that there are real international difficulties with our Community partners and that certain aspects of the proposals for the Crown Suppliers may not have the agreement of the EEC Commission. The Treasury certainly does not yet have the agreement of the American air force, which is deeply concerned about security.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is an expert on security and he will be leading for the Opposition in Committee. I am entitled to follow up one of my written questions on the American air force, which I understand has not agreed to the new arrangements and is not persuaded about the security arrangements within the Government's privatisation proposals. The American air force should not determine Government policy, but there should be some serious answers detailing its objections. Will they be met, and how can they be met? What is the legal ruling in respect of the EEC and the American air force?

Even Coopers and Lybrand said that certain lines of business could not be feasibly privatised such as Defence Contracts Organisation contracts, equipment product categories, procurement of low value products, contracted services and security furniture workshops. DCO contracts are resource intensive and would not be commercially viable in the long term. Do the Government agree with Coopers and Lybrand or not? It also said that it felt that the arrangement of DCO contracts was a valuable service that should be retained within Government. Some of those activities are highly specialised and would not readily transfer to the private sector. The transfer of the supply of security furniture would not be acceptable to the Government.

What arrangements are being made for Government transport in the four areas of operations—vehicle hire, the interdepartmental despatch service, the Government car service and vehicle workshops? All could be successfully privatised with the exception of parts of GCS and the Nine Elms workshop, which would be retained to provide high security maintenance. All feasible areas could transfer either by sale as a going concern or by closure and contracting out. In the case of the allocated fleet, where

continuity would be helpful, a transfer of vehicles and drivers to the relevant departments would be appropriate. In particular, the vehicle hire business would represent an attractive proposition in the private sector where it could free itself from the capital restraints of vehicle ownership and thus compete more effectively.

Coopers and Lybrand said that it was not feasible or appropriate to transfer to the private sector the provision of high security chauffeur-driven vehicles, the peripheral activity of secure mail dispatch and secure journeys from the pool. The overriding consideration was security. Although the security could not be reasonably privatised, Coopers and Lybrand said it could be operated by another public sector body such as the police force.

In future, will the Minister for the Civil Service accept Coopers and Lybrand's advice and be driven in Government cars by the police? If not, why do the Government turn down the advice of their own expensive advisers? What is the Government's position on the question of sauce for the goose being sauce for the gander? Are Government Ministers to be treated differently?

Hansard will show that I have posed some careful questions. I hope that proper answers will be given in Committee. I have no record of filibustering on any Bill, taking time unnecessarily or speaking for too long, thereby keeping out my colleagues. I warn the Government that some of us will be exceedingly persistent until we obtain answers to our questions. As I have named Bob Etherington and referred to Patrick Brown, it might be better if, in his reply, the Minister referred to the position of those gentlemen.

7.39 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I was going to make a few detailed points about the Bill, but as the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) did not cover any of those points, I will be brief because I know that other hon. Members want to speak. I hope that the hon. Member for Linlithgow does not mind if I do not follow his points because I could not see the relevance of many of them to this debate. We are talking about Next Steps agencies. Paragraph 2.6 of the White Paper states:

> "Next Steps is primarily about those operations which are to remain within Government"—

that is, operations that will not be privatised. I believe that the hon. Member for Linlithgow was referring primarily to the Property Services Agency which will certainly be privatised if the Bill is passed.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) should look carefully at the Bill. It is for the Chair and not for him to allow me to make my points. I am sure that the hon. Member will concede that it is for the Chair to take that decision.

Mr. Mans: I was not in any way commenting on the relevance of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. I said simply that I was not going to follow them because I believe that the main point of the Next Steps initiative is associated with the creation of trading funds and not with the points made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

I was very interested in the contributions of the hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed was right to maintain that if the initiative resulted in a better service for consumers and the people using the services that are to become agencies, the initiative should be welcomed. I agree with that.

As far as I could follow them, I would not agree with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Wrexham. It seems to be Labour party policy at the moment not to disband any of the agencies that we are going to create or have already created. Rather, Labour will not create any more agencies from those that currently have candidate status. The Labour party appears to be worried about committing itself to anything at least for the next year or two. It was very interesting that the hon. Member for Wrexham said nothing positive about the Bill. He did not give us Labour's view of the Bill. He seemed to say that Labour would leave things as they are and that the creation of trading funds would not lead to a better service for consumers. That was about all that I could understand from the contribution of the hon. Member for Wrexham.

I completely disagree with the hon. Member for Wrexham. The creation of trading funds and of the wider commercial climate is a prerequisite for a better service for those who require it from those agencies. Before we can decide the level of service and the amount of resources that are to be provided, we must know exactly what it will cost. The creation of trading funds will go some way towards achieving that.

The list contained in annex A of the White Paper is relevant. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) referred to the fuel suppliers branch. It is odd that an agency designed to cut expenditure and to ensure that we purchase fuel most economically for the public sector does not know how much money it is spending—according to the annex—or the number of people it employs. If nothing else, the Next Steps agencies will ensure that people will look more accurately at what things cost.

The Next Steps agencies will affect the RAF training organisations and the service schools in north-west Europe. Under the current financial structures the figures are not separately identifiable. The RAF does not know the exact cost of its training or of providing school facilities in north-west Europe. If nothing else, the initiative to create trading funds and new agencies will act as a discipline on those involved in those functions to ensure that they know how much it costs to provide those services. That must be a prerequisite to ensure that the services are provided efficiently and economically to the public and to the users of those services.

I welcome the Bill because it will increase accountability and the opportunity for scrutiny. I hope that it has a speedy passage through the House.

7.45 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I want to make a short contribution about two aspects of the White Paper. Before I became a Member of this House I was involved in running a very large local authority which had a budget well in excess of £100 million a year. Even with restrictions on local government expenditure, with that level of resources we provided finance and accountability in the construction of services and in their delivery. We had methods which could be deployed to improve value for money and efficiency and at the same time ensure that that efficiency and value for money was governed by the need

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to provide services instead of a need to achieve a financial target imposed on particular aspects of local authority activities.

Against that background I want to consider the White Paper and the proposals in the Bill. I want first to refer to the Liverpool passport office about which several hon. Members have expressed a rather jaundiced view. I believe that if the employees in that passport office had not acted as they did last summer, the Government would still not have taken steps to improve the service and administration of that office. The staff brought their views to the public about the need to improve the working of the office and the level of manpower resources that should have been allocated to provide the service.

Sometimes when we debate local government services or the privatisation of services currently run by civil servants, the prerequisite for arguing for that privatisation as voiced by Conservative Members is an attack on the integrity, capability and work ethic of the people working in those services. In the final analysis, very few people who work in the public sector do so as a result of a malevolent feeling towards the people for whom they provide the service. The staff working under trying circumstances in the Liverpool passport office were the catalyst for the changes. They wanted to improve the service and we should remember that instead of attacking them when they cannot respond to our debate.

Annex A of the White Paper refers to the planning inspectorate which, according to the White Paper,

"Carries out public inquiries and appeals on planning, housing, highways, and other matters."

It also deals in two ways with rights of way, pathways, bridleways, the change of use of property, opencasting and other mineral extractions. First, they are dealt with in the time-honoured fashion of a public inquiry. The local authority may take a decision which is appealed against and the Secretary of State refers that to a public inquiry. Following that, the Secretary of State will determine whether he accepts, rejects or amends in part the recommendation of his inspectorate. Secondly, it deals with written appeals against local authority decisions. Both parties submit written evidence to the inspectorate, and the inspectorate then makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

For two main reasons, over the past few years the work of the planning inspectorate has been made difficult. First, many planning inquiries have had to be held. Secondly, local communities are far more aware of environmental changes caused by housing and industrial planning applications. In past decades, planning applications were not publicly scrutinised, but they are now challenged and scrutinised by the public. As a result, local authorities take more account of a community's views than they did previously. There is a huge backlog of appeals before the planning inspectorate. I refer to written appeals and to a substantial number of appeals that are the subject to public inquiry.

Some appeals do not relate only to small matters such as a change of use of land for housing. In my constituency, a recent planning inquiry related to opencast mining and the Secretary of State's power to impose a mineral plan on Greater Manchester county. That mineral plan included policies on the extraction of coal, shale, sand and other minerals associated with opencast mining. There was a huge number of objections from local residents, Members of Parliament, heritage and environmental groups, and local authorities. Because of the backlog in the inspectorate's work, an outside planning inspector was appointed. Also, because of that backlog, the inspectorate appoints inspectors to conduct particular inquiries. In some instances that system can work satisfactorily, particularly when the inquiry reports in one's favour. However, there are instances in which an inspector has a similar background to that of an applicant. That happened in the case to which I referred.

The Government must recognise the need to provide resources for independent professional planning advice. Planning inquiries should be carried out in the most professional, independent and thorough way possible. Intolerable burdens will be placed on the inspectorate if it is included in the Next Steps initiative.

What is meant by competition in the planning inspectorate? The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) is chary and wary about North-West Water polluting Morecambe bay. Does he believe that he has a better chance of preventing what is happening if competition is introduced into the planning inspectorate?

What is the role of competition in such activities? Can a Conservative Member provide technical, professional and accountable reasons why the introduction of competition into the planning inspectorate will assist the Secretary of State, local authorities or those who regularly use the system? The Government's White Paper is dogma. It is simply a list of organisations that the Government consider necessary to opt out as part of an overall policy to privatise. It fails to take account of other aspects of Government policy.

I do not believe that Conservative Members who have an interest not just in planning matters but in the environment do not want the House to retain the accountability and independence of the planning inspectorate and ensure that it operates outside the confines of the financial limitations which would be placed on it by a policy of competition. If the planning inspectorate operates at a substantially lower level than hon. Members would like, either in terms of the number of planning application inquiries that it conducts annually or the quality of its decision making, or if it does not operate in the public's interest, they should look at the reasons for the planning inspectorate's difficulties.

Mr. Hind: If the hon. Gentleman reads the White Paper carefully he will see that not every Next Steps agency will have a trading fund and that not all of them will be privatised or even considered for privatisation. Common sense dictates that the Department appoints inspectors on the basis that they are independent and quasi-legal and are able to make important judgments for the public. That cannot be open to competition. The Government would be reluctant to consider a trading fund, never mind privatisation.

Mr. McCartney: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his perceptive intervention. Why are they included in the document if it was never the Government's intention to include such activities of the Department of the Environment? It only highlights the Government's incompetence. The White Paper was not published on a wing and a prayer. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) shakes his head. He made some valid points. I

agree with them all except for one important one that appears in the White Paper. The inspectorate is being considered as a "First Steps" agency and could be considered for privatisation. If the hon. Gentleman agrees with me he should not support measures such as hiving off the planning inspectorate of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I have taken the opportunity to look at the White Paper. One must consider some aspects which will be imposed on the planning inspectorate. Even if this is simply an exercise in accountability, let us consider what is being suggested. We are dealing with the legislation as it stands and, according to the White Paper, the planning inspectorate is in the front line. Paragraph 5.10 of the White Paper talks about, "a summary of key targets for the future."
What does that mean in terms of the planning inspectorate when the inspectorate deals with matters put before it by the Secretary of State for the Environment on behalf of local authorities or by the Secretary of State himself in relation to activities by his Department? At no time can the planning sector of the Department of the Environment be able to target future activities because its work is demand driven in the sense that the demand for inquiries arises from the activities of local authorities and the Secretary of State.

Paragraph 5.10 of the White Paper also talks about, "a report of performance against financial, efficiency and quality of service targets over the past year, set against previous trends".
What is meant by "report of performance"? Does it relate to the way in which inquiries are carried out and the nature of the decision that is taken? The hon. Member for Wyre and his hon. Friends who support such claptrap——

Mr. Mans: Why is the hon. Gentleman voting against it?

Mr. McCartney: I have no problem about that because the points that I am making are highly relevant. A debate about the environment should be open-handed. We are talking about not introducing competition into serious matters, and in such a serious debate we do not need silly schoolboy quips. The hon. Member for Wyre is on record about a planning matter in his constituency.

What is meant by "a report of performance" in relation to the planning inspectorate? The planning inspectorate can be judged only by the nature of the decisions that it takes. Every one of those decisions has to be approved or amended by the Secretary of State irrespective of whether it is about the building of a petrochemical plant or whether a new bridleway should be built between two villages. The spectrum of activity in the Department is such that the Secretary of State is involved in every planning inquiry or written objection to his Department. In no circumstances could the Bill be used to regulate and improve the activities of the inspectorate. I hope that the Government will rethink the whole concept of some of the organisations and activities included in Next Steps agencies. I oppose the Government politically but the general public will also start to ask questions about the validity of Government policy when they see the possibility of an independent planning inspectorate being hived off to an agency and the possibility of it going to the private sector.

The Government must step back for a moment and rethink their ideology about some of the activities of public sector bodies. These bodies are in the public sector for good reasons. One is because of the nature of the work that is carried out and the requirement for Parliament to retain accountability. Not only planning bodies but health, safety and training organisations are in the public sector for very good reasons. They are there not because of Socialist dogma but because of long tried and tested experience.

Some aspects of life are better organised through public accountability and cannot be left to market forces and driven by competition. That is at the heart of our opposition to the Bill. The Government see a need to create competition irrespective of the work carried out by the agencies, the need for parliamentary accountability and the conflict that is caused in the Department of the Environment. The Government want to privatise everything in sight.

Over the last 10 years the Government have used public expenditure cuts and privatisation to try to impose Next Steps agencies on local authorities. In my constituency the Wigan metropolitan council has had imposed on it privatisation of its cleaning and waste disposal services. Its services for waste disposal made a profit for ratepayers last year of over £3 million. The council is trying to protect those services and jobs and the Government are trying to impose a local government form of Next Steps agencies by which people are directly employed by a company—a "hands-off" arrangement—which runs the services for the local authority in competition.

Such things are done for the dogmatic reasons of the Secretary of State and have nothing to do with the improvement of services or accountability to the public. However, they have everything to do with hiving off profitable parts of public services to the private sector which looks to the quick buck at the expense of the long-term needs of the community. Following this debate, I wonder whether the hon. Members for Wyre and for Lancashire, West will be able to defend to their constituents the privatisation and hiving off of such an important body as the planning inspectorate, with all its consequences.

8.6 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I am grateful for this opportunity to make a brief contribution to the debate. I sense that the issues have been well and truly thrashed out and although there is a low growl of discontent from the Opposition I do not think that the Bill will be pressed to a vote.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) opened for the Opposition and his speech was briefer than some of those that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and I remember from the Finance Bill Committee. I think that the hon. Member said that it was a technical matter and I endorse that. We are not following the route that the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) seemed to follow in his eloquent speech that the Bill is about privatisation. It may come to privatisation and there are aspects of the agencies which I hope will lead to that, but that is not the predominant thrust of the Bill. Its purpose is to improve the quality of public service that is made available to our constituents.

I strongly support the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) who spoke about the need to extend the process to the Ministry of Defence. He identified one or two possibilities.

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

I, too, believe that it could go a great deal further. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) talked about the Training Agency and I endorse the important points that he made. There is a critical role over the next 10 years and beyond for the Training Agency. There has been a 30 per cent. drop in the number of 18-year-olds in my constituency and there is a critical need to encourage more women in Nottinghamshire to go back to work. My hon. Friend's comments were extremely helpful in emphasising that aspect of the Training Agency.

Some hon. Members said that some agencies may need to relocate. I hope that if they do so they will come to Nottingham. There are too few national and quasi-national agencies there and I should like to see more. It is especially helpful that my right hon. Friend who will respond to the debate knows Nottingham well and while wearing his other hat as the Minister for the Arts has seen the tremendous depth and breadth of the cultural and artistic activities that go on there. I hope that he will consider it a suitable place for many agencies to relocate in future.

The Bill seeks to extend the powers of the Government to create trading funds to finance central Government activities. Perhaps the measure has not caught the imagination of the general public as readily as it should have done.

Mr. Mans: Not yet.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is right. As I said earlier, the measure will have a key effect on major public services. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East said, the Bill does not seek in any way to allocate fault or attack the Civil Service. Civil servants are saddled with a system that does not work effectively either in their interests as employees or in the interests of the public who receive the service.

As I flicked down the list in the annex to the White Paper this afternoon, four agencies particularly caught my eye. They were the driver and vehicle licensing centre, the Land Registry, the passport office and Companies House. Three of those are largely covered by related receipts, as defined in the White Paper. One of them is not. I am particularly pleased to hear that Companies House is an early candidate for trading fund status.

The majority of Government activities are not suitable for trading fund status, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said in his opening speech. However, 20 per cent. of Government agencies are suitable. We want that 20 per cent. to embark as rapidly as possible on the route to trading fund status. Why should we seek trading fund status for those important agencies? There are a number of key reasons. First, proper commercial disciplines should be passed on to the organisations. That brings with it a degree of self-management. The improvement and motivation of individuals is extremely important and brings initiative and some concept of size. Small is beautiful in many of the organisations. We want to encourage employees not to see themselves as part of a great amorphous mass.

The Bill is not entirely a cost-cutting measure, as some Opposition Members suggested. It is partly a cost-cutting measure, but, above all, it aims to improve the quality of service to the public and the efficiency of the agencies. My right hon. Friend said in his opening speech that £3 billion had already been saved by such measures.

The criteria for suitability laid out in the White Paper emphasise the matters that are really important. It is emphasised that decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. The criteria recognise that it is not only a matter of revenue and expenditure and that the importance of service to the public is predominant. There must be a genuine separation of activity where one Government Department supplies another. As far as possible we must engender genuine competition. That, too, is extremely important.

There must be a commitment to substantial and valuable improvements in performance. It is right that the full accounts should come before the House of Commons as well as reports on whether targets are being met and details of new targets for subsequent years so that we can judge the effects of those targets and ascertain whether they are being met.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle spoke of the importance of adequate detail so that we can make those judgments. I understand that the Treasury will report on the general trends in the use of trading funds and assess their effectiveness. That, too, must be welcomed as part of the parliamentary process.

Some agencies may be suitable for privatisation. I hope that there will be many, but I do not believe that that is the critical judgment. The criterion must be to provide a better service. As the hon. Member for Wrexham said, we must be accountable to the consumer. I believe that that view is common to both Conservative and Opposition Members.

I mentioned four particular agencies which could provide a better service to the public than they do now. I emphasise that I do not blame the civil servants for being saddled with a system that does not work effectively. I mentioned the passport office. It is a demoralised service. All hon. Members have had to deal with the problems of constituents who find at the last minute that they do not have a passport to go on holiday. We all know that the system does not work effectively. There have been problems with the Land Registry. Everyone knows that buying and selling a house is a particularly stressful aspect of life. The failings of the Land Registry are legion and we must do something about them. In my former existence I worked in the City so I know the inadequacies of Companies House. It could do much better as a result of the process outlined in the Bill.

The driver and vehicle licensing centre, too, has legion inefficiencies and difficulties. All the organisations that I have mentioned will benefit greatly from the process that we are setting in motion today. The aim is to make changes in the interests of improved management, efficiency and effectiveness. The Bill is not an attack on the Civil Service but an attack on a system that does not work. It is a significant opportunity to provide a better service to the public, more job satisfaction for the people who work in the agencies and better value for money for taxpayers and those who pay for the services. I greatly welcome it and hope that it will speedily become law.

8.14 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Nothing is wrong in the passport office, Land Registry or driver and vehicle licensing centre that could not be remedied by an increase

in the number of staff. The Government have curbed appointments of staff in the Land Registry office which, combined with an increase in activity, has produced delays. It is not the fault of the hard-working civil servants. The responsibility must be laid at the door of the Government, who have made a sustained attack on the Civil Service over the past 10 years and are proud of it. Ministers repeatedly make claims about the number of staff that they have sacked. The blame is fairly and squarely at their door.

I shall make a few brief remarks about the relationship between the Bill—which is not a clear piece of legislation—and the Act that it amends, the Government Trading Funds Act 1973. The Bill puts a different emphasis on consultation and the obligation on the Minister to consult before making an order. The 1973 Act placed a duty on the Minister to consult appropriate persons. That meant that the Minister had to approach appropriate persons. The definition of "appropriate persons" was left to the Minister and was subject to judicial action in the courts if the range of appropriate persons was unnecessarily narrow.

The Minister was required to consult people. That has been subtly changed. The Bill now provides:

"he shall take such steps as appear to him to be appropriate to give such an opportunity to such persons as appear to him to be appropriate."

In other words, the Minister stays in his office and causes a notice to be put in a newspaper, specialist newspaper or magazine and takes whatever steps he deems appropriate. People then have to go cap in hand to the Minister to make representations to him. That is a change of emphasis which was not necessary because the traditional position where the Minister was obliged to consult appropriate persons is entirely adequate and satisfactory. No doubt the Minister will explain the reason for that subtle change of emphasis.

I am sorry that I was not present for the Minister's opening speech. I was attending a Committee dealing with a Bill during the relevant time. The Government and Conservative Back Benchers, with their Government-supplied briefs, have made great play of parliamentary accountability. Although not particularly in this Bill, there has been a significant removal of parliamentary accountability by a conversion from a consensus measure in 1982. I regretted it very much at the time and voted against it in the parliamentary Labour party. The Consolidated Fund has been removed from parliamentary accountability. Payments into the fund are required by the Bill. If the Bill becomes an Act, that payment will enable Members to debate the measure in a proper Consolidated Fund debate and to obtain the necessary votes to initiate a debate in the Chamber.

Now that the Consolidated Fund debate has been changed into a series of Adjournment debates selected by the Speaker with the time allowed for each debate set by the Speaker, the opportunity for detailed examination on the basis of votes both in the Consolidated Fund debate and others has been diminished. I also regret the change because under the previous operation of the Consolidated Fund debate the House disciplined itself well. If the debate was on a wide and important subject, there was an opportunity for many hon. Members who were interested to take part in the debate. If the debate was a narrow one, it lasted only half an hour. The House was well disciplined.

We now have limitations imposed upon us. When there could be a long debate on a wide-ranging subject we are limited to three hours. I regret that the Consolidated Fund procedure has been changed. There was no need for any change to be made, but on one morning the Government found it awkward to secure a closure. They could not get 100 Conservative Members to support the closure motion and so they decided, as it were, to shift the Consolidated Fund. The Opposition of the day—mistakenly, in my view—said to themselves, "We shall be in government one day and we might find it awkward to get a closure, so we shall agree to what the Government propose." As a result, a real element of accountability was knocked to one side. That cannot be attributed to the Bill, but it is a relevant factor and a continuing source of concern to me.

The Bill proposes that section 6 of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 should be changed. The section provides an order-making power and requires that the establishment of a trading fund must be by way of affirmative resolution. That is the main pre-requisite of the section, and that is retained in clause 2(3), which sets out some changes to section 6 and the order-making powers of the 1973 Act.

As I have said, the establishment of a trading fund must be by way of affirmative order, and that means the tabling of a resolution on the Floor of the House for approval. This is extremely important. We must bear in mind, however, that there can be debate for only one and a half hours. Given the length of speeches that have been made on many occasions by Front-Bench spokesmen on both sides of the Chamber during the passage of affirmative orders, there has been only about half an hour left for Back-Bench Members to cross-examine the Government. Even though we say that an affirmative resolution in support of a statutory instrument is a useful procedure—the resolution is for debate on the Floor of the House, the Government have to secure its support and there must be a debate—it provides only a limited opportunity to question the Government and we should not elevate it beyond its importance.

Other powers proceed by negative procedure, including a Henry VIII clause. If some hon. Members are not aware of that term, I should explain that it is given to the power that is handed to Ministers to change primary legislation by order without any further primary legislation being required. We must remember that they is a great power. It is a relatively trivial one in respect of the Bill, but the sums that are involved for trading funds—the position is similar in the 1973 Act—can be altered, when the Bill is enacted, by a negative procedure instrument that is issued by a Minister. That is less than satisfactory.

The Government said that they would take legislation off the backs of the people. They told us that they would remove the weight of legislation which they claimed, in 1979, was burdening the people and preventing the enterprise culture from burgeoning forth. As they are fond of making comparisons with the Labour Government, let it be generally understood that they are producing more statutory instruments than their predecessors. The volume of statutory instruments is so great that it has become the primary source of legislation. In the past 18 months the Government have produced 23 Acts with Henry VIII clauses, includng the Education Reform Act 1988, which was a major piece of legislation. Given the Government's majority, we have, unfortunately, given Ministers the power to change primary legislation without introducing new primary legislation.

In a better ordered world, the Government would hve to return to the House to produce further primary

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

legislation to alter the legislation that was already on the statute book. Should not the Mother of Parliaments be the Parliament that sets an example to the rest of the Commonwealth, for example? It should do so, of course, but it does not. At the end of last year we had the opportunity to examine the procedures of other Commonwealth legislatures. Delegates came to London from 18 Commonwealth countries, including Pakistan, which we welcomed back into the Commonwealth after the restoration of democracy following the removal of the military junta and the election in which President Bhutto was elected.

Delegates, particularly the ones from Australia and New Zealand, made it clear that the power of scrutiny of delegated legislation is a real one in their legislatures. They told us that they can hold up the application of legislation if a Minister is found to be abusing his or her powers. Nothing like that exists in our legislation. We are building up a huge volume of subordinate legislation without any sort of adequate scrutiny being available to us. I am concerned, for example, that under clause 2 the Minister is allowed to change the maximum sum provided for by means of a negative procedure instrument.

Mr. Beith: If the hon. Gentleman wants a vivid example of what has happened and of the drift that has taken place, he has only to look at the end of today's Order Paper. When the debate has come to an end the House will be asked, for the first time in my recollection, to vote forthwith on the amendable Census Order 1988. Previously such orders have been debated on the Floor of the House. The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight a dangerous trend, even in the detailed circumstances of the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for providing that example. I am aware that the Census Order was considered in Committee. I am aware also that several amendments were tabled—it was an unusual order—and I pressed for the amendments to be considered. I hope that the minority parties can somehow obtain the services of one of their Members to serve on the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which they appear not to have been able to do up to now. I think that the Committee serves a useful purpose and the hon. Gentleman's remarks highlight his concern. I hope that he will be able to spread his concern to other Members of the Liberal party, the Liberal Democrat party and the other sorts of party which he helps to represent.

The issue of Henry VIII clauses is not often raised in the House. We should talk about it more, and it is my intention to do so. I have been inspired, at least in part, because it seems that other legislatures have proper and adequate scrutiny. The reality is that a Minister will not be much involved in an order-making power. A civil servant will present him with the order and he will say, "Minister, will you approve this? We must secure the order. We are running close to the limit and we need another £500 to be added to it. That should see us all right for the next two or three years." The Minister signs the order and the civil servant goes away.

The order goes before the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. If it is to proceed by way of the negative procedure—that is the procedure that will be used to increase the moneys available to the trading funds—and if the Opposition think that it is a dangerous measure or an unusual use of such a measure, for example, they will table a prayer. If the Government follow the usual pattern, they will provide time for the prayer to be debated if it is signed by Opposition Front-Bench spokespeople. If a prayer were to be signed by a group of Back-Bench Members who have a particular concern, 100 to 1 it will never be heard. The majority of instruments, including the potential instrument that is referred to in the Bill, have little chance of being debated. It is just not good enough that they can be pushed through.

I should like an assurance from the Minister that in Committee, and whenever primary legislation is being dealt with, Ministers will have to cast their eyes over the legislation. They will, of course, be briefed by civil servants. It could be a simple one-section measure, and it would be easy to secure its passage. In primary legislation, however, Ministers conduct its passage on Second Reading, in Committee, on Report and so on. That means that Ministers are much more personally involved in the legislative process. Such a procedure would mean that the increase in the maximum sums available to trading funds would be dealt with in a more elaborate way. With the negative procedure process, which is implicit in the alterations that will be made to section 6 of the 1973 Act, the chances are that the instrument will never be debated.

If the Government are really concerned about parliamentary accountability, they should say, "We know that there are difficulties over allocating time on the Floor of the House; there always are. But we will ensure that the Bill is amended in Committee to bring its order-making powers in line with those establishing a trading fund, and that any increase in the maxima allowed for the total, global trading funds sum will be by affirmative resolution and not by the residual power"—which, under section 6 of the 1973 Act, is the negative procedure.

I hope, though not with great expectation, that the Minister will give an assurance of that kind. The reality is that both the Administration and the Civil Service bureaucracy, as well as Ministers, find it easier to get negative procedure instruments through this House and therefore more convenient. We say that public accountability, not convenience, should be an Administration's main criterion. The Government have made an issue of public accountability, saying that the procedure will provide for more parliamentary accountability. The Minister now has an opportunity to say, "We are determined to ensure parliamentary accountability, and affirmative instruments will be our watchword."

8.30 pm

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): I am glad to be associated with the Bill because it is not only important in itself but must be seen against the background of the Government's Next Steps policy and the important reforms that are taking place in the Civil Service. The Bill provides the first opportunity for the House to have a wide-ranging debate on the Next Steps reforms in the Civil Service, which are of great importance and will do a great deal to improve further the management of the large resources for which the Civil Service has responsibilities.

I am glad that the debate has allowed right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to speak on a wide

range of issues relating to the reforms. There were constructive and supportive speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell). We heard speeches also —some of them more constructive than others—from Opposition Members.

I was astonished by the remarks of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), and at his reaching the conclusion, having listened to the excellent and outstanding speech of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury —in which he demonstrated how the Bill will strengthen further the management of the Civil Service—that the Bill would lead to the break-up of the Civil Service and was about cost cutting. I inferred from his remarks that the hon. Gentleman feels that the Bill will prove disastrous for the Civil Service, but the very opposite will happen.

I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman takes the line that he does, particularly as the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, of which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is a member, while perhaps being critical of the Government for being too slow in implementing the Next Steps policies, was generally strongly in support of the Government's broad policy of reforms within the Civil Service. Therefore, I am all the more surprised by the speech of the hon. Member for Wrexham.

Many detailed points have been made, and I trust that hon. Members will bear with me if I do not answer every one of them. Where I fail to do so, I shall make a point of writing to the hon. Member concerned with a clear response to his question.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Why cannot the Minister answer every point now?

Mr. Luce: I shall be saying quite a lot in replying to the debate, so I trust that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me.

I want to view the Bill in the broader context of the Next Steps policy and to examine more sharply the issue of accountability, which hon. Members in all parts of the House have raised. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke in her new year message of the tasks that lie ahead for Britain in the 1990s. One of the "six great tasks" that she identified was to

"improve our public services such as health and education, and make them more responsive to people's needs."

That is very much at the heart of the proposals before the House. I have told the House on many occasions that it is my view that the Next Steps initiative——

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister allow me to intervene?

Mr. Luce: Certainly I shall.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of the Prime Minister, does he—or the Prime Minister—have any comment on the protest by the Civil Service First Division Association? One of the Government's tasks surely is to satisfy the Civil Service, but in relation to the guidelines, judging by the association's protest, the Government have failed to do so.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman, with whom I have frequently jousted in this House, which I have enjoyed very much, goes wide of the Bill. However, no doubt he will seek other opportunities to probe that matter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome my right hon. Friend's new year message and her emphasis on seeking to improve further the quality of Government services.

The purpose of the Next Steps initiative is to play a key role in improving the way in which we deliver Government services. I am glad that objective is widely shared both within this House and beyond. Both the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee have shown a keen interest in our progress, and I am grateful for the support that both Committees have given and for their constructive criticism.

As we stated in the White Paper "The Financing and Management of Next Steps Agencies" which was published with the Bill:

"The main aim of the Next Steps initiative is to deliver services more efficiently and effectively, within available resources, for the benefit of taxpayers, customers and staff. Agencies thus represent a new and distinctive development in the Governent's policies for improving all aspects of Civil Service management."

The Next Steps initiative, as its name suggests, builds on previous measures that have brought about significant benefits for management in Government. However, it is much more than a consolidation exercise. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee's first report on Next Steps in July 1988 noted that

"this change could be the most far-reaching since the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms in the nineteenth century."

I am convinced that we are putting into effect a gradual revolution in the way that the Government go about their business.

It is nearly two years since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched the initiative, and progress since then has been good. I have tried in the various parliamentary replies that I have given to keep the House informed. So far, 10 agencies have been established and we expect 20 agencies to be up and running by the summer. In addition to the 10 already established, a further 40 activities in the home Civil Service and three in the Northern Ireland Civil Service have been announced as candidates for agency status. Together, they account for nearly 200,000 staff or about one third of the Civil Service.

Next Steps is not just about numbers, although the involvement, even at this early stage, of one civil servant in three is a pretty good indicator that we mean business. Our goal is to enable civil servants to use available resources in the most effective way to provide a high-quality service to the public.

The Bill will help the Civil Service to become more responsive to the needs of customers. The 10 agencies that have been launched so far have demanding performance indicators to do with quality of service, both for the public and for internal customers, and these targets are being achieved. For example—and this may go some way towards answering the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—the customers of Companies House will say that turn-round time for document searches has improved considerably, as has the lead time for orders placed with Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

The service has not just improved in terms of performance indicators. Next Steps has ensured that agency chief executives are keen to consult customers about what they want, and to meet those needs as far as possible. Agencies have been able to offer extended opening hours, premium services, and to provide offices in new locations.

[Mr. Luce]

The Bill will allow revenue-generating agencies in particular even more scope to respond to customer demand. It is worth stressing that point, because many right hon. and hon. Members were concerned about the quality of service to the public, and that is a major priority for the Government.

Next Steps agencies are also ensuring that they keep their customers in touch with what they are doing. They are training their staff better to meet customer needs. I attach much importance to that.

There has been a lot of stress on the issue of accountability, in my view quite rightly. My hon. Friends the Members for Cambridgeshire, South-East and for Gainsborough and Horncastle and the hon. Members for Wrexham, for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), among others, focused on accountability. It is of such importance that I hope the House will allow me to spend a moment or two to reiterate some of the points made by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

I stress the importance of the greater openness that will come from the Bill and the procedures that we are adopting under the Next Steps policy. There will be much more scope for Parliament to scrutinise the activities of the agencies than there has been hitherto, and that has been recognised by some of my hon. Friends if not by Opposition Members. Agencies' objectives and performance will be more open to scrutiny than ever before, by Parliament and by others with an interest, including their customers.

Parliament will know what the Minister has asked the agency to achieve, the resources the Minister has allocated through Parliament, for the tasks, and the targets by which performance is measured, and through the agencies' annual report, the way in which the chief executive goes about the task and the extent to which the agency has been successful. That will be expanded on in the Bill, and I have no doubt that it will be debated in more detail in Committee.

A central feature of Next Steps arrangements is the position of agency chief executives. Each has managerial authority delegated to him or her by the responsible Minister.

The Minister is and remains accountable to Parliament as a whole and its Select Committees. When a Committee's interest is focused on the day-to-day operations of the agency, the Minister will normally regard the chief executive as being the person best placed to answer the Committee—on his or her behalf—on the performance of the agency. Ministers remain fully accountable for Government policies.

Alongside these more formal arrangements, right hon. and hon. Members need to know that the day-to-day operations of agencies are still open to their scrutiny on a day-to-day basis. There will always be queries and matters to be raised on behalf of individual constituents, besides the more general need of Members to inform themselves about the way in which Government policies are being executed in practice.

We believe that it will make sense to right hon. and hon. Members to deal in the first instance directly with the chief executive of an agency or his or her staff on matters for which he or she has delegated authority. Because Next Steps agencies are by their nature particularly likely to be delivering services to the public, I would expect that a good proportion of matters raised by right hon. and hon. Members on behalf of their constituents or in connection with an inquiry made of them, are likely to be such operational matters. They will get a quicker response and be likely to resolve any follow-up points more quickly and to their satisfaction by going direct to the agency, rather than routing their inquiry through the Minister—who would almost certainly want to seek advice from the chief executive. That is, therefore, the course I encourage hon. Members to take, bearing in mind that it is the Minister who sets the policy, the resources and the targets for the agency and the chief executive who is responsible to him or her for the way in which the agency uses those resources and sets about achieving its targets.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will recognise this as confirming existing practice, since we already have good contacts with the appropriate Civil Service managers in our constituencies. Certainly, the experience of the existing agency chief executives is that hon. Members find it helpful to contact the agency direct and I know that many Civil Service managers welcome the additional feedback about what their customers really think and the opportunity to rectify errors and omissions when something goes wrong, which a businesslike relationship with local parliamentary representatives can bring.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend has told the House that there will be strong accountability. Will he confirm that every Next Steps agency will have to come to the House and be considered for the inclusion of a trading fund within its operations by positive resolution of the House, and therefore that that additional safety net will be built into the system that he is putting forward?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said, and what is clearly established in the White Paper. Any organisation that is considered as a candidate for trading fund status under the Bill will be subject to the affirmative resolution of the House before it is established.

Mr. Cryer: Before the Minister leaves the general point, will he say whether the chief executives will have powers to send a minute to the Comptroller and Auditor General if they disagree with any policy laid down by the Government regarding the agency under the relevant audit and exchange control Act, for example, as a permanent secretary has the right to do as auditing and accounting officer in a Government Department?

Mr. Luce: Of course, in most cases the chief executive is established as the accounting officer for his operation. The same relationship would exist as with a permanent secretary, who is the accounting officer for overall policy. I confirm that that would be the general position.

To complete my remarks on accountability, I emphasise that it will be an addition to the existing practice by which hon. Members can raise any matter that falls directly within a Minister's responsibility with him in the House.

In short, as we said in Command Paper 524:

"Establishing Executive Agencies within departments will involve some developments in the way in which external accountability is discharged. These include the publication of framework documents and the expectation that Members of

Parliament may often wish in the first instance to deal directly with Chief Executives on operational matters for which they have delegated authority. Ministers will continue to deal directly with inquiries about matters of policy or levels of resources, and with any cases where a Member of Parliament specifically seeks a reply from a Minister."

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, Next Steps involves no diminution in ministerial accountability to Parliament. On the contrary, agencies and their workings will be more open to inspection and more responsive, both to their customers and to examination by right hon. and hon. Members. The establishment of Next Steps agencies offers the potential for significant enhancement of the openness and quality of public services and of direct access to the people who manage them. Next Steps will in this way nourish and sustain the already firmly rooted concept of ministerial accountability.

I think that it is right to set out the position on accountability as clearly as I can, in view of the importance that the House attaches to it.

I shall briefly mention one or two other matters raised by right hon. and hon. Members. I reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said about privatisation, as that subject featured considerably in the debate. The hon. Member for Wrexham, my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle, for Cambridgeshire, South-East and for Lancashire, West all mentioned privatisation. Before an agency is established, alternative options, including contracting out and privatisation, are examined. Next Steps is primarily for those operations that are to remain in the Government. However, after some years it may not be ruled out that agencies, like other Government activities, may be suitable for privatisation. When an agency is being set up and there is a firm intention of privatising it, that should be made clear. Our policy on the establishment of agencies, and on privatisation in general, remains the same.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle asked whether there were any candidates for either trading fund or straightforward agency status for which the Ministry of Defence was responsible. No fewer than seven, including those concerned with defence support, are included in the list. I hope that that will encourage my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who raised the same point.

Although he demanded answers to a number of questions in his long speech, I think that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) would almost fall out of his seat if I responded to all of them. Although most were not related to the Bill, I think it only right to deal with a point on which he challenged my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, and which he raised again in his speech—the position of the Property Service Agency in the context of agency status.

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary rightly made it plain that it is planned to privatise the vast bulk of the PSA—some 20,000 staff—and measures to do so are before the House. I should add, however, that a small part of the agency will remain in Government service and could therefore be a candidate for agency status, although whether it could be a candidate for trading fund status is a matter for further consideration.

Mr. Dalyell: May I make the reasonable request that some of my other questions be answered in writing, preferably before the Bill has made much progress in Committee? I believe that they are relevant to the Civil Service and other Departments. I was hoping particularly —because they were rather ad hominem—that the Minister would comment on my questions about the position of Mr. Patrick Brown and Mr. Bob Etherington. I think that they raise important questions of principle, to which some Minister may have an answer.

Mr. Luce: Such is the compelling interest aroused whenever the hon. Gentleman speaks that—as he will have noticed—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment came into the Chamber this evening and heard much of his speech. I am sure that my right hon. Friend noted what he said, and I shall ensure that he is shown the full text of the hon. Gentleman's remarks about matters that are principally his responsibility.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) asked about the provision of social security benefits. As he said, the White Paper makes a clear reference to the matter in paragraph 4.14—which makes it plain that the delivery of such benefits would not satisfy the criteria for trading fund status—and I confirm that the service could not possibly become a trading fund agency.

My hon. Friends the Members for Gedling and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) asked about the relocation of agencies. That is principally the responsibility of my right hon. and noble Friend the Paymaster General, but it would be the duty of any agency to consider whether relocation might bring about more efficiency and a better use of its resources. If it were already located in the south-east, for example, it might wish to move elsewhere. It will be the task of the Civil Service as a whole to look sharply at the benefits of relocation, and I have no doubt that every agency will undertake that task as well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle also asked about experience in the Civil Service —in business, for example. I attach considerable importance to that, which is why the Government have increased the number of secondments and exchanges between the private sector and the home Civil Service; indeed, I should like to see a further increase. The Next Steps team is ably managed by Mr. Kemp, who gained accountancy experience before entering the Civil Service, and a member of Price Waterhouse is on loan to the team. I value such experience.

It is important that the right people, with the right experience, are appointed as chief executives. The Government are also anxious that the general principle of open competition should be maintained as far as possible, and that is increasingly happening. We must ensure that we obtain the best people for the job, and that as much authority as possible is delegated to them: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) about the importance of delegating responsibility and accountability, and that is at the heart of the Bill and of the Next Steps policy. My hon. Friend also asked about training. Let me say again how important we consider that, and remind my hon. Friend that my office has introduced challenge funding for other Departments so that the level of Civil Service training is raised to an even higher standard.

I shall try to reply by letter to any questions that I have not answered specifically. Let me end, however, with a general issue raised by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr.

[Mr. Luce]

Marek), who asked about the number of candidates for trading fund status. As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary made clear in his speech, among the existing agencies potentially suitable for trading fund status are the vehicle inspectorate, Companies house, the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and Warren Springs laboratory. There is, however, a long list of candidates—about 43—of which about 30 are possibilities. They represent about 50,000 of the 200,000 staff covered by the list. Although they may not all be given trading fund status, they can be taken as a guideline. The Bill will go a long way to strengthen the accountability of the agencies, particularly those suited for trading fund status.

As a result of the procedures introduced by the Bill, suitable Civil Service functions will be put on a more commercial and businesslike footing. The measures for holding agency chief executives fully accountable form a durable basis for giving agency management the tools to do the job and to provide the more efficient and effective and better-quality services which Next Steps is about. A trading fund represents a financing framework offering both independence of detailed control and clear accountability for results and value for money. That seems to me to be a most appropriate basis on which to move into the next decade.

Our Civil Service aims to achieve the highest standards of excellence. It has a high sense of duty. We have one of the finest Civil Services in the world. I believe that it will fulfil its tasks with great competence. The Bill will add to the range of tools that is available for the further improvement of Civil Service management and enhance the Government's drive towards improved financial management throughout the public services. I warmly commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for raising this matter on a point of order, but the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) to whom I wanted to put this question earlier on a point of order had left the Chamber and has only recently returned. The hon. Gentleman referred in his speech to the Government's trading fund agencies and to the services that the Civil Service college provides in terms of management skills and techniques. He spoke at great length about the need to privatise these services.

I notice that in the Register of Members' Interests the hon. Gentleman is a director of Framlingham Management and Training Services Ltd. Would it be in order at this stage for the hon. Gentleman to declare that interest, given that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and others have made it clear that it is vital that direct or indirect pecuniary interests should be made known to the House? It is interesting that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East made such a vehement speech in support of the privatisation of trading fund agencies when the Register of Members' Interests shows that he is the director of a company that is directly involved in providing training services.

Mr. Paice: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The information to which the hon. Gentleman refers is out of date. I ceased to be a director of that company in May 1989.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) has put his point of order on record. All that I need say from the Chair is that, as the House well knows, there is a Register of Members' Interests and that it is customary for any hon. Member who has an interest to declare it during a debate.

Government Trading Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Government Trading Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of the National Loans Fund or money provided by Parliament of sums required for the purpose of issues by way of loan to trading funds, subject to a limit of £2,000 million or such greater sum not exceeding £4,000 million as the Treasury may specify by order, and

(b) payments into the National Loans Fund or Consolidated Fund—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

9.1 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister was unable in the time allocated to him to cover a point that I raised in my speech. Therefore, I have decided to use the opportunity provided by the money resolution to give him another opportunity to reply to it.

The money will be subject to a limit of £2 billion, or such greater sum not exceeding £4 billion, which is certainly a lot of money swilling around. The explanatory and financial memorandum states:

"The Bill provides that the aggregate of all such limits must not exceed £2,000 million, which may be increased to £4,000 million by affirmative resolution order."

I should be grateful if the Minister could say what the effect of the amendments contained in the Bill will be on section 6 of the Goverment Trading Funds Act 1973. Subsection (3) would be amended to read:

"A statutory instrument containing an order under section 1 of this Act if made without a draft having been approved by a resolution of the House of Commons shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of that House."

The affirmative procedure is thereby removed. The negative procedure takes its place.

The Government Trading Funds Act 1973 refers in section 6(3) to an order made under section 2(4). The passage that I read out is the amended version of section 6(3). The Minister will no doubt be acutely aware that section 2(4) is removed. Its substitute is a clause of the Bill with which we are now dealing. New section 2B(7) says:

"The sum of the maxima in force in respect of all trading funds at any time shall not exceed £2,000 million."

Subsection (8) of new section 2B states:

"The Treasury may by order made by statutory instrument increase or further increase the limit in subsection (7) above by any amount, not exceeding £1,000 million, specified in the order but not so as to make the limit exceed £4,000 million."

That lines up more or less with the money resolution that we are happily discussing.

Do the amendments to section 6, and of new section 2B, mean that the Minister can use a negative procedure instrument to raise the maximum of the trading funds, or is it just confused wording which provides the Minister with a residual power so that he does not have to use the affirmative resolution procedure? Is the Minister being given the power to decide whether he should use the affirmative or negative resolution procedure? On most occasions, Ministers, by some happy chance, seem to prefer the negative resolution procedure. I would be assured if the Minister would say that, in Committee—just so that it can be clear to the ordinary citizen—we can insert an amendment to new section 2B(8), which states:

"The Treasury may by order made by affirmative statutory instrument".

The provision would then line up with what appears to be one interpretation of the present legislation. I know that the Minister likes to be positive and constructive whenever the opportunity presents itself, and I would be happy if he could give such an assurance.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce) *rose——*

Mr. Cryer: I have another question. I know that the Minister is keen to give me an assurance. Perhaps I should not stretch his patience, but I shall give it a try.

A lot of money—up to £4 billion—is floating around, and I am a little worried about what the Minister said about there being a lot of interchange between the private sector and the Civil Service. The trading funds are based on the idea of some form of competition developing. Perhaps the Government had something like Barlow Clowes in mind when they drew up this method of trading. The Minister said that there is a lot of interchange between the Government and the private sector through civil servants. It occurs to me that the Government must maintain a system in which civil servants are kept at arm's length from the private sector and in which there are clear rules. I am not making any accusations, but the public must be satisfied that, when civil servants advise on setting up trading funds, which the Minister argues will offer a better and more efficient service—I do not agree—they will not get so close to the private sector that they become involved and finish up as directors on boards.

The Minister knows that this issue has been raised before in various contexts. I shall give an example of what I have in mind. I remember the General Electric Company getting hot under the collar with the then Department of Industry and making representations about its desire to take over Northern Engineering Industries. Inquiries about whether GEC was influencing civil servants to make such a decision were made. It was discovered that a civil servant became a non-executive director of GEC. I asked in the House whether the civil servant, who had been in the Department of Industry, had been involved in discussions with GEC. The answer was no, but it subsequently appeared that there had been a series of secret meetings between several civil servants, including the permanent secretary at the Department of Industry, and GEC. There was contact. We asked whether secret meetings were held to be good and whether the civil servant established contacts which enabled him to assume an important position in GEC.

I recognise that I am not posing an easy question, but the Minister will have to be satisfied, and it must be clear, that civil servants will remain completely aloof from any inducements or lures to move to the private sector for their own benefit. I am quite sure that that principle guides the Civil Service, Ministers and the House. Under the money resolution which allows increases up to £2 billion and £4 billion and in which a great deal of money is involved, I should like to know how that principle will be maintained.

9.14 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Under the money resolution I wish to return to the issue of valuation in relation to the Property Services Agency which, as the Minister said in a previous speech, might be very small but nonetheless would remain.

I asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when a proper valuation of the Property Services Agency

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

would be carried out and at what cost. The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), replied:

"It is too early to say."

It seems pretty extraordinary that we are making great changes in the Property Services Agency, which according to the National Audit Office report was valued at £3 billion in 1982 and is now valued at £10 billion—the Minister may challenge those figures if he disagrees with them—yet apparently no proper valuation has been undertaken.

Secondly, it is within the terms of the money resolution to ask the Minister to explain what physical assets in the Property Services Agency will be assigned to a privatised body and on what basis. Will such property and equipment remain in public ownership? Will it be leased to a privatised body or will it be given to such a body as a sweetener? In other words, is flotation envisaged?

It is rather unsatisfactory when a Member of Parliament raises a bit ad hominem the position of two key individuals—in this case Mr. Bob Etherington and Mr. Patrick Brown—and the Minister replies, "If you want answers to those questions perhaps you will get them from the Secretary of State for the Environment." He was courteous enough to say that the Secretary of State for the Environment had come in to hear my speech. I thank him for his courtesy, but the purpose of the House of Commons is not to be courteous but to give answers. Precisely because Ministers have had time——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is right that the purpose of the House is to give answers, provided that it is to the right motion. I am having some difficulty in understanding what relevance this has to the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: You are at some disadvantage, Mr. Speaker, because when you were out of the Chamber, the occupant of the Chair listened rather carefully to what I was saying and made no attempt to rule me out of order although I spoke at some length. I believe that I am in order under the terms of paragraph 8 of the National Audit Office report and under the terms of the Bill.

If particular cases are raised, they should, not least for the sake of the individuals concerned, be answered in the reply to the debate. Therefore, I was disappointed simply to hear that the Secretary of State for the Environment was courteous enough to come and hear me. Some answer should have been forthcoming on a rather major issue of principle.

In relation to property and equipment, will the Minister explain in terms of the money resolution how such valuable public resources are to be valued, who will be given the task and how soon such a portfolio would be completed? What assurance can the Minister give the House that such a valuation would be able to withstand public scrutiny so ensuring that the public was not ripped off in the privatisation of the PSA and Crown Suppliers?

I am entitled to ask the Chief Secretary again whether it is true that Miss Jeannie Turton chaired a committee on behalf of the Treasury that opposed privatisation. One of the central units in the Treasury made a similar report, and we know that Dewi Jones also did so. Was my description of the circumstances of the report by Coopers and Lybrand correct? Was Mr. Etherington's organisation correct in its valuation? Was what I said about it factually true?

While the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill refers to the transfer of undertakings under Protection of Employment Regulations 1981, what undertakings is the Minister prepared to give in regard to any person or persons subsequently made redundant under the new private body——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, who rightly said that I was not present during his previous speech. However, it seems to me that these matters are concerned with the Second Reading debate rather than with the money resolution.

Mr. Dalyell: I think, with respect, Mr. Speaker, that we are in some difficulty. The Minister quite properly conceded that there was to be a fag end of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill—honourably, he nods in assent—among the bodies that we are discussing. Surely, therefore, I am entitled to ask general questions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No. The money resolution covers the payment of loans to Government trading funds under new section 1(5) and new section 2B(2), (7) and (8) of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 relating to payments into the national loans fund or the consolidated fund; under new section 2A(5) relating to public dividend capital; new section 4A(6) relating to operations ceasing to be funded; and clause 2(1)(b) relating to increases of pensions.

Mr. Dalyell: Under new section 2A may I raise a question that has concerned the trade unions about protection from asset stripping? Given the nature of the construction industry, is it not necessary that bidders for the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers do not seek to asset-strip those organisations? The trade unions do not want a repeat of the royal ordnance factory fiasco. They therefore ask that amendments to the Bill——

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): Which Bill?

Mr. Dalyell: —are supported to ensure that windfall profits from the sale do not accrue to the Treasury. I say to the Financial Secretary that of course I am referring to the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill. It is easy to assert that that Bill is not relevant to the money resolution of today's discussion. If that is so, why on earth mention the Crown Suppliers in the Bill that we are discussing? Ministers cannot have it both ways. I believe that these are legitimate questions and that they deserve some answer here and now.

9.18 pm

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): In a moment, I shall try to help the hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr. Cryer), but first I should like to respond to the remarks of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I thought that I had made it plain in my reply to the Second Reading debate that many of the points that he raised about the Property Services Agency were related to the provisions that we are debating on the privatisation of the bulk of the PSA and that I would draw his worries to the attention of my right hon. Friend the

Secretary of State for the Environment, who will no doubt wish to comment on them. Of course I will do that, and I will do the same on the issue that the hon. Gentleman has raised under the money resolution. I shall draw those matters to the attention of my right hon. Friend. I am concerned that the hon. Gentleman should get a proper answer. Most of those issues, including the references to Mr. Etherington and Mr. Brown, do not relate to the Government Trading Bill. It would not be right or proper for me to answer those points specifically.

Mr. Dalyell: This is my last intervention. Is the Minister sure that he is right? Was not the crucial decision to go to Coopers and Lybrand for the report that was wanted—not the "whether" but the "how" report—taken inside the Treasury and Civil Service Department and not in the Department of the Environment?

Mr. Luce: Much though I should like to think that Ministers of the Civil Service are infallible, I fear that they are not. If I am wrong in these matters, I shall put it right with the hon. Gentleman by means of a letter or other contact.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South referred to the ethical standards of civil servants and the possibility of agencies being privatised. As a Minister with day-to-day responsibilities for the Civil Service, I attach great importance to the maintenance of the high ethical standards that the Civil Service already has. Certain rules, codes and guidelines on these matters can and must be followed. There are already rules and guidelines covering civil servants who wish to obtain a job outside the Civil Service. The rules involving the Diamond committee, of which the hon. Member for Bradford, South will be aware, are clear. Very high standards are maintained. Clearly, we must always ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. That is my duty and the duty of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as Minister for the Civil Service. There is no evidence that civil servants as a whole have any wish to abuse those rules in any way.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South made another point which should be seriously considered. I apologise for not picking up the hon. Gentleman's point earlier in my wind-up speech on Second Reading. I could have reassured the hon. Gentleman then. The Government propose to introduce an amendment to make orders under new section 2B(8) subject to affirmative resolution. This was omitted in the drafting. I hope that this undertaking, which we can consider in Committee, will reassure the hon. Gentleman and answer his main point.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Government Trading Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of the National Loans Fund or money provided by Parliament of sums required for the purpose of issues by way of loan to trading funds, subject to a limit of £2,000 million or such greater sum not exceeding £4,000 million as the Treasury may specify by order, and

(b) payments into the National Loans Fund or Consolidated Fund.

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (BORROWING POWERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

CENSUS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13*(a)(e)(f)(g)-(h)(i)(j)(k)*, 14*(a)*(vi), 14*(b)*, 15, 17, 18 and 19 of Schedule 2 and items 2 and 3 of Schedule 3 to the Order in Council, entitled the Census Order 1989, a draft of which was laid before this House on 13th November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

The House divided: Ayes 93, Noes 16.

Division No. 30] **[9.23 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Nellist, Dave
Beith, A. J.	Pike, Peter L.
Bermingham, Gerald	Primarolo, Dawn
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Skinner, Dennis
Cousins, Jim	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	
Kirkwood, Archy	Tellers for the Noes:
Mahon, Mrs Alice	Mr. Bob Cryer and
Meale, Alan	Mr. Jimmy Hood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Smoking

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Dorrell.]

9.35 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I am delighted to be offering the first Adjournment debate of the 1990s. I hope and believe that the 1990s increasingly will become a smoke-free decade. It has started unfortunately with the minority of smokers dictating a dangerous and anti-social environment for the majority. However, I am optimistic that by the end of the decade most public places will be free of that health and environmental hazard.

Smoking is a dangerous, dirty and anti-social habit. It is now practised by only one third of the adult population, but it directly affects the other two thirds. I firmly believe in the principle that people should be free to do what they want subject only to the proviso that they do not harm or injure anyone else. If people want the right to indulge in a habit which they know may damage their health and eventually kill them, that is their right in a free and democratic society. However, when their drug has the same effect on the majority of people who do not smoke, that is not acceptable and is a gross violation of human and civil rights.

This debate is not anti-smoker; it is pro the legitimate and abused rights of the non-smoking majority. The tobacco lobby may say, "What about the loss of Government revenue from tobacco taxation?" Well, what about it? Nothing that I will suggest this evening will affect that in any way. I do not see how the establishment of non-smoking areas will reduce the consumption of tobacco products when all smokers will continue to be allowed to smoke the same amount as before. They will simply have to do it in certain areas so that they do not pose a danger to the majority who do not smoke.

If smoking is reduced as a result of the measures that I will suggest, so much the better for everyone—and for smokers in particular. Tobacco tax could and should be increased to maintain the level of revenue. As we get down to the hardened core of committed smokers, so the demand for tobacco products becomes inelastic at which point the tax can be raised as much as we like —within reason—and that will eventually increase revenue. In any case, I doubt whether the tobacco lobby is in the slightest bit concerned about the level of Government revenue. It merely uses that as a superficial and dishonest debating point.

My debate covers two essential political issues. The first relates to extending and enhancing the rights and freedom of the individual. The second involves the protection of the environment—the green issue.

The majority of people should not have to be subjected to the health risks created by smokers. Mr. Speaker, you are a reasonable man. It is not right that you should have to watch someone else's pollution waft across you in a restaurant and land upon the food which you then must eat. Surely it is not right that you should come out of a pub or a cinema with your clothes and hair reeking of stale smoke. Surely it cannot be right that when you make a journey by train or bus you must sit in a smoke-filled cocoon which may cause eye and nose irritations. Surely it is not right that in one's place of work, where one spends most of one's waking life, one should be subjected to the selfishness of the minority. Surely it is not right that

schools, which must now have a health education programme, should allow pupils to see teachers create the impression that smoking is just a normal part of the adult lifestyle.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) called you, Mr. Speaker, a reasonable man. Of course all hon. Members agree with that, but what does my hon. Friend mean by a smoke-filled cocoon? When I go for my walk in the morning, everybody is hurtling around jogging and so on. They are in a smoke-filled world. My hon. Friend talks about smoking killing people. Biased medics will use anything to bolster their bias when they say that smoking kills. What about all the traffic? What about carbon monoxide? Is my hon. Friend so naive as to believe that all that kills is smoking and that carbon monoxide is almost good for us? Does he want to do away with cars, buses, trains and aircraft? Is his bias so built-in that he wants to do away with just us smokers who want to go about our harmless way?

Mr. Amos: If I had been allowed to develop my arguments, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) would have been relieved to hear that they are consistent and to the point. My hon. Friend says that his smoking pastime is harmless. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We are all concerned about the environment, but for many people that concern seems to stop short at the frontiers of the external environment and does not seem to extend to the domestic or enclosed environment. I am concerned with what happens to the ozone layer and also with what happens to individuals' lungs and hearts. It is inconsistent and rather pointless for people to worry about the effects of lead in petrol and then spend their working day in a smoke-infested atmosphere, to be followed by a couple of hours in a smoke-infested pub, and finish with an hour or two in a smoke-infested living room, regardless of the effects on their children.

Now is the time for the Government to act, and act positively. The Government are to be applauded for their initiatives to protect the external environment. They are to be encouraged in their involvement in warning the public about the scourge of AIDS and the dangers of drink driving. However, when it comes to smoking, there seems to be an extraordinary reluctance to take any effective action—everything must be voluntary. The tobacco industry's power does not frighten me, but its power to prevent the introduction of any effective measures to protect the majority of people is nothing short of scandalous.

It is entirely right that the tobacco industry's voluntary agreement to limit tobacco advertising and sponsorship should be shown for what it is. At a time when under-age smoking is a growing social menace, especially among girls aged 11 to 15, it is quite outrageous that the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship—COMATAS—should be allowed to keep many of its findings confidential. Clearly, tobacco companies have something to hide. Four major studies on how well voluntary agreements are being observed have been kept secret—one on poster advertising near schools, one on sports sponsorship, and two surveys on advertising at confectioners, tobacconists and newsagents. One can only be extremely suspicious of why they have been kept secret. It was because tobacco companies kept breaking voluntary agreements that COMATAS was set up. Even so, tobacco companies still broke the agreements 41 times in 1987 alone. Clearly, as a matter of urgency, we must set up a new legally-binding agreement.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health has now agreed to renegotiate the voluntary agreement on advertising and that the role of COMATAS will also be reviewed. COMATAS has limited value in its present role, because tobacco companies can veto the truth if they do not like what it is. This voluntary approach is basically a cop-out and an abdication of responsibility.

The argument that statutory measures cannot work is clearly nonsense, because other countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia have already introduced measures to honour the rights of people in those countries. The argument that statutory measures should not be introduced is a dereliction of duty when one considers the effects of smoking on the culprits and the innocent victims—children, the elderly and the majority of people in general. Deaths from smoking-induced diseases in the United Kingdom, especially lung cancer and other cancers and coronary heart disease and arterial diseases, are 110,000 a year, which is equal to about 15 deaths per hour. It costs the National Health Service over £500 million a year to treat tobacco-related diseases, all of which are preventable, not to mention the time off work due to ill health.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: They are not all preventable.

Mr. Amos: They are preventable if people do not smoke. The central consideration must be the rights of the long-suffering majority who should not be expected to live and work in a smoke-infested environment.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: What about traffic?

Mr. Amos: The debate is about smoking. If my hon. Friend listens he will learn a lot and I am sure that his views will be changed by the sense and logic of the argument. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) would contain himself there might be time for him to speak in the debate and put his point of view.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am encouraging my hon. Friend to say something sensible.

Mr. Speaker: Do not encourage him.

Mr. Amos: I need no encouragement to spread truth and light throughout the world.

In the case of passive smoking, the non-smoker breathes sidestream smoke from the burning tip of a cigarette and mainstream smoke from that which has been inhaled and then exhaled by the smoker. Most people in Britain spend most of their lives indoors and tobacco smoke makes a significant and measurable contribution to the level of indoor air pollution, which is what I am concerned about. We do not have the problem of lead pollution in the home, the workplace or in school.

Tobacco smoke is highly complex and contains thousands of chemicals which are released into the air as particles and gases. Many potentially toxic gases are present in high concentrations in sidestream smoke and

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nearly 85 per cent. of the smoke in a room is sidestream. About 60 of these substances are known or suspected to be carcinogens. How does that affect passive smokers, the people who involuntarily breath in this pollution? As well as causing annoyance by making hair and clothes smell unpleasant, involuntary smoke exposure can cause symptoms such as eye irritation, headache, coughing, sore throat, dizziness and nausea and it produces many small but measurable changes in the air passages of lungs of otherwise healthy adults. Adults with experience of asthma undergo a significant and substantial decline in lung function when exposed to sidestream smoke for one hour. People with allergies and respiratory and heart ailments will be more seriously affected.

The effects of long-term exposure are very serious. In March 1988 the Government's independent scientific committee on smoking and health published its fourth report dealing in particular with the issue of passive smoking. The committee scrutinised studies on the effects of passive smoking and found that the overall findings were consistent with an increased risk of lung cancer in non-smokers of up to 30 per cent. That was independent, scientific medical evidence. When that risk is compared with other cancer risks, it is found that the life-long risk from passive smoking is more than 100 times higher than the estimated effect of 20 years exposure to asbestos that is normally found in buildings.

Many people are involved and some of them are at a greater risk than the general population due to pre-existing cardiac or respiratory conditions and/or prolonged exposure in the home or workplace. There is no safe level of exposure to carcinogens. Recent studies have also found an increased risk of disease other than lung cancer in passive smokers. In addition, young children are at risk. Infants of parents who smoke are more likely to be admitted to hospital for bronchitis and pneumonia in the first year of life. Chronic coughs and phlegm are more frequent among the children of parents who smoke. The Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health said:

"By enhancing the frequency or severity of childhood respiratory illnesses, [passive smoking] could contribute to the development of respiratory disease in adult life among nonsmokers."

The committee also found evidence of an association between exposure to passive smoking and low birth weight and said that, since active smoking confers a hazard on the health of the unborn baby, passive smoking might be expected to confer one also, albeit a smaller one.

On the basis of the independent scientific and medical evidence, the non-smoker should be protected. Experts have concluded that given the public health initiatives to minimise or eliminate involuntary public exposure to other environmental pollutants with less carcinogenic potency than several of the substances in tobacco smoke, similar efforts to prevent involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke are necessary. In the United States of America some 80 per cent. of states restrict smoking in public places and workplace smoking policies have increased dramatically in the 1980s.

Public opinion now demands the provision of a smoke-free environment in five main areas: public transport, public eating places, places of public entertainment, the workplace and schools.

As you are a learned man, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you will be aware that 80 per cent. of the public agree that there should be no smoking on public transport. That includes 67 per cent. of smokers. There have been recent encouraging developments. For example, there is now a total ban on smoking on London Underground. British Airways has introduced a ban on smoking on all its domestic flights by public demand, including that of many smokers. I congratulate British Airways on that move and on putting up with the abuse of the well-heeled Tobacco Advisory Council. The council's only advice seems to be that people should smoke as much as they want because the medical evidence is not conclusive about the health dangers. They say, "Go ahead and smoke because it does not do you any harm." *[Interruption]*—a view shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak. There is independent medical evidence which some people, to their lasting regret, choose to ignore. That is their choice.

The smoking ban on British Airways was introduced despite dire warnings about what would happen to customer demand. The opposite of what was predicted has happened. I, for one, would choose British Airways in preference to other airlines such as Dan Air, all things being equal, because I know that I will not have to take the risk of sitting in a smoke-infested atmosphere.

The challenge to British Airways is to extend the ban to its European and transatlantic flights. In the United States all domestic flights are now smoke-free. Some journeys last up to five hours. The Canadian Government has just announced a smoking ban on all domestic and international flights on all Canadian airlines. So much for the argument that it cannot be done.

Progress is also being made on British Rail. It is time for them to get rid of mixed smoking and non-smoking carriages and compartments. In open coaches the existence of a non-smoking section adjacent to a smoking section is useless. British Rail must reintroduce the concept of smoking carriages which would be easily identified by the fog inside and the empty seats.

Similarly, upper decks of buses divided between smoking and non-smoking sections do not provide a smoke-free environment for the non-smoker. The onus must shift from the privilege of the minority to damage the health and environment of the majority to special provision for the minority in secluded areas so that the rights of the majority can and will be respected.

Some eating places and pubs now give customers a choice. Where areas cannot clearly be demarcated, the onus must shift to the rights of the majority. Eating places should be clean and hygienic in the dining areas as well as in the kitchens. Fast food places are popular, especially with children and young people. It appears that 91 per cent. of the public generally and 89 per cent. of smokers agree that all restaurants should provide no-smoking areas.

Another consideration is entertainment areas. Increasingly, cinemas are making provision for the majority of their customers. The futility of dividing an auditorium into smoking and non-smoking sections has been highlighted. Entire areas should be completely free of smoke infestation.

In the workplace, we are talking again about the rights of the individual—indeed, the rights of the majority—and concern for the environment. Even 81 per cent. of smokers agree that non-smokers should have the right to work in

non-polluted areas. The demand is that all United Kingdom workplaces must have an effective smoking policy.

In education, the adult community has an especial responsibility to protect our children from the dangers of passive smoking and the appalling examples which smokers provide. It is about time that we had the guts to end the outrage of continuing tobacco advertising and sponsorship, both of which are designed to encourage people to smoke more. That applies especially to youngsters, who are needed to take up smoking in ever greater numbers as adults continue increasingly to kick the habit. There has been an alarming growth in smoking among young people—I am talking about 15-year-olds—particularly among girls. I have no doubt that that has been caused by the heavy advertising of the tobacco industry in women's and girls' magazines.

The Tobacco Advisory Council has limitless money to take full-page advertisements in the national daily press and evening newspapers—I have some examples with me—which seek to abuse the right of the majority to have clean air and any organisation such as British Airways, which dares to respond to its customers and brave the wrath of the advisory council in order to introduce a clean air policy.

The tobacco industry spends about £120 million a year of its obscene profits on advertising plus countless extra millions on sponsorship. Of course, sponsorship is the obvious and easy way to circumvent restrictions on advertising. It is an outrageous abuse when there is tobacco sponsorship of sporting events which are especially impressionable on young people. The aim must be to stop people smoking and to protect people from the influences of the Tobacco Advisory Council in encouraging people to start smoking, especially when set against the massive sums spent by the tobacco industry is the derisory £3 million that is spent on smoking prevention by the Government, together with the welcome extra £10 million that is to be spent over the next five years by the Government on their new teenage anti-smoking campaign.

In December, Mr. Donald Reid, the director of the Health Education Authority, said:

"One million children and teenagers alive today in Britain will eventually die from smoking if the present trend continues."

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: That is rubbish.

Mr. Amos: That was said at the launch of the new campaign to try to reduce teenage smoking over the next five years.

"At the launch Mr. Reid accused the tobacco industry of refusing to co-operate in moves to cut illegal tobacco sales among the under-16s. The authority had asked companies to cut off supplies of cigarettes to retailers caught selling cigarettes illegally but the tobacco industry had refused."

Mr. Reid added:

"This is not surprising since the industry must recruit 270 children to smoking today—merely to replace the 270 adults who will die from smoking.

The industry knew that if they attracted youngsters aged 11-15 they would keep them for life."

The article continues:

"The HEA's programme will also be targeted at schools with the goal of making all schools non-smoking by 1995.

An HEA booklet which is being distributed to schools claims that children are attracted to smoking through cigarette advertising, tobacco-sponsored sports events and the sophisticated image associated by smoking."

This is not the time for timidity. As the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health said in March 1988:

"Passive smoking is a major public health hazard in all public places. Several hundred thousand people will die in the UK as a result of being forced to breathe in other people's tobacco smoke."

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: More rubbish.

Mr. Amos: My hon. Friend shouts "More rubbish", but my remarks happen to be true. We are dealing with a serious matter which puts lives at risk and which concerns an anti-social habit. The public have a right to hear my remarks, rather than for me to be shouted down or abused by the power of the tobacco industry—though it scares me not one jot. I quoted independent scientific and medical advice.

Several hundred thousand people in the United Kingdom will die as the result of being forced to breathe other people's tobacco smoke. Those suffering from asthma and bronchitis are severely affected, as smoke irritates the eyes, nose and throat. It also makes clothes, hair, furniture and other objects reek of stale smoke. There is overwhelming public demand for a cleaner environment in buildings as well as outside, not only among non-smokers but among many smokers themselves, who recognise the problem——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): I beg to move, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: The Question is, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will you not, Mr. Speaker, allow my hon. Friend the Minister to reply?

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) please to remain silent. I call Mr. Amos.

Mr. Amos: Many smokers themselves recognise the problems associated with smoking and may welcome the opportunity that a ban would provide to help them give up their habit. Such a ban could serve as an inducement. The Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health remarked in 1988:

"Non-smoking should be regarded as the norm in enclosed areas frequented by the public or employees, special provision being made for smokers rather than vice-versa."

In 1986 the World Health Organisation commented:

"Passive smoking violates the right to health of non-smokers, who must be protected against this noxious form of environmental pollution."

None of that can happen unless the Government accept their responsibility to introduce legislation and stop relying on so-called voluntary measures, which in many cases do not work and never can work properly. We know that passive smoking is 100 times more dangerous than breathing in asbestos dust. We should remember the outcry when asbestos is discovered in a building. It is immediately closed to the public and suitably protected workmen are called in to remove the asbestos.

There will always be a significant number of people who will not respond to voluntary measures—as one finds in restaurants when a selfish smoker is clearly causing distress to non-smokers at an adjacent table—and legislation has been tried, and works, in countries and cities throughout

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the world, including the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Norway and Spain. Those countries have laws guaranteeing some form of protection for non-smokers that have overwhelming public support and are effective.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health on his genuine and strong personal commitment to the cause that I support. I hope that the debate will strengthen his hand in bringing about new measures and in using whatever influence he can bring to bear in ensuring a clean and safe environment. The message is simple. Legislation can be used, is being used and should continue to be used. Smoking is no longer socially acceptable and we should all act on public opinion, take the lead, and provide a clean, safe and healthy environment.

10.3 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) stated that we should heed the majority, but there is of course also a minority—and they too hold an opinion. I do not approve of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) catcalling the hon. Member for Hexham when he was putting his case. However, I must admit that when I am seated behind the hon. Member for Selly Oak when he is smoking his pipe, more often than not I really enjoy the aroma and sense of flavour that reaches me. Other right hon. and hon. Members also smoke pipes, and I enjoy the sensation as much as they do.

The hon. Member for Hexham is being a little dictatorial. We have just got rid of a dictator in Romania, but here we go again. I believe that we are seeing the thin end of a very thick wedge. That is what is happening. If the hon. Member for Hexham persuades the Government to do what he has suggested, he, or some of his colleagues, will move on. They will have a total ban on smoking. The hon. Gentleman is nodding his head and agreeing with me. If his constituency was in Bristol or Nottinghamshire he would not have made that speech, but would have kidded someone else into making it. Both those cities have massive tobacco factories.

I do not live in or represent a constituency in Nottingham; my constituency is outside the city. A number of my constituents work in the tobacco industry in Nottingham. I am surprised that I do not see one or two Conservative Members who represent constituencies in Nottinghamshire in their places, or standing up for the industry. I am here to defend the tobacco industry, but there are no Conservative Members representing Nottingham or Bristol here. The little fellow who sits up yonder is not here now, but he ought to have been here to defend his constituents and the jobs available to them in the tobacco industry.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South) *rose*——

Mr. Haynes: I shall not give way, because other hon. Members want to speak.

The hon. Member for Hexham did not write his speech. A voluntary organisation wrote it for him.

Mr. Amos: The hon. Member should withdraw that remark.

Mr. Haynes: I shall not withdraw it. I have heard that speech before. It came from an organisation that is against smoking; it is called Action on Smoking and Health. I am sure that the hon. Member for Selly Oak has also heard it before. The hon. Member for Hexham may wag his head. He was agreeing with me and now he is disagreeing, but I have heard that speech time and again.

I am defending the rights of the individual too. There is a minority in this land who wish to smoke. If the hon. Member for Hexham considers other countries he will find that they are in the same boat—they have minorities and some have majorities. The hon. Gentleman has not been here very long and he has a lot to learn. Hon. Members do not get away with the things that he has suggested tonight. I am not saying that he is not out of nappies yet, but he has a lot to learn.

I have listened to the Under-Secretary speak on many occasions in many debates, including those on smoking. I congratulate him on his work for health since he left the Ministry of Defence, although I am an Opposition Member. I praise the Under-Secretary, but I do not praise the hon. Member for Hexham, because if he lies in bed tonight and considers what he has said, he will probably have a different opinion in the morning. He should consider what I have said about jobs and the rights of the minority. He is favouring the majority.

10.9 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) for allowing me to contribute to his Adjournment debate. I commend the sensible and balanced way that he spoke. Public opinion is shifting and my hon. Friend has captured the changing mood more accurately than did the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes).

I hope that every hon. Member hopes to reduce the 100,000 premature deaths caused by smoking every year. Progress has been made in the past few years, and the Government deserve some credit for their role in securing a reduction in the number of deaths. However, we must do more. We need a coherent strategy that embraces all Government Departments, including the Treasury, because excise duty has an influence on consumption, and there has been no increase in duty in the last two Budgets. I hope that that will be put right so that there is a firm fiscal boost for the preventive strategy that we all want.

The Department of Trade and Industry has a role to play: there is no point in the Government's providing grants for the building of factories to manufacture cigarettes if they adopt a posture in favour of a reduction in smoking. Sports Ministers have their role to play: there is also no point in the Department of Health putting across the message that smoking is unhealthy if the Department of the Environment allows sport—a healthy activity—to be associated, through sponsorship, with smoking.

My hon. Friend's Department has a key role in this regard. I remember that, when I was given the job that he now holds, I observed two things when I entered the building: a no-smoking sign and, behind it, a chain-smoking doorkeeper. It took me a long time to establish the correct priority, and to disengage the latter from the former. I hope that the Department is now doing what it can to discourage smoking in hospitals, and at

district health authority meetings, for instance, and that there are plenty of smoke-free zones at Richmond house, the Department's new headquarters.

What an individual does in his own home is of course a matter for him. My hon. Friend's point was this: why should we have to inhale polluted air in places that we have to visit, such as post offices and railway stations? Do we not have a right to breathe unpolluted air? What my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) does with his pipe in private affects no one; what he does with it in public affects many of us. The hon. Member for Ashfield may like the flavour that follows my hon. Friend, but I must say that, although I am happy to tolerate his company and conversation, I do not like the smoke, and my wife does not like the smell of my clothes when I go home after a discussion with my hon. Friend.

We can play a role by choosing to patronise institutions that have already made progress. We can stay at hotels with no-smoking bedrooms; we can visit pubs and no-smoking bars and restaurants with no-smoking zones; and—as my hon. Friend pointed out—we can support airlines that have banned smoking. We can get the message across to producers and suppliers that public opinion is shifting, and that they can attract more customers by reponding to the changing mood than by listening to the rather reactionary voices that we have just heard.

My hon. Friend spoke of the "nanny state", but so far the no-smoking rule has been self-policing. There is little smoking on the Underground now, not because we have a nanny state but because people accept the rule. As far as I know, no one has been prosecuted for smoking on the Underground, although there may have been one or two prosecutions. Exactly the same would happen if the policy was extended to discouraging smoking in public places: the prohibition would become self-enforcing. We are asking the Government to nudge the shift in public opinion even further by giving a lead along the imaginative lines suggested by my hon. Friend.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on introducing such an important debate. I shall keep my remarks brief, as I know that other hon. Members may wish to contribute if there is time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Acton (Sir G. Young) is entirely right: a reduction in cigarette smoking will unquestionably save lives. Of 1,000 young adults who are regular smokers, 250 will die before their time from smoking cigarettes; six will die in road accidents. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton that we ignore such statistics at our peril. Smoking cigarettes is dangerous, and, as a health Minister, I have a responsibility—as, indeed, we all have—to draw that fact to the attention of the public.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham that passive smoking is also dangerous, although not as dangerous as cigarette smoking itself. My hon. Friend cited the 1988 Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health. To be fair, we should quote its findings a little more accurately: it identified an increase of between 10 and 30 per cent. in the risk of contracting lung cancer for non-smokers who were habitually exposed to cigarette smoke, as opposed to people who were exposed to it by chance in public places. However, my hon. Friend was right to draw the committee's report to the attention of the House. He was also right to say that on good medical advice the Department of Health accepts it.

My hon. Friend also said that smoking by others in public places can sometimes be a nuisance. Recently I visited a restaurant with my wife. We were greatly annoyed when the couple who were sitting at an adjacent table started to smoke before we had even ordered our meal. The fact that people sitting adjacent to us in a public restaurant chose to smoke cigarettes ruined the prospect of our meal. It was obvious that the other people in that relatively small restaurant did not enjoy cigarette smoke, either. Smoking can be a nuisance.

As for the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham, it is important to recognise that smokers have rights, too. I defend the right to smoke pipes, cigarettes and cigars, but that right should not be exercised at the expense of those who do not smoke. It ought not to be exercised in public places. We must take every step possible to protect the rights of non-smokers. They are in the majority.

My hon. Friend said that there should be legislation to prohibit smoking on public transport. Smoking is already banned on the Underground, for safety reasons. As for aircraft, I join my hon. Friend in welcoming what British Airways and Air UK have done on domestic routes. Carriers have the right to ban all forms of smoking, if they so wish. The railways also have that power. I note that 80 per cent. of Network SouthEast trains already prohibit smoking, which is a higher proportion than on the rest of British Rail's network. Bus carriers also have the power to prohibit smoking. However, it would be difficult for them to enforce such a ban on the top deck of a double decker bus, particularly if there were only a driver and no conductor. My hon. Friend also referred to public eating places. An owner can ban cigarette smoking in his restaurant, if he so wishes. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Acton that it is up to public pressure; legislation is not appropriate.

As for places of public entertainment, cigarette smoking has largely been prohibited in cinemas. Employers already have the power in workplaces to prohibit smoking by employees. They can enforce that ban through the contract of employment. In schools, it is up to the local education authority. By agreement with staff, smoking can be prohibited in staff rooms.

I agree with the thrust of my hon. Friend's case. He has my sympathy. However, I have to admit that I am a smoker. I smoke a pipe and I enjoy a good cigar, but I do not smoke in public places. I have stopped smoking in the Department of Health, at Richmond house. Although I still enjoy smoking, I do so in private—either in my own house, through the tolerance of my wife, or out of doors. I do not smoke in public places because I am concerned about the effect on other people, and their reaction. In public places it is good manners to refrain from smoking. The general thrust of my hon. Friend's debate is not unwelcome. The points that he has made are wise and sensible, and we should all heed them.

Schizophrenia (Constituency Case)

10.18 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to raise briefly a serious issue on behalf of my Fylde constituents. I want to raise with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health one of the most difficult constituency cases that I have had to deal with since I became a Member of Parliament. It concerns a young man who, for the sake of the debate, I shall call David, a schizohphrenic, and the problems that his mother faces in looking after him.

I shall never forget, when I first met David's mother, her asking, "What will he do when I am gone? Who will look after David?" She was referring to facilities in the community available to look after her son. He is schizophrenic, irrational, sometimes subject to the influence of alcohol and drugs and imagines that people will murder him. He finds it difficult to live in the community. He tries hard, but his condition is serious. He repels some of the help available to him such as day care, and even the community psychiatric nurse has had difficulty.

When I first encountered the case, I felt that I was in some sort of game of pass-the-parcel. I raised the matter with the district health authority which referred me to social services; I raised it with social services which referred me to the district health authority. I found it a most difficult case to make progress with. I am raising it tonight because I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary takes a keen interest in mental health matters. I have letters from David's mother, one of which reads:

> "I have nightmares about what the future holds for both David and myself—I love him dearly and have sorely tried from the beginning to be 'a prop' to him, but . . . at my age which is 68, I wonder what happens when I die."

This Christmas she went to his flat. He had had some surplus milk bottles which he had flung all over the place. She walked in on a carpet of glass. He had had a bad schizophrenic attack and had crushed his collection of records and cassettes.

David's mother is 68 and tries her best. She has commented favourably on the efforts that have been made since I intervened and asked Lancashire social services to help. It has provided a home help with whom he has formed some kind of relationship, but much of the help is somewhat tenuous. I asked the district health authority what might be done to help, but was confronted with a picture almost of despair. When I asked what it could do to help the seriously mentally ill or people with serious behavioural difficulties, I was told, "I am afraid that we do not have a facility to help a young man such as this. The best we can do is send him to a facility in Northampton. We have three people on whom we are spending some hundreds of thousands of pounds in providing care. Could there not be some funds for a supra-regional unit to look after people who suffer from this kind of condition?"

The White Paper on caring for people might be a blueprint for hope for mentally ill people in the community. I showed it to the local social services department for comment and was told, "We have ideas. We would like respite care, one-to-one care in the community and the opportunity to put a social worker or community worker at the young man's disposal, but where are the resources? Can we be sure that in future the Government will give us the resources necessary to provide the intensive care which this type of person requires?"

The example that I have given, albeit briefly, is not unique. Schizophrenia is a widespread problem. Only today the *Daily Mail* wrote about it in human terms. It is a condition that many people find difficult to face. Margaret Wallace, a champion of schizophrenics and a journalist of note, recently presented an excellent television programme which showed that, to deal with schizophrenics in New York, warehouses with 750 iron beds in them are available to "look after" such people. That is a nightmare which haunts the mother of this young man.

I should like to hear from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary what hope he can offer David's mother and many others that the future will not be so bleak for those who suffer from this terrible condition.

10.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) has done the House a great service by raising this subject. I very much hope that the House will have the opportunity to return to it at greater length and in greater depth than is possible tonight. In the time available I shall make five brief and simple points.

First, I do not believe that there is as deep an understanding of the affliction of schizophrenia as there should be in society and in the medical profession, particularly among general practitioners and primary care services. Early diagnosis means that early help is available to the family and the individual suffering. There should be a far greater understanding of how individuals can relapse throughout their lives. Schizophrenia can arise in the late teens. I have met a number of families who, to their great despair and amazement, have seen their children lapse into schizophrenia, sometimes diagnosed too late. The children then spend time in and out of psychiatric hospitals and then perhaps relapse into a chronic condition later in life, sometimes physically assaulting their parents, which is incredibly distressing.

I share with my hon. Friend a desire to bring out into the open this terrible disease so that, whether we are politicians, consultants or GPs, we are aware of the scale of the problem.

Secondly, the Government have continued the long-standing policy of seeking to care for those with mental illness as far as possible in the community. That is a humanitarian policy, but there are limits to the degree to which we can care for those with a mental illness, in their own homes, with their parents, sharing flats or in hostels. In my judgment, there will always be a need for state provision for asylum care which can be short and long term. There will always be a need for some provision of institutional care for those with a mental illness. I do not think that it is fair to portray our policy as moving entirely away from an institutional setting to a community setting. Therefore, for my hon. Friend's constituent there will always be a need for some hospital care.

Thirdly, from 1 April 1991 the Government will be introducing a new grant payable through regional health authorities to social services departments to help them to improve facilities available in the community for the mentally ill. We recognise that social services departments

do not spend enough of their resources on the care of the mentally ill in the community. It is 3 per cent. of their budgets. That is not sufficient. Therefore, the new grant will help in pump-priming—in the construction of new facilities, and in hiring additional social workers to care for those in the community. I frankly admit that in certain parts of the country the service is less than adequate. It is a function of historic policies and decision taken in good faith in the past.

Fourthly, from 1 April 1991 we shall be requiring all district health authorities, before they discharge any schizophrenic patient, to ensure that there is a proper plan for caring for that individual so that the health authority, the hospital and the consultant may know where the patient is going, how he can be contacted, who his friends are and what is his method of medical and social support in the community. That is most important, and I commend the Royal College of Psychiatrists for producing a code of practice broadly similar to our discharge policy for hospitals.

Finally, it is most important that the Government facilitate the construction of more community care facilities. I am very pleased to repeat the announcement which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health made a few weeks ago about the creation of a capital loan fund. It is a major new initiative, and £50 million will be available to district health authorities to borrow from the loan fund to construct facilities in the community now and repay the money when the facilities which they replace are sold when they become empty and are no longer used. I hope that that will bring to fruition a much earlier construction of facilities in the community. I hope that that will help my hon. Friend and all those who suffer from mental illness.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 9 January 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NEW SOUTHGATE CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM LIMITED BILL

Order for consideration of Lords amendments read.
To be considered on Thursday.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

Order for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords]*

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Eastern Europe

1. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of the United Kingdom's forces of the changing situation in eastern Europe.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): We shall continue to give full support to NATO's strategy for peace and security and shall foster dialogue with the nations of eastern Europe while maintaining effective nuclear and conventional forces at the minimum levels necessary for deterrence.

Mr. Fields: Does the Minister agree that the level of defence spending by the Government is an obscenity and a waste, when a fraction of that money would resolve the ambulance dispute and fund expenditure on the environment, our infrastructure, education, health and other matters? Who is the enemy—surely not our new-found friends in eastern Europe? Why do the Government persist in posturing as the most fanatical cold war warriors in Europe? Is it not time for a rethink and for Britain to take a realistic approach to defence?

Mr. Hamilton: There is nothing more important than the defence of these islands and although changes are taking place in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, there is tremendous uncertainty there and nobody knows what the future will bring.

Mr. Speaker: Sir Alan Glyn.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Sir Alan Glyn: Does my hon. Friend agree that, despite all the changes in Europe, in Russia and in the satellite countries, Russia still represents a formidable force and that we should in no way drop our defences but should retain our nuclear deterrent until Europe has settled down and a peace settlement can be reached?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right. It is probable, indeed likely, that intentions in the Soviet Union have changed, but recently the capabilities of the Soviet Union's forces have probably been enhanced with new equipment that has come on stream. We know that intentions can change and the future is uncertain.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister accept that the changed political circumstances make it highly unlikely that a follow-on to the Lance missile will be deployed? Will not that make it impossible to sustain the doctrine of flexible response? Does not that in turn make it necessary for the Government to consider a defence strategy based on minimum deterrence?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, our NATO partners remain committed to a follow-on to Lance, and that decision will be taken in 1992. Flexible response is an essential part of our deterrence strategy and I should be unhappy to see us move away from that.

Mr. Speaker: Question No. 2. Mr. Colvin.

Mr. Colvin: No. 2, with one proviso——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask his question. He cannot preface it with a proviso.

Mr. Colvin: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but the wrong date has been printed on the Order Paper. I do not know whether that is a Freudian slip, but the date should be 1990, not 1999. I fear that the Minister may give me the wrong answer.

Mr. Speaker: If the fault lies with the Table Office, I shall accept that correction.

Helicopters

2. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to confirm his order for 25 utility EH101 helicopters for delivery in 1999.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): The EH101 utility helicopter programme is still at an early stage. We are giving our attention to a number of different considerations, but it is much too soon to confirm an order.

Mr. Colvin: I am disappointed to hear that answer because in April 1987 my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the then Secretary of State for Defence, promised an order for delivery early in 1990. That gives rise to a couple of questions. First, can my hon. Friend tell the House whether the project definition stage of the EH101 utility version has yet been completed? If not, when will that happen? Secondly, can my hon. Friend

say more about the review of the role of the helicopter in the land battle in Europe, which we all badly want to learn about?

Mr. Clark: I remind my hon. Friend that when my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence made his statement about the order for 25 aircraft, he said that it was subject to contractual and other considerations. We hope that the project definition study will be completed in April. The more comprehensive programme of operation analysis will continue. It is a detailed topic that will affect our consideration of the mix of helicopters and other weapons in the battlefields of the future, and we shall be drawing the appropriate lessons for our procurement.

Mr. Ashdown: I take this opportunity to tell the Minister of the seriousness—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has hardly got a word out.

Mr. Ashdown: I remind the Minister of the seriousness of the situation. Does he realise that the two-year delay is creating a serious impediment to the effective financial management of the project, which is so important both to Westland and to the nation? Is the Minister aware that the delay means that the first type 23 frigate will have to wait a full five years—perhaps one quarter of its total life—before it receives the EH101 for which it was designed, and without which its operational effectiveness will be considerably diminished? How can the Minister continue with that folly?

Mr. Clark: If the right hon. Gentleman is honest with himself and with the House, he will acknowledge that a number of specification incompatibilities remain to be solved. Until that is done to our satisfaction, we cannot place an order.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has the specification been properly thought through in regard to the Army and the Royal Air Force? The signs are that both services are unhappy with the EH101 as a basic helicopter for the future.

Mr. Clark: As I said, there are specification incompatibilities, but it would not be appropriate for me to reveal them to the House. However, they have been fairly well ventilated in the specialist press. My hon. Friend can read those specialist journals and see what he thinks.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said that he was unhappy with the Minister's reply. The Opposition are appalled at the Minister's reply. In April 1987, when he cancelled the NH90 project, the then Secretary of State for Defence gave a firm commitment to the EH101, stating that

"we intend to place an order for an initial batch of 25 utility EH101s for delivery in the early 1990s."

We are now in the early 1990s, and still no delivery of EH101s has been made because an order has not been placed. That statement by the then Secretary of State and the Government's current statements serve deliberately to mislead the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No Minister deliberately misleads the House.

Mr. Clark: Characteristically, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) did not complete the quotation. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence clearly also used the words:

"subject to satisfactory contractual negotiations."—[*Official Report*, 9 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 470-71.]

Does the hon. Gentleman want me to order an aircraft before I am satisfied that it is effective and represents good value?

Mr. Marlow: In view of recent changes in eastern Europe, many of which are irreversible, and given the likelihood that, in future, we shall be less involved in a defence policy that is dependent upon armour, and likely to require a more mobile and flexible capability, does my hon. Friend agree that the Government are more likely to invest in helicopters than in tanks and armoured vehicles?

Mr. Clark: The mix between helicopters, armour and other weaponry on future battlefields is subject to a detailed programme of operational analysis that my Department is currently undertaking.

Aldermaston (Police Investigations)

3. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the MOD police investigations into malpractice at Aldermaston.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Michael Neubert): I assume that the hon. Gentleman refers to press reports alleging financial malpractice by contractors in connection with the A90 project. I can confirm that certain allegations are the subject of investigation by the MOD police, but it would not be appropriate for me to comment further while that is still in progress.

Mr. Davies: I can understand the reason for the Minister giving that answer. Does he not think that opportunities for malpractice will be considerably greater after privatisation? Will the Minister give particular consideration to the role of the compliance office, and will he tell the House how the newly contracted atomic weapons establishment will be able to ensure that those responsible for monitoring the operations are not dependent on their relationship with those who are contracting? Will he assure us that the compliance office will not enter into direct contractual relationship with private contractors?

Mr. Neubert: There are no grounds for believing that there will be greater opportunities for malpractice under contracted management in the future. It is true that the investigations are taking their time, but they will be completed before long and it would be wrong to jump to any conclusions before we know the results. Safety will be given the highest priority. The hon. Gentleman may care to look at the written answer that I gave the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on that subject.

Eastern Europe

5. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for defence procurement of recent events in eastern Europe.

Mr. Alan Clark: We welcome recent moves to towards democracy in eastern Europe and hope that they will lead to a sustained improvement in East-West relations and enhanced stability and security in Europe. Certainly those events and other developments will continue to form an important part of the background to our considerations of procurement decisions.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend accept that his statement will be widely welcomed among thinking people in the House, because of the troublesome and turbulent times through which Russia is going? Any country that has 386 generals who may find themselves unemployed may decide to make dangerous incursions, and that shows that it is not warmongering to be safe, but making sure that we have peace.

Mr. Clark: I welcome the note of caution sounded in my hon. Friend's question, against the background of reckless optimism that I have heard in some quarters. Certainly, the events in eastern Europe have reduced the likelihood of confrontation, but I think that we would all agree that they have not enhanced the stability of that region.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister not accept that the threat from the Warsaw pact countries in total has significantly diminished, so the posture of the United Kingdom Government, when they endeavour to retain defence expenditure between 5 and 6 per cent. of gross domestic product, is preposterous in current terms? Should we not be thinking carefully, in view of the implications of a rundown in defence expenditure, about how we can shift from defence manufacturing to civil manufacturing, to meet the needs of eastern Europe and the Third world?

Mr. Clark: Such changes are purely matters for the commercial judgment of the companies concerned. It may be possible for the Soviet Union to switch its industry, as it has a command-led economy of a fairly Socialist kind. We have heard much ill-thought-out nonsense from the Opposition Front Bench about socially acceptable jobs and funds to shift industry from one form of production to another. I am confident that the flexibility and sense of innovation of British industry will be equal to the events, should they arise.

Mr. Jack: In the light of my hon. Friend's current procurement programme, will he tell the House how his Department will react to the contents of the West German Defence Minister's letter about the decision on radar for the European fighter aircraft? Can he tell my constituents, who are involved in building those planes, when they can expect to have an answer?

Mr. Clark: That subject is under close and detailed discussion between the two Governments. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will be meeting the West Germans in the near future. No decision has yet been made, but we are fully aware of the great merits of the ECR 90 system.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Minister agree that one of the reasons for the relatively sluggish performance of the British and Soviet economies—and even some difficulties for the American economy—since the war has been the huge burden of armaments that we have borne, and the amount of research and development that we have had to invest? West Germany and Japan, on the other hand, have benefited from not having to bear that burden. Would not the beating of swords into ploughshares as early as possible be very much in our national interest?

Mr. Clark: All Government spending is a matter of priorities, and the electorate give their verdict on spending programmes at election time. The House will, however, be interested to learn—and I have no doubt that Opposition Members will welcome this—that social security spending is three times as much as defence spending.

Mr. William Powell: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be entirely wrong for British defence policy to be adjusted to meet considerations that may be short term? Will he ensure that any changes in the defence budget reflect long-term changes rather than purely temporary factors?

Mr. Clark: Every Minister responsible for procurement is a victim of the fact that leads and lags in weapon orders ensure that that consideration is observed, whatever private intentions may be.

Mr. O'Neill: Following the changes in eastern Europe, against whom will the laser guns fitted to type 22 frigates be deployed? Why have those weapons been shrouded in secrecy for so long, and will Britain join the United States and the Soviet Union in giving an undertaking that they will not be used in any peacetime exercises?

Mr. Clark: It is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman should make such a fuss—and his off-the-cuff remarks on the subject were an absolute disgrace. He made the ludicrous comment that the weapon was a very dangerous means of self-protection, but surely it is desirable to possess a system that guards against trigger-happiness, and against any repetition of the incident when the United States shot down an airliner by mistake.

This is a purely defensive weapon with no offensive capability, and it is an essential adjunct to the Royal Navy's armoury in difficult waters where it may not wish to shoot.

6. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to change Britain's defence policy in western Europe following the recent changes in the Governments in East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): Our policy in western Europe is based on strong support for the NATO Alliance. NATO's commitment to seeking dialogue with the East while maintaining a strong collective defence has undoubtedly contributed to the welcome changes taking place in eastern Europe.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his answer. Does he agree that, although there have been welcome changes in eastern Europe, it is probably more unstable now than at any time in the past 25 years, and that our defence posture must therefore be cautious? Before making any moves towards a change in defence policy, will my right hon. Friend consider that Mr. Gorbachev has a much stronger hand on the Soviet Union —particularly in relation to dealing with the nationalist movements that are arising on the fringes of the Soviet Union, which would destabilise the whole country and possibly lead to a military takeover?

Mr. King: I support my hon. Friend's comments about potential dangers and instability. Siren voices suggesting that all the problems were over were heard in a previous defence Question Time, and I remind the House that since then all the events in Romania have taken place and President Gorbachev has threatened to resign. While everyone of good will wishes a successful outcome to the current exciting and important developments, no one can conceal the instability and potential danger of the position.

Mr. James Lamond: If we were prepared to engage in the conventional forces in Europe talks in Vienna when the position in eastern Europe and the Warsaw pact was much more threatening that it is today, why are we still dragging our feet now? Why has no progress been made in the fourth round of talks, and why does this country not take the initiative in ensuring that money is saved, so that it can be used properly for social purposes, both here and abroad?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman seems to ignore the active part that we are playing, as a full member of NATO, in the current discussions which we hope will lead to a successful treaty on conventional weapons reductions in Europe during the current year. Our policy is clear: what we wish to achieve—our responsibility to this country and our allies—is greater security at lower force and armament levels. We are determined to achieve that aim, and the possibility is there, but it must be soundly based.

I do not know how many hon. Members listened to the answer that I gave just now. No one can pretend that the present circumstances, especially the developments in the Soviet Union during the past month—the speed of change, and the uncertainty in the area—do not mean that we must do all that we can to advance the cause of peace, while maintaining the security of our country.

Sir Jim Spicer: It has rightly been said today that it will take time for the Ministry of Defence to bring forward its study and decide what the procurement policy should be. In the short term, however, does not my right hon. Friend agree that it would be right and proper to equip properly the fifth airborne brigade with the necessary number of helicopters, so as to make it truly a mobile brigade which is capable of going into action immediately?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that the exact balance of battlefield provision is under study. My hon. Friend, with his close interest in these matters, understands very well that the leads and lags in the procurement programme make it important not to change anything without all the background details against which decisions can be made. That is why we shall make sure that at all times we do not put at risk the security of this country.

Mr. Buchan: After the historic events of the past two or three months, is it not sad that the Conservative party is completely incapable of understanding or attempting to respond to them? Mr. Gorbachev has been taking enormous risks and is running into enormous danger. Due to his actions, the world can now be more hopeful. Does not the Secretary of State have a responsibility to respond? Can the Government not assist Mr. Gorbachev to face the dangers in which he has placed himself? His actions have been on behalf of humanity. For God's sake, act.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman has a very suitable selective memory. Many of us have often seen him rise to his feet from the Opposition Benches to oppose the stand for freedom, justice and liberty in eastern Europe that we have taken. At the very time when the strength and unity of NATO has ensured the possibility of progress and freedom in Europe, I totally reject his intervention.

Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall hear the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan).

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am accused on every occasion in the House of opposing freedom. That is a vile calumny and lie. It is disgraceful. The Secretary of State obviously did not listen to a word of what I said during our debates on the Official Secrets Act 1989. If anyone has argued continually in the House for freedom, it has been me and not the Minister. He should withdraw.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We often hear rough statements in the House, but I do not think that an attack has been made on the honour of the hon. Member for Paisley, South, whom the whole House respects.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members warmly support the Government's defence policy? Does he not agree that it is ludicrous to ask for a change in defence policy until we make progress on arms reductions with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact countries?

Mr. King: Throughout the years we have stood for the strong defence of our country and for freedom, democracy and dialogue. It is that which has achieved progress. It is monstrous for the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) to suggest that somehow we are holding up that process.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Secretary of State be participating in the 35-nation talks in Vienna next week, on doctrine and strategy? If he does not intend to participate in those talks, will his representative convey the need that is felt throughout the House and the country for genuine vision in Britain, taking account of the fact that the future order in Europe will be based not on the security of two blocs but on the security of 35 nations working together in one new grouping?

Mr. King: I shall be represented by the Chief of Defence Staff and the Vice-Chief of Defence Staff at the talks in Vienna. We shall continue to play a constructive role in trying to strengthen security and peace in Europe. We take some pride in the progress that has been made. Opposition Members complain about a lack of vision when we are achieving more progress, better understanding and a greater chance of peace than we have had in 40 years. We do not consider that that shows a lack of vision.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: As I initially supported the upgrading of short-range nuclear weapons in Germany, I ask my right hon. Friend carefully to reconsider this matter. Has he noticed the views of Lord Carrington and others that such a proposal is unrealistic in the present circumstances, bearing in mind the fact that those weapons will be pointing at East Germany?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is aware that at the NATO summit those matters were agreed under the comprehensive concept and it was decided that they should be reviewed in 1992. In view of the rapid rate of change and the developments that are taking place, that is an eminently sensible position to adopt.

Nuclear Submarines

7. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to safe decommissioning of nuclear submarines.

Mr. Alan Clark: We continue actively to consider the safest way of disposing of decommissioned nuclear submarines.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the evidence which my Department gave to the Select Committee on Defence and which was published in its seventh report.

Mr. McFall: At least three options have been open to the Government, but they have taken none. Instead, they have produced the disingenuous fourth option—wait and see. Despite their prevarication, over the next 10 years at least eight nuclear submarines will be decommissioned, including Dreadnought. As the Defence Committee reported last year, additional submarines stored merely to corrode is no reflection on the Ministry's ability to deal with that long-term problem. Consequently, will the Minister give me a straight answer to a simple question?

Mr. Clark: In view of the concern expressed in the House and the questions asked by hon. Members before Christmas, I went to Rosyth and looked at HMS Dreadnought. I had conversations with the naval personnel concerned and I am entirely satisfied that there is no danger at present or in the long-term future in mooring that submarine or storing it in that way. During that time the radiation factor is minimal, and that will make it easier to consider the three options to which the hon. Member and the Select Committee referred.

Mr. Viggers: Does my hon. Friend agree that opponents of civil nuclear power tend to forget that the Royal Navy has been safely operating more than 20 pressurised water reactors for many years, which is a reflection on the safety of nuclear power as well as the superb standards of Royal Navy engineering?

Mr. Clark: Certainly, and it is those very standards of engineering and construction which make the present policy entirely safe.

Mr. Boyes: What is the Government's attitude to the London dumping convention's new ruling that the sea-dumping or burial of decommissioned nuclear submarines at sea is not permissible? Are the Government prepared to breach the London dumping convention's suggestion? Have the Government considered any land sites? Have they spoken to the Americans about the Hanford reservation in the United States? Is it not about time that the Minister made a comprehensive statement to the House on this matter?

Mr. Clark: Although sea disposal has not been excluded as an option, I am keenly aware of public concern here and in the international community about that solution.

Mr. Sayeed: Is it correct that we have been unable to find a safe way of cutting up the reactor compartment of a submarine and burying it without exposing workers to a considerable radiological hazard? Is it correct that it is much safer for people for the reactor compartment to be encased in concrete and the submarine buried in a deep-sea pit?

Mr Clark: The reactor would not be cut up and the work force would not be exposed to radiation because we would take care to ensure that the exposure was kept to the minimum. The longer a submarine is stored in the mode that is currently used, the faster the radiation factor degrades. It will be simpler in future to dismantle the reactor compartment in the way that my hon. Friend said.

Frigates

8. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the United Kingdom withdrawing from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation frigate replacement for the nineties project.

Mr. Neubert: It remains our plan to procure an anti-air warfare escort ship to come into service at the turn of the century to replace the Royal Navy's type 42 destroyers. Following the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the NFR90 project, we are addressing how best to meet that requirement, including the possibility of alternative collaborative arrangements for parts of the programme.

Mr. Lofthouse: What was the Government's initial expenditure on NATO frigate replacement, and why did they withdraw from the project? Does he think that, whatever the costs were, it was a complete waste of taxpayers' money? Bearing that in mind, does he have plans to ensure that initial expenditure on future projects is kept to a minimum?

Mr. Neubert: There has been no waste of taxpayers' money. Our participation in the NFR90 project cost £4·5 million, and the value of that work will be reflected in the work that we do on the type 42 successor, which we plan to have in service at the turn of the century or thereabouts.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that the bulk of the money spent on a frigate is on its weapons systems, on which we are still doing much collaborative work? Does he further agree that it would be unnecessary for us to continue to design ships with a dozen teams of naval architects trying jointly to produce a sea camel?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend is right. There is a close connection between the design of the ship platform and the associated weapons systems. He drew attention to the fact that we have announced our decision to enter into collaboration with partners in the family of anti-air missile systems project for anti-air warfare systems, which will be a considerable advance in the planning and design of the type 42 successor.

War Widows (Pensions)

9. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the level of war widows' pensions since the statement of 11 December.

Mr. Tom King: A number of letters have been received, the majority of which warmly welcome the proposals that I announced on 11 December.

Dr. Moonie: Does the Secretary of State agree with the statement made by his colleague in another place, the Earl of Arran, that it is impossible to revise pensions for war widows without considering the problem of the war disabled pre-1973? If he does, what will he do about it?

Mr. King: The view that was generally held in the House when I made the statement on 11 December and the strong view of the many people who were campaigning was that war widows occupy a unique position in the affections and respect of the people of this country. Against that background, I was able to make the proposals that I did.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Government's decision was warmly welcomed throughout the country and that most people regard it as sheer humbug and hypocrisy for the Labour party to raise the issue when it did nothing to deal with it when in Government?

Mr. King: I do not think that the economy under the Labour Government was ever in a condition to afford such initiatives. I was proud to have the opportunity to make that announcement, which has brought considerable comfort and relief to people for whom many in this country have particular respect.

Fylingdales

10. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the status of contractorisation of Fylingdales early warning system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The operation of the ballistic missile early warning system at Fylingdales is under Royal Air Force command and control, and will remain so when the system is modernised. However, the maintenance, engineering support and operation of the radars and associated equipment has been carried out under contract since 1964. A competition is currently being run for similar services on the modernised system.

Mr. Fatchett: Is this not a case of the Government's ideology and blind commitment to privatisation taking preference over the country's security? How many times have Ministers told us about the importance of the Fylingdales installation for national security, and how can they justify those comments if they are prepared to give sensitive maintenance contracts to private contractors, who may easily fall into foreign ownership?

Mr. Hamilton: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's words about our "blind commitment" to privatisation. Contractorisation has existed at Fylingdales since 1964.

US Spending (Europe)

11. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart regarding reductions in United States military spending in Europe.

Mr. Tom King: I have had a number of valuable discussions with Secretary Cheney at NATO and bilateral meetings in the past three months. At all these meetings, he has emphasised the continuing commitment of the United States to maintain forces in Europe as an essential contribution to NATO's collective defence.

Mr. Michie: The United States defence budget will be published later this month and it is widely expected that next year there will be a reduction compared with this year which reflects the changing situation in eastern Europe. In view of that and the announcement made by the Soviet Union, why are the Tory Government standing alone in increasing the budget to the tune of over £1 billion a year for the next three years, instead of spending money to help those who need it in this country?

Mr. King: It is no secret that the United States is considering possible economies in its defence budget and that it has already announced possible economies through the closure of bases in the United States and in relation to its other defence commitments. The hon. Gentleman asked his question as though he were wholly ignorant of the fact that we are at present actively engaged as a full partner in the NATO discussions with the Warsaw pact on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe. We are determined to ensure that we maintain the security of our country and to see how that can be done safely, with a reduction of forces and armaments.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members welcome the fact that the United States continues to be a staunch ally of the western Alliance and helps to defend Europe, and that we believe that during the past 10 years that policy has brought the USSR to the negotiating table and has brought about the present state of affairs in eastern Europe?

Mr. King: I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's remarks. The American commitment to Europe was restated clearly by President Bush at the NATO summit on 4 December. He said:

> "The United States will maintain significant military forces in Europe as long as our Allies desire our presence as part of a common security effort".

We see, as the United States clearly does, the importance of maintaining strong defences. Strong defences made possible the progress that we now see in eastern Europe.

Mr. Sean Hughes: In view of the reply by the Minister of State, will the Secretary of State confirm whether it is the Government's position that whatever the prospects of reductions in military spending by the United States and whatever the developments in eastern Europe, they can never envisage a change in the doctrine of flexible response?

Mr. King: These questions are matters which we keep under continual examination. We must ensure that if we change any arrangements for defence, such as introducing a different balance in helicopters or armour, we do so with a clear understanding of the background. At a time of great instability, the biggest mistake that we could make would be to make rapid changes when we cannot be certain of the outcome.

Recruitment

13. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on anticipated levels of recruitment to the services over the next three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Levels of recruitment over the next three years will be affected by a range of factors, including the success of the measures being taken to improve the retention of trained service personnel.

Mr. Butler: What measures does my hon. Friend propose to increase the prospects of recruitment?

Mr. Hamilton: We have already considerably enhanced the advertising budget, which has increased enormously. We are trying to attract ethnic minorities and greater opportunities have been found for women in two of the services. A decision will be taken shortly on the Royal Navy.

Nuclear Test Veterans

18. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about providing compensation for ex-service personnel who took part in the nuclear testing programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of recent representations have been received from right hon. and hon. Members and others regarding compensation for nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Howarth: Does the Minister accept that every other country in which there are veterans with these problems have now conceded this point? When will this Government concede it, in line with all the others?

Mr. Hamilton: That is true only of the Americans, and the position in the United States is different from that faced by our nuclear test veterans. We have always made it clear that if we can find direct evidence that nuclear test veterans are suffering from cancer as a result of their service in the forces, we shall compensate them. To date, we have found no evidence to support that.

Defence Commitments

19. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will initiate an independent review of the United Kingdom's defence commitments.

Mr. Tom King: I have no plans to do so.

Mrs. Fyfe: In the light of developments—*[Interr ption.]*—in eastern Europe, will the Minister say, when the first Trident submarine arrives—*[Interruption.]*—at which country it will be aimed?

Mr. King: I apologise to the hon. Lady, but I heard hardly a word of that supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I accept that the Secretary of State did not understand what the hon. Lady said. It is difficult to hear.

Mrs. Fyfe: The House rather resembles school returning for the first day of term, Mr. Speaker. In the light of events in eastern Europe, when the Minister acquires his first Trident missile, at which country will he aim it?

Mr. King: The hon. Lady may not be aware that the Labour party supports the need for the maintenance of a nuclear umbrella with the presence of United States forces in Europe. We recognise the need to maintain a balance of nuclear and conventional forces. That is our position and I understand that it is also the Labour party's position.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Archer: The right hon. Lady having flatly refused to meet two successive presidents of the Methodist Conference, who were asking to see her on the instructions of conference, may I ask her to say whether the deep concerns of the Methodist people are as much a matter of indifference to her as are the concerns of the other churches, the Royal College of Nursing, the British Medical Association, the Royal Society, the Bar Council and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom? Has she ever considered as a possibility that everyone else may be right and that she may be wrong?

The Prime Minister: I am very flattered that everyone would like to come and see me, but I am afraid that there just is not time for all that to take place. The president of the Methodist Conference wrote me a letter. I replied fully to it—the reply received a great deal of publicity—pointing out that despite the complaints of the president of the Methodist Conference, the amount spent on social security was vastly in excess of what was spent by Labour, that the same applied to the amounts spent on health and the disabled, and that this Government had well and truly discharged their duty of increasing the social services available to the people of Britain.

Mr. Dunn: Does the Prime Minister agree that the first duty of the British Government is to provide the means of defending their people and that it would be foolish in the extreme to change our defence policy now to take account of the short-term changes that appear to be happening in the eastern bloc?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I agree with my hon. Friend. The defence policy that we have is a NATO defence policy, as was made clear in the replies that I heard by the Secretary of State for Defence to previous questions. It is a flexible response and it can be changed only by NATO. These matters will be considered when the agreements on reductions in conventional arms have been completed. We shall have to consider the issues together so that one nation does not take advantage over another of the reductions.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister join me today in paying tribute to the skill and dedication of all the ambulance workers who worked at the scene of the tragic multiple crash on the M25 last night? Does she agree that it is inaccurate as well as insulting for those people to be described as merely professional drivers?

The Prime Minister: I gladly pay tribute, as I have always done, to all the ambulance workers, many of whom are still working full time and many of whom in particular are providing full emergency and accident cover. A number of those at the scene last night were on normal emergency and accident cover, in the usual way.

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, it has been our wish—I believe that it has been the wish of the ambulance and Health Service—to increase the number of ambulance staff who have paramedical qualifications. For that reason, the pay offered to the ambulance workers, varying between 9 and 16·3 per cent. according to their qualifications and where they work, was slanted towards those who also have paramedical qualifications.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister now answer an essential part of the question? Does she agree that to describe the people who went to the scene of the crash last night as merely professional drivers is both inaccurate and insulting?

The Prime Minister: I have gladly paid tribute to the ambulance service and pointed out that we require a bigger proportion of ambulance workers to have paramedical qualifications so that they can give life-supporting medical treatment at the scene of accidents. For that purpose we have slanted the pay offer to the ambulance workers of up to 16·3 per cent. in London towards those who have the requisite medical qualifications.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is wholly inappropriate and has never been the case under any Government that Cabinet Ministers negotiate directly with trade unions? Will she confirm that the line that the Secretary of State for Health is taking commands the wholehearted support of Her Majesty's Government?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I gladly confirm that. As my hon. Friend knows, the latest offer of 9 to 16·3 per cent., according to where a person works and his qualifications, included some £6 million of new money. The NHS executive had already moved to make that extra money available and we look forward to the ambulance people settling.

Q2. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: Will the Prime Minister take time today to compare her travel time to work with that of the average Londoner? As she sweeps out of Downing street past those new regal gates in her bullet-proof limo, with the police holding back the traffic and the angry crowds—*[Laughter.]* her travel time to work is probably about 90 seconds. We should all like that. Is she remotely aware of the terrible congestion on London's roads and the appalling state of London Transport? Will she come out of that bunker in No. 10 and, for once in her life, travel on public transport in London in the rush hour? If she did it just once something would change, but Londoners have to do it twice a day.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman does not have his facts quite right. I live over the shop, as I have done for years.

Q3. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Page: If my right hon. Friend, for perceived electoral advantage, were to change her deeply held views on policies such as unilateral disarmament, the closed shop, sale of council houses and nationalisation, would the voter believe that she or any party that did so would revert to type after the next general election?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, the Government's policies are founded on sound principles and strong convictions. The policies will not change. The principles are excellent and they have done very well for the British people. We shall continue until the next election and through the next Parliament to pursue the same policies which are relevant, beneficial and advantageous to our people.

Q5. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Does the Prime Minister agree that, in the interests of proper public and parliamentary accountability, her former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Lord Young, must now agree to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to answer for the public losses and the threat to jobs at Cowley and elsewhere arising from the Government's giveaway of the Rover Group?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that it is at all usual for Ministers to appear before the Public Accounts Committee, for reasons that the hon. Gentleman knows. It is quite a different matter to appear before the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which I understand my right hon. and noble Friend has agreed to do.

Q6. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hind: Does my right hon. Friend agree that excessive and irresponsible increases in spending by county councils will lead to vast unnecessary increases in the community charge? Is she aware that Labour-controlled Lancashire county council has increased its expenditure in the past 12 months? If a rate were to be declared, it would represent an increase of 33·4 per cent., which would cause unnecessary hardship to the ratepayers of Lancashire.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that unnecessarily high spending will increase the community charge and place an extra burden upon the electors whom councils are meant to serve. Let us look at the settlement for the coming year. In our settlement proposals, the provision for council spending is 11 per cent. more than the corresponding figure for last year. That should be quite sufficient for reasonable programmes and, therefore, a reasonable community charge. If that policy is not followed, I trust that electorates will know precisely what to do and cast their votes against such councils.

Q7. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Michie: How will Scotland benefit from the single European market if the Government do not heed the

warning by Sir Robert Reid that there must be a substantially increased investment in north-south rail links?

The Prime Minister: Of course, Scotland will benefit upon the completion of a whole common market of the kind that we shall have after 1992. In Edinburgh, for example, we have a flourishing thriving financial centre and one of the things that we are trying to do is to get much greater freedom to sell our services in the market. With regard to manufacturing goods and their movement, I hope that the hon. Lady will read in full Sir Bob Reid's speech, which was very complimentary about the enormous advances made in the past few years during his chairmanship of British Rail. He pointed out a number of things that he wished to see done, some of which require private Bills—particularly the link from Heathrow to Paddington, which would affect everyone who travels down that way. It was some Labour Members—not members of the hon. Lady's party—who prevented the passage of such private Bills.

Mr. Boswell: Most people think that this is the first Prime Minister's Question Time of the decade. Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to comment on the recent staggering events in eastern Europe and take an early opportunity of going to eastern Europe and telling people there of the benefits of policies based on democracy and free enterprise?

The Prime Minister: I gladly respond to my hon. Friend's question. The events in eastern Europe confirmed that Socialism has utterly failed and has been totally rejected by the people of eastern Europe who want much greater freedom than they have ever known, a freer market economy and genuine democracy. We shall do all that we can to assist in that aim. We are already giving Poland and Hungary extensive help, in concert with other countries in the European Community.

Q8. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Primarolo: The Prime Minister referred to the Government's sound principles and strong convictions. As a mother and grandmother herself, will she explain why her Government have introduced social security changes which mean that a 16-year-old pregnant woman living in a hostel has only £3·65 per week to buy her meals and keep herself—excluding rent and breakfast? What is so sound about those convictions and principles?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady knows that benefits were changed so that those living in hostels have the same kind of structural benefit as those living in flats. They got their housing benefit, and of course they will get their rent rebate, and they have the requisite income support. That is very much fairer than favouring one group, who live in one kind of accommodation, against the other.

Q9. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment at the banks' withdrawal from the student loans scheme? Does it not show that it is naive to depend on alternative economic strategies that involve the banks rationing their own credit at Government request alone?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am sorry that the main banks pulled out of the student loans scheme. I am afraid that it will be disadvantageous for students because it means that they will not be able to have the facilities offered by local banking branches. It is unwise of the students to urge the banks to do that, and it is unwise of the banks to agree to do it—it harms everyone. Nevertheless, the student loans scheme will go ahead.

I agree with my hon. Friend about credit control. Credit control would not work on days when we had no foreign exchange control, and it would be quite absurd to rely upon the banks to try to operate such a system.

Standing Committee E

3.30 pm

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As Chairman of Standing Committee E, which is considering the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, I have to report to the House the circumstances in which the Committee adjourned this morning. After repeated requests from the Chair to resume his seat—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very serious matter.

Dame Janet Fookes: The Chair made repeated requests to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to resume his seat because he had persisted in pursuing a matter which I had ruled was not a matter for the Chairman of a Standing Committee. When it became crystal clear that the matter was not to be resolved in any other way, I accepted a motion for the adjournment of the Committee. That motion was passed without a Division.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe) *rose*——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called the Leader of the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House must take seriously the report made by the distinguished and experienced Chairman of Standing Committee E. From what she has told the House, it is quite clear that the conduct which she has reported made impossible the continued work of the Standing Committee. In the absence of a response to rulings made by the Chair, quite regardless of what was being talked about, I beg to move,

That the Chairman of Standing Committee E, during its sittings to consider the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, shall have power to direct that any Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or persistently and wilfully obstructs the business of the Committee do withdraw immediately from the Committee Room for the remainder of the sitting; and that the Serjeant at Arms shall act on such orders as he may receive from the Chair in pursuance of this order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must propose the Question. *[Interruption.]*

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): While it is obviously essential that the House at all times should uphold the authority of the Chair—I say that on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself without equivocation —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Is this the behaviour of the next Labour Government?

Dr. Cunningham: Shut up, you fool.

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very serious matters.

Dr. Cunningham: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Was it really necessary to move the motion, in this way, immediately? Why cannot we have a cooling-off period and hold discussions through the usual channels before we take such an unprecedented step? The motion—although it was difficult to hear because of the noise made by the hooligans behind the Leader of the House—gives unprecedented powers to the Chairman of just one Standing Committee—something that the House has never done before—without even the opportunity to discuss what has happened and how we might resolve the matter through the usual channels.

We should pause before rushing into such a decision. I am sure that, with reasonable time, we can resolve the matter satisfactorily in a far better way and in a way more acceptable to hon. Members. After all, it was a decision of the whole House that originally established Standing Committees. If the motion is accepted, it would give to a member of a Standing Committee—albeit the person in the Chair—powers to overrule the decision of the whole House by excluding a Member from the Committee whom the whole House had decided should be a member. Before the House takes such a step, we should pause and consider more fully all the implications.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to remind the House that the motion is debatable and it is for the House to decide whether to agree to it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am a member of the Standing Committee who wants to debate the important National Health Service and Community Care Bill. This morning the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) delayed the Committee from 10.30 until just after 11 o'clock. The Committee suspended for 10 minutes and, after the suspension, continued for a few more minutes. It became clear that the hon. Member for Workington was insistent upon disrupting the work of the Committee. We have not yet debated even one word of the Bill.

If we are to support the Chairman in running the Committee, it is vital that the House agrees to the motion. It is not unprecedented as it has already happened once this Parliament on Scottish legislation. The quicker that the motion is passed, the quicker the Committee can continue to debate the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, which is of so much concern to all our constituents.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand that the motion is debatable, but I am advised that as it is a narrrow motion if I were to veer from it you would intervene, Mr. Speaker, and ask me to resume my place.

May I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the debate that took place on 14 March 1989. On that occasion hon. Members representing the Scottish National party were in similar difficulties. I have read the *Hansard* report of the speeches made on that day. They show that every hon. Member who managed to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and to speak was allowed to speak on the motion that had been tabled, which was narrow, in a way that went wider than the terms of that motion. All the speeches made on that occasion went far wider than the motion moved by the Leader of the House. Therefore, on the basis of precedent, I ask you for a little latitude, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: May I interrupt the hon. Gentleman to clarify matters? His example took place against a totally different background. The whole House will understand

—I think the hon. Gentleman accepts this—that he cannot rehearse in the Chamber this afternoon a matter that has already been ruled out of order in Committee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I drew attention to the example only because the motion that the Leader of the House read at the Dispatch Box at that stage in 1989 is almost identical —I have it with me—to the motion tabled by the Leader of the House today. I believe that that is a precedent which allows me to go a little wider than the motion.

This morning, as the House knows, I was involved in a little difficulty in Committee. I want to make it clear to the Chairman of the Committee that it is not my intention to disrupt the proceedings of the Committee in future. Therefore, the motion need not have been tabled if the Leader of the House had come to me to ask me my— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: One of the Government Whips was kind enough to do that and came to me in the Tea Room to ask me that. I presume that he revealed my intentions to the Leader of the House. The motion need never have been tabled. It has been tabled for other reasons—because some Conservative Members do not want the issue that I raised in Committee to be raised in public or to be given an airing before the British public——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will my hon. Friend give way? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] This is a debatable motion. My hon. Friend has referred to incidents in Committee this morning. In view of the fact that the Committee took certain decisions and that the Chair took one—to suspend the Sitting—and as this matter is now before the House, those members of the Committee who were privy to the incidents and the statements made are fully aware of the facts, which we in the Chamber are not. As we are now debating the motion, it is important that the House should know, from my hon. Friend and others, exactly what took place and what statements were made. We cannot properly decide the issue unless my hon. Friend is able to reveal in full exactly what took place and what was said.

Mr. Speaker: That is fair enough. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) can certainly touch upon the matter. However, it would not be in order for him to outline at length a matter that the Chairman of Standing Committee E ruled out of order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a specific point of order because the House is in some difficulty. By all means let us have accounts—I am sure that we would have a faithful and honourable account from both the Chairman of the Committee and my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—but would it not be sensible for us to pause to read the *Hansard* report of the Committee proceedings before debating the motion?

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is impossible for the House thoroughly to understand what happened unless what my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has just suggested is done. We need to have the verbatim report of what happened in the Committee. Without seeing that, to continue with what is happening would be a violation of democracy.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a member of Standing Committee E, may I say that the issue is not about what was discussed, but about the behaviour of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and the discipline which the Chair must exercise from time to time. I sat through that Committee for two days, and the hon. Member for Workington—whose forensic skills I admire—disrupted it. That is what this matter is about, and nothing else.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not want points of order on this decision. I sense from the mood of the House that there is a feeling that we should reflect on the matter. [HON. MEMBERS: "No".] Order. The purpose of the motion is to give the Chairman of Standing Committee E the authority to suspend a Member from the Committee if her orders are disobeyed. The shadow Leader of the House has already said that we must uphold the tradition in this Chamber of obeying the Chair's rulings. I hope that the House will always do that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You, Mr. Speaker, said that you would let me proceed if I did not seek to touch on these matters at great length. It is not my intention to do so. I want to touch on the matter only briefly.

I raised the matter of a company called Michael Forsyth Limited—a lobbying, public relations company which trades on the name of a Minister of the Crown. The secretary to the Minister, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), is a lady called Griselda Hayes, who is not currently in the House. She has been, and is, acting as the Minister's secretary and is the wife of the man who bought half the company from the hon. Member for Stirling. Therefore, there is a direct link with the Minister's secretary in the House of Commons, who sees the mail of hon. Members when they write to him—if the correspondence goes via the Letter Board as opposed to going direct to the Department. I object to this lady's access to mail on the basis that she might see correspondence from hon. Members about issues relating to privatisation when her husband owns half the company, Michael Forsyth Limited, which is involved in public relations, and promoting privatisation.

I know, although the Minister denies this, that he has an informal agreement whereby if he is sacked and loses his job as Minister or—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must hear what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to continue to bring to the attention of the House a personal matter that a Minister has already denied?

Mr. Speaker: This is the problem with such matters. The House has to make a decision about whether the motion should be passed, and it is difficult to make that decision until it knows the background to the matter.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I moved the adjournment of the Committee this morning after we had reached the stage when the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) would not resume his seat when

[The Secretary of State for Health]

asked to do so, would not desist from making a speech when ruled out of order and barracked the rulings of the Chair. As a result of that misbehaviour, it seems that the hon. Gentleman is now being allowed to make a speech that was out of order this morning and is out of order now. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. How can I possibly rule on the Secretary of State's point of order if he is not allowed to make it?

Mr. Clarke: There is a difficulty here, which is why we have come from the Standing Committee to the Floor of the House. The hon. Member for Workington is a procedural expert to a greater extent than I am. Until this morning I did not know that a Chairman of a Standing Committee had no power to suspend a Member in circumstances in which you, Mr. Speaker, would suspend a Member. My belief is that the hon. Gentleman persisted this morning thinking that he would be suspended and then found that he could not be. That is the issue, and it is the only issue, that we have brought to the Floor of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These proceedings do not bring any credit to the House.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You were right to say that there are aspects of these proceedings which do not bring credit to the House, but these proceedings have been initiated because the Leader of the House brought a debatable motion before the House. Some hon. Members now realise that under that motion matters will be raised that they do not wish to have raised.

You have already said, Mr. Speaker, that some degree of reflection might be preferable, and I wonder why the Leader of the House did not realise that before he moved the motion. As the Committee need not sit again until Thursday, the matter may be deferred to allow for a more careful debate and for hon. Members to have the motion before them. We are all being asked to consider a motion that has not been printed, to which it has not been possible to devise any amendments, and whose implications we cannot consider. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give the Leader of the House the opportunity to withdraw the motion and to deal with the matter in a more sensitive way.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The shadow Leader of the House made the point—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is this on a point of order?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes. I respond to the point of order that has just been made.

The shadow Leader of the House made the point that the matter was entitled to be considered clearly and in silence. The position quite simply is that, having suspended the proceedings of Standing Committee E this morning in the light of the adjournment motion that was moved and accepted—the Committee has achieved no useful work this morning, having made no headway on the substance of the matter—the Chairman of the Committee reported to the House that that had happened as a result of the repeated failure of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to respond to her rulings. Therefore, the matter comes before the House on the simple point of the need, as a matter of order, to uphold the rulings of the Chairman.

The shadow Leader of the House is entirely right to say that this is not a matter that arises frequently. Fortunately, it has not been necessary to raise it frequently. Without the Chairmen of Standing Committees being armed with the authority that you, Mr. Speaker, have, their rulings have been accepted without question. It is because that has not happened in this case, and having attempted to find a solution through the usual channels, that I have moved the motion. It would have been preferable if a comprehensive undertaking could have been given through the usual channels, but in the absence of such an undertaking, and in the face of the fact that the Standing Committee is due to resume its work at 4.30 this afternoon, it seemed to me right beyond question that I should move the motion to uphold the authority of the Chairman of the Committee.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Secretary of State for Health finds it difficult to accept arbitration. Perhaps he will reflect on the fact that that is exactly what he, together with the Leader of the House, is being offered in this case. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has already made it clear that he has no intention of continuing to disrupt the Committee, and that the Government Chief Whip had that information some considerable time ago, so I wonder why the Leader of the House has rushed the motion before us. As he has done so, and as the motion is debatable, I hope that Conservative Members will, like me, respect the authority of the Chair and will allow my hon. Friend the Member for Workington to continue his speech.

Mr. Speaker: Before the hon. Member for Workington does so, I remind the House that, although the motion is debatable, there is other important business to consider. When the authority of the Chair must be upheld, that matter must be dealt with responsibly. The hon. Member for Workington has outlined the reasons why he refused to obey the Chair earlier today, and he must not go further in stating on the Floor of the House what was said upstairs and then ruled out of order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You are absolutely right, Mr. Speaker, in saying that I have already outlined the reasons for my action, but I want to make one final point.

This morning, I made it clear to the lady Chairman of the Committee, and to the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight), in the Tea Room, prior to the House sitting this afternoon, that I had no intention of disrupting the proceedings of the Committee in the future. I understand that that reassurance has been conveyed to the Government Chief Whip, and it should have reached also the Leader of the House. Therefore, there was no need for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to move his motion.

I said that Michael Forsyth Limited is trading in the name of a Minister of the Crown. I also have to say that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) has made an agreement with the new director——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member is alleging that something irregular has occurred, that must be dealt with as a matter of privilege. Alternatively, if it is a question of

interests outside the House, the Select Committee on Members' Interests, of which the hon. Member for Workington is himself a member, should consider it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have already checked, Mr. Speaker, that it is not a matter of privilege, and nor is it a matter for the Select Committee on Members' Interests. The rules governing such matters are instead set down by the Prime Minister. They cover the conduct of Ministers' private affairs, and they are not matters over which the Committee of which I am a member has any jurisdiction. This morning, I simply asked the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland a question, which was whether he would give the Committee an undertaking that he would not——

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call the Chairman of the 1922 Committee, but I have not had a report of what happened in Standing Committee E.

Mr. Onslow: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely we are debating whether the Chairman of a Committee should be given further powers to deal with a disorderly situation when it arises in his or her Committee. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that we are not here to challenge the ruling that was made this morning. However, judging from the expression on the face of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), let alone from his words, it is his intention to achieve precisely that objective. It would not be inconsistent with the wishes of the House that the authority of the Chair should take priority over the preferences of the hon. Member for Workington.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) attempted to make a point of order in a Committee this morning. It was obviously inconvenient for the Government, but hon. Members have the right to free speech.

The problem for the Chairs of Committees is that they do not have power to suspend a Member but have to work, or have done since I have been in the House, by persuasion, and it is often extremely difficult.

I remember a Committee which was considering a social security Bill in which a Member kept talking while the Chair was putting the Question and taking the votes. The Chair used all the available powers to keep the proceedings in order. It would be an unfortunate precedent if, in an attempt to gag hon. Members, we changed the balance of power between the Chair and the Committee. They have the power to achieve things by persuasion whereas you, Mr. Speaker, have the power to exclude Members, but that is based on the fact that it is in the best interests of the House, and you are normally supported in that. For the Chair of a Standing Committee to exercise similar powers, without the whole House having the opportunity of access to all the information, would be unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter that the hon. Member might raise if I call him to take part in the debate.

I think that the whole House will accept that we must uphold the authority of Chairmen of Standing Committees. If we fail to do that, anarchy will prevail, and we cannot have that. Let us now come to a decision on the matter—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I call the hon. Member for Workington, but please be brief.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We could curtail the debate quickly if I were to be allowed to finish my brief remarks. I simply asked the Minister to tell the Committee that he would not reacquire his interest in Michael Forsyth Limited in the future, or that his wife would not acquire that interest. People in the industry believe, and I have been told reliably, that he has an agreement to reacquire those shares if he loses his job as a Minister or if he loses his seat in Parliament. That is the issue.

Mr. Speaker: Those are allegations that the hon. Member cannot sustain. I have heard enough of the background to this case.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent) *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I finish my speech?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Foot: As the House is now aware, this is a debatable motion, although that was not immediately evident, I thought, to the Leader of the House when he moved it. If he had known that when he moved the motion, he might have made at the beginning the speech that he later delivered on a point of order. If he had explained the situation at the beginning of our proceedings, it might have been somewhat different, although I think that it would have been unsatisfactory from the point of view of the vast majority of right hon. and hon. Members.

Of course, it is right to emphasise that the authority of the Chair here and in Committees must be upheld, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), other hon. Members and you, Mr. Speakers, have said. However, that authority cannot be upheld by motions moved in this form when the House has not had the chance to consider what they are about. The Leader of the House had a second opportunity—he is shaking his head before he even knows what I am going to say. That may be the safest way in the Cabinet: if they shake their heads later, they will be lopped off.

This is a serious matter. Let me say again to the Leader of the House that if he wishes our proceedings to be conducted properly—and I understand the motives that persuaded him to move the motion—he must withdraw the motion. He will then have a chance to give not only my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland, but hon. Members on both sides of the House the opportunity to consider it. If he really wishes to uphold the authority of the Chair, that is the best way for him to go about it. But if he tries to rush through the motion as he did at the beginning—without knowing or considering the consequences—far from upholding the authority of the Chair, he will be creating still more confusion.

For the third time, I invite the right hon. and learned Gentleman to take the obvious course. If he does not, however, the motion will still be debatable, and I believe that all hon. Members will exercise their right to debate it. Even on the lowest ground, that of assisting Government business—and hon. Members cannot sink any lower than that—much the most sensible course is for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to withdraw his ill-considered motion and to move it again tomorrow after consultation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Mr. Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "Is this a point of order?"] No, it is a contribution to the debate. I propose to make three brief points. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will doubtless agree with the first two, although he will probably not agree with the third.

First, let me respond to what was said by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett)——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the Secretary of State is allowed to make a speech, why was my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) not allowed to do so?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) had already made his speech.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask for your guidance? When my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) rose earlier, may I take it that you regarded that as an intervention in my speech?

Mr. Speaker: I had said to the hon. Member for Workington that I thought that he had made his case in sufficient detail for a judgment to be made on whether the motion should be passed, and I therefore called his right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot).

Mr. Clarke: In response to the——

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Such behaviour disfigures our proceedings. I call the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker).

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. To avoid any confusion that may arise later, will you please explain to the House whether, there being no written motion before the House, a manuscript amendment can be submitted? Will you also tell us whether there is any fixed time limit that would force the debate to end before 10 pm?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members allow me to deal with one matter at a time?

Hon. Members will find the precedent on page 323 of "Erskine May". Such motions may be moved without notice and are debatable. The debate could continue until 10 pm, although I hope that it will not.

Mr. Clarke: The first point that I wish to make, in response to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), is that there is no question of criticism of the hon. Member for—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not answer the second part of the question of the hon. Member for Perry Barr. The motion is amendable by means of a manuscript amendment.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put; *but* MR. SPEAKER *withheld his assent and declined then to put that Question.*

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. The dignity of the House would be best served if we were to proceed with the debate. I have a suspicion that a manuscript amendment is being prepared.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. Points of order of this kind do not help in any way at all.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House is in difficulty over this matter. As I have already said, a manuscript amendment, which I should be prepared to consider carefully, is being drafted. Let us listen now to what the Secretary of State for Health has to say.

Mr. Clarke: I think that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) would agree that he is not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was in the middle of his speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) must resume his seat.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall hear the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

Mr. Beith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have to raise this matter, because it is of the greatest importance to the freedom of speech in the House.

I may have misunderstood what you said a few moments ago. My first understanding of what you said was that you had called the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to order because it seemed that he might be straying beyond the terms of the debate. That would have been right and necessary for you to do. However, some of your later comments led me to believe —I am sure that I was wrong in this assumption—that you had ordered the hon. Member to resume his seat and to bring his speech to an end.

I am able to hear things that are said by hon. Members who are sitting near me that you, Mr. Speaker, are unable to hear. I believe that a number of hon. Members thought that you had caused the hon. Member for Workington to cease speaking. I know—and you know far better than I —that it does not lie within Mr. Speaker's power to do that. As I understand it, you asked the hon. Member for Workington to cease to refer to anything that was either outside the terms of the motion or ought to have been raised as a matter of privilege and that you would have

given him the opportunity to continue his speech if you had realised that he wished to do so. Am I right in that assumption?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said that he knew that, if it were moved, this motion would be narrow. I had already pointed out to him, both in private and in public, the extent to which he could go in the debate. He went to that point. My understanding then was that he had made his contribution—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Then I called another hon. Member to speak. That is that position. I have already called the Secretary of State. [HON. MEMBERS: "On a point of order, Mr. Speaker."] I shall hear the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I try to assist the House? It is quite clear that the debate inevitably turns on what happened this morning in Standing Committee E. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Whether we are debating what was said in Standing Commitee E or whether Standing Committee E was disrupted, the debate inevitably turns on what happened this morning in the Standing Committee. If the motion is persisted with, the House will be invited to take a view on what happened in Standing Committee E. Surely, therefore, it would be wrong for allegations about what happened this morning to be made in the Chamber before hon. Members have in front of them the verbatim record of the Committee's proceedings.—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) says that the words are irrelevant to the Committee's behaviour. We cannot judge its behaviour without having the record of that behaviour in front of us. It is perfectly clear that the Secretary of State intends to refer to what he says happened this morning.

May I put it again to the Leader of the House that, whatever he may think about the merits or otherwise of the motion he advanced 45 minutes ago, it would be better for the House to debate it when we have the verbatim record? May I press him on an additional point? We are now in difficulty that Standing Committee E is due to resume the sitting at 4.30 this afternoon, at which point all those hon. Members who are aware of what happened this morning will vanish from the Chamber. In those circumstances, surely it must be self-evident that the debate must be deferred for future and further consideration.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House is in a difficulty about this. I propose to suspend the House for 15 minutes so that discussions on this matter can take place through the usual channels.

Sitting suspended at 4.15 pm.

4.30 pm

On resuming——

Dr. Cunningham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the brief suspension I have taken the opportunity to discuss the situation not only with the Leader of the House but with my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who has renewed to me his assurance—the assurance that he first gave to the House some moments ago—that it is not his intention to disrupt the Standing Committee's proceedings any further.

In the light of our discussions and that new assurance, I hope that the Leader of the House will now respond postively—*[Interruption.]* It is a clear undertaking, as I said earlier, and I repeat it now. I therefore invite the Leader of the House to respond positively and to withdraw the motion.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Two points have emerged clearly from what has been said on both sides of the House, including by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). The first concerns the importance of upholding the authority of the Chair.

Dr. Cunningham: I apologise to the Leader of the House. I said—I repeat it willingly—that of course we uphold the authority of the Chair in all circumstances, including the circumstances in which the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) found herself earlier. I give that absolute assurance again, as I did at the beginning of my original remarks.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the shadow Leader of the House for his confirmation of that because it was a point that emerged clearly, even from the characteristically mischievous but well-intentioned intervention of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. I appreciate the support of the right hon. Gentleman as a former Leader of the House, and also that of the shadow Leader of the House.

Secondly, the undertaking now given by the shadow Leader of the House on behalf of, and affirming that given by, the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was of a character not available through the usual channels, despite our search for it at an earlier stage this afternoon. Had that position been different, the question of moving the motion that I moved would also have been different.

The undertaking now having been given and the House having plainly been assured from both sides that the authority of the Chairman of the Standing Committee must and will be upheld, we have a different situation from that which prevailed when I moved the motion.

The allegations advanced in the Committee upstairs which were the subject of the ruling by the Chairman of the Standing Committee have in substance been reasserted on the Floor of the House this afternoon. That is, for me and for most hon. Members, a matter of the utmost regret. It is fair to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) that I should make it clear that he firmly rebutted those allegations during the Committee's proceedings. I hope that they can be left to rest on the basis that they should never have been made. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] On the basis of the assurance given by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and his confirmation that the authority of the Chairman of the Committee will be upheld, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Now that the matter has been put to bed, you will be aware that this afternoon we have witnessed the shameless use by one hon. Member of the television cameras to smear the reputation of another. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the House has dealt with that matter. I deeply regret that it has arisen in this way.

Mr. Gale: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I regret to have to press the matter further. This afternoon we have witnessed the use of the cameras on live television to smear a Member of this House. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) would not have said what he did outside the House and every hon. Member knows it. As a Back Bencher, I appeal to you Mr. Speaker. It is your clear duty to protect Members of the House. When these proceedings are over, will you consider what measures can be taken to ensure that such circumstances do not arise again?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will not persist with this matter. Allow me to deal with it. We must deal with each other in this place as men and women of honour. It is not in our traditions that we should smear each other in the House. The hon. Member informed the House of what had occurred in the Committee this morning and at a certain point I asked him to desist. We should now continue with our proceedings.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that the events of this morning, of which some of us knew nothing until the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) reported to the House, have put both the House and yourself in some difficulty.

I wish to put to you a point which is a matter of precedent relating to the powers of the Chair and hon. Members who are on their feet. You made it clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) had assumed and affirmed that the scope of the debate on the motion moved rather precipitately by the Leader of the House, was narrow. My hon. Friend developed several points, which you informed him were outside the scope of the debate. At that point you called my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) who made an effective speech. Some of us were under the impression that you called him to make a point of order. At that point my hon. Friend technically had not completed his speech although in your judgment he was moving outside the scope of the debate.

It is within the power of the Chair to ask an hon. Member not to pursue a point if it is beyond the scope of the debate or is not in order, and you did so. As a matter of precedent, is it not the case that the Chair has not the power, other than through the ten minutes rule or on matters relating to order, to ask Members to resume their seats and that only on a matter of content can they be ordered to pursue other matters? I hope that you can confirm that on future occasions, which I hope will not arise, hon. Members will be able to complete their speeches, as you will agree is right.

Mr. Speaker: Allow me to explain. I regret that there has been some confusion this afternoon. I have no authority to order an hon. Member to sit down unless he is out of order. I was under the impression that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) had completed his speech. That is why I called the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). If the hon. Member had not completed his speech, I apologise to him. In my judgment, he had reached the point at which it would not have been in order for him to go further.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you tell us whether the conclusion of these proceedings is now a precedent? If it is a precedent, is not the precedent this—that if one shows contempt for the ruling of a Chairman of a Standing Committee and subsequently, having caused the disruption of that Committee, gives an undertaking that it will not happen again, no further proceedings will follow? Is that the kind of precedent that we are expecting to establish today?

Mr. Onslow: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not evident that the confusion that has been caused in the House this afternoon has its origins in one simple fact, which is that Chairmen of Standing Committees do not have power to suspend members of those Committees for unruly behaviour? They do not have such powers because no member of a Standing Committee has previously behaved so badly as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) behaved on this occasion—of that there can be no doubt. Would not the best way out of this difficulty be for the whole matter to be referred to the Select Committee on Procedure so that a judgment can be made? Then the hon. Member for Workington, who is a member of that Committee, can argue his point, although I doubt whether his argument will carry much conviction.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that we can pursue this matter to any benefit today. It is perfectly true, as the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said, that the Chairmen of Standing Committees——

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

As the right hon. Member for Woking said, Chairmen of Standing Committees, whose authority must always be upheld, do not have the powers that the Speaker has. It may well be that the Select Committee on Procedure should consider the matter.

Dr. Reid: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise this point of order reluctantly because, like my hon. Friends, I am aware that very important Scottish business is to follow immediately afterwards. I am also aware that many people in Scotland will regard today's events—both the byzantine rules and the substance of what was said—as very important. The motion was withdrawn after discussions, through the usual channels, of three issues. The first two, I accept. The third was a statement from the Leader of the House to the effect that the allegations have been rebutted by the Minister concerned and assurances given. I want to know—this is a point of order for you, Sir—and I am sure that the people of Scotland will want to know, whether that means that assurances have been given by the Minister that the company trading——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. Reid: —will not be bought by—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already said, and the hon. Gentleman, although he was not with us before this

Parliament, knows, that we do not make allegations against each other in this Chamber. If we seek to do so, it must be by a motion on the Order Paper.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the principle established by this afternoon's proceedings is that the authority of Chairmen of Standing Committees must always be upheld, how can we have been discussing what happened before a ruling was made by the Chairman of a Standing Committee? If we have such a discussion, it means that the House is being invited to stand as a court of appeal upon that ruling. With respect, Mr. Speaker, it should be made perfectly clear that if a Chairman of a Standing Committee has made a ruling, that ruling cannot be questioned by the House. We must then determine whether an hon. Member has acted properly in accordance with that ruling. That is not what we have been doing this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: In order that the House can make a judgment on whether a motion should be carried or not, the arguments must be heard, and that is exactly what happened this afternoon. I must say to the House, however, that I think that these proceedings bring no credit on us and that it would be very wise indeed for the Select Committee on Procedure to look carefully at the powers that are given—or not given, in this case—to the Chairmen of Standing Committees. Their authority must be upheld and the hon. Member for Drake was quite right to come to the House to report to the House what happened in Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a heavy day ahead of us, and a great many hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of requests that you should report today's events to the Select Committee on Procedure. The Chairman of that Committee, who takes a deep interest in these affairs, is not here today. May I suggest, therefore, that to avoid any repetition of such a series of events, you ask the Procedure Committee to investigate the whole structure of rules relating to Members' interests and to tighten them up? That would render discussions such as those held this morning unnecessary because Ministers would not be involved.

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter not for the Procedure Committee but for the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to the point or order, Mr. Speaker. I think that we should clarify, for the record, which of two things the House was doing. If the motion tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House had purported to censure the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and to punish him in some way—by exclusion or anything else—it would have been perfectly right for the House to debate the circumstances of the Chairman's request to him, with which he did not comply. I did not see my right hon. and learned Friend's motion in writing, but as I understand the matter, the motion did not seek to censure anybody. Instead it would have conferred powers on the Chairman of the Standing Committee. It cannot, therefore, have been in order to go into what happened in that Committee only for the House to decide whether to uphold the authority of the Chairman of the Committee. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think that it is a matter for regret that the House did not proceed with that motion, which represented the only possible way of upholding the authority of the Chairman of that Committee.

Mr. Speaker: We can best bring this matter to a conclusion by repeating that the House was being asked to confer power upon the Chairman of a Standing Committee to exclude a Member if he misbehaved. The hon. Member for Drake did not have that power this morning. The motion before the House was a debatable motion and the House was not asked to give a rubber stamp to what the Leader of the House proposed. The House had every right to debate whether the Chairman of a Standing Committee should have that power. The matter has now been resolved. I hope that we shall never get into such a difficulty again, and that we may leave the matter there.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have nothing more to say on this matter.

BILLS PRESENTED

Coalmining Subsidence (Damage, Arbitration, Prevention and Public Awareness)

Mr. Alan Meale, supported by Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. John Prescott, Mr. Alexander Eadie and Mr. George J. Buckley, presented a Bill to establish the rights of owners of houses, land, buildings and other constructions which have suffered damage due to subsidence resulting from the working and getting of coal or of coal and other minerals worked therewith, to full repair or equitable compensation of their properties; to establish an independent arbitration procedure to resolve any disputes that may arise out of such damage or any matters relating thereto; to require any public body or organisation involved in the working or getting of coal and other minerals to take steps to prevent subsidence damage and to promote public awareness of working which might give rise to such damage:

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 26 January and to be printed. [Bill 46.]

Football Spectators

Mr. Alan Meale, supported by Mr. Denis Howell, Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Jim Lester, Mr. Tom Pendry, Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. David Blunkett, Mr. Robert N. Wareing, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Brian Wilson, Mr. Peter L. Pike and Mr. Don Dixon, presented a Bill to establish a statutory liaison body for the sport of football, to include in its membership the various footballing authorities and their agencies, Football League clubs, the Sports Council, football supporters' organisations and other necessary bodies; and to make provision for changes in the organisation and function of the sport; and for connected purposes:

And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 2 February and to be printed. [Bill 47.]

British Racing Commission

Mr. Alan Meale, supported by Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Dennis Turner, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. George J. Buckley, Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. John McAllion, Mr. Pat Wall, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. Max Madden and Mr. Harry Barnes, presented a Bill to establish a single national commission of control for the whole of the horse and dog racing industries, with overall responsibility for the bloodstock, thoroughbred breeding and betting industries, incorporating the control of the financial arrangements, rules and aims of current bodies, their other responsibilities and where applicable, the assets of all publicly supported organisations concerned or connected with these sports: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 9 February and to be printed. [Bill 48.]

Greyhound Betting Levy

Mr. Alan Meale, supported by Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Menzies Campbell, Mr. Tim Smith, Mr. A. E. P. Duffy, Mr. Richard Alexander, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. William McKelvey, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. Martin Redmond and Mr. George J. Buckley, presented a Bill to extend the functions of the Horserace Betting Levy Board to include the sport of greyhound racing; and to make consequential amendments to the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 16 February and to be printed. [Bill 49.]

Human Rights

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to provide protection in the courts of the United Kingdom for the rights and freedoms specified in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to which the United Kingdom is a party: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 26 January and to be printed. [Bill 50.]

Orders of the Day

Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.50 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is a separate point of order. Allegations have been made on the Floor of the House. It is a rule of the House that every Member is an hon. Member. I draw your attention to the proceedings of Standing Committee E on 19 December, when my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland said:

"Since the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was clearly referring to me"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E,* 19 December 1989; c. 37.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have finished with that matter; I have nothing more to say on it. I do not think that there is any profit to be gained for the House in persisting with it. It must be a completely different issue.

Mr. Bennett: It is a matter of principle. If an hon. Member makes allegations about another hon. Member in Committee and those allegations are denied in the record of 19 December, is it in order for an hon. Member to make the same allegations on a subsequent occasion on the Floor of the House when they have been denied by the hon. Member concerned? Is that not tantamount to impugning the honour of the hon. Member and calling him a liar?

Mr. Speaker: What goes on in Standing Committees is a matter for the Chairmen of Standing Committees. We have now disposed of that matter. I call Mr. Secretary Rifkind.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind) *rose*——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have already disposed of the matter. Today's proceedings have brought no credit upon the House. I ask hon. Members to leave the matter there.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different matter?

Mr. Walker: Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Sit down, please. *[Interruption.]* I have said that I do not propose to take any further points of order on the previous matter. If the point of order is concerned with this Bill, I will take it. Is it concerned with this Bill?

Mr. Walker: It is a matter of principle.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to take it if it resurrects the previous matter. It must be concerned with this Bill.

Mr. Walker: It is a different matter of principle, Mr. Speaker. I have been attempting to catch your eye for

some time on this point of order. It is about hon. Members on Standing Committees or elsewhere. If we are to accept your ruling—I have no argument with it—that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) gave his word and made a pledge——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Member to sit down. We have dealt with that matter. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Please sit down. I call Mr. Rifkind.

Mr. Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have told the hon. Member that I am not prepared to take his point of order. I shall be very reluctant to take further action. I ask the hon. Member to resume his seat.

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Member to resume his seat. I call Mr. Secretary Rifkind.

Mr. Rifkind *rose*——

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I order the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) to resume his seat. I call Mr. Secretary Rifkind.

4.53 pm

Mr. Rifkind: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House will be pleased to be able to consider the more tranquil matter of this Bill, with the major proposals that it incorporates for the Scottish economy. The Bill has been described as perhaps the single most important measure affecting Scotland. *[Interruption.]* I ask Opposition Members to wait a moment. It has been described not only by me but by the Scottish Trades Union Congress as the single most important measure—*[Interruption.]* Before he goes too far, I refer the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to the remarks of the STUC. It describes the Government's proposals as

"The most significant institutional reforms within the fields of both training and economic development to be suggested since the establishment of the Manpower Services Commission in 1974 and the Scottish Development Agency in 1975."

Therefore, I was modest in my description of the significance of the Bill, because the STUC and its members clearly think that its significance is even greater.

There are three major aspects of the Bill for Scottish Enterprise, any one of which would be of profound importance to the Scottish economy. First, it provides for the combination of the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Commission into a new body to be known as Scottish Enterprise—a powerful body with substantial resources, which will provide an integrated approach of a type that has not been seen before.

Secondly, the Bill provides for the transfer of responsibility for training in Scotland from Sheffield to Edinburgh, and from the Department of Employment to the Scottish Office. Thirdly, it provides for many of the responsibilities that in the past have been carried out by either the SDA or the Training Commission to be delivered in future by new private sector-led enterprise companies in each of the various regions of Scotland, both in lowland Scotland, and, through Highlands and Islands Enterprise, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Without qualification, any one of the three proposals would amount to a major contribution to the economic future of Scotland. Brought together, they justify the joint judgment of myself and the STUC about their profound significance. They are not only profoundly important. What is significant and, perhaps, unprecedented for such wide-ranging measures is the enormous support that they have received virtually throughout Scotland.

In response to their White Paper, the Government received more than 420 contributions from various organisations, bodies and others concerned with the future of the Scottish economy. Of those 420 responses, no fewer than 403 did not depart from the central recommendations of the White Paper. Only 17 out of 420 disagreed with the basic proposition in the White Paper for the integration of training in the SDA and the creation of Scottish Enterprise.

It is a disappointment but, perhaps, not surprising that in that lonely group of 17 was to be found Her Majesty's Opposition, the Labour party. We have found that the Labour party, with no significant or noticeable support from any major organisation in Scotland, stands in lonely isolation opposed to the Bill. The hon. Member for Garscadden sits sulking in his tent, without any support from significant bodies in Scotland. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends think that I am exaggerating, I ask them to reflect on the views of many organisations in Scotland. I shall not refer to all those that might be seen in some way as antipathetic to the views of the Labour party. Let me concentrate on those which are the traditional allies and supporters of the Labour party and which the hon. Member for Garscadden in the past has never hesitated to quote as endorsing his view and welcoming his support.

For example, Mr. Campbell Christie, the general secretary of the STUC, who has not only identified the STUC with the proposals but who was present at the launching of them, said on 31 August last year:

"First of all can I say that from the trade union movement's point of view we very much welcome the integration of training and economic development as envisaged in 'Scottish Enterprise' and we look forward to the partnership arrangement that the Secretary of State and others have talked about this morning and participating in it."

We find that the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations

"notes with approval the remit for Scottish Enterprise"

and

"endorses the case . . . for devolving to a Scottish base the administration of the training and job creation functions . . . and integrating them with the economic development functions already directed from a Scottish base."

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities said in its response to the Government's proposals:

"The general objective, set out in the White Paper on Scottish Enterprise, to integrate the Government's support for training and for enterprise creation is welcomed by the convention."

The Church and Nation Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland stated:

"The Committee welcomes in broad terms the proposals set out in the Government's White Paper 'Scottish Enterprise' and, in particular, the fact that Scotland is to be given special treatment to suit her own needs. The Committee also welcomes the proposal to bring together training and enterprise functions which will benefit greatly from being inter-related."

[Mr. Rifkind]

In view of the Opposition amendment and the opposition of the hon. Member for Garscadden to the central thrust of our proposals, I challenge the hon. Gentleman to say what support he has from elsewhere in Scotland for the Labour party's lonely position on the measure. I challenge him to name one other organisation of substance or body of importance in Scotland that supports the Opposition's view, which is derived from their narrow partisan position of opposing for its own sake and not on the merits of the proposals.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The Secretary of State is obviously replying carefully and legalistically to a wide range of arguments. There is great merit in annotating those who support him. If we study carefully the words that people are using to support the legislation, it is clear that they are talking about the interrelationship of the investment and training functions. The danger is that in the Bill those functions are not interrelated, but fused. That is the problem that the Secretary of State, in operation, must address. It is not the interrelationship but the bureaucratic fusion of those functions; it is not only the devolving to Scotland but the local aspects as well.

That is a bureaucratic and operational problem that the Bill does not address. The dangers exist and the Labour party is right to draw attention to the fact that those two functions should be more disinterrelated to avoid the danger of fusion and to benefit the Scottish economy.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman may be describing the position of the Labour party, but I hope that he will have the honesty to admit that that view does not have the support of any other significant organisation in Scotland, on either side of the industrial scene. I note that he accepts that.

It is an unusual phenomenon for the Secretary of State for Scotland, in the present Administration, to be quoting in support of his proposals the STUC, COSLA and the Church and Nation Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. I should usually be nervous about support coming from those quarters. I should be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pledging the Labour party's opposition as that will reassure some of my hon. Friends that the Government are continuing on the right path.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I shall happily give way to the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he can tell us who else supports the Labour party's view.

Mr. Dewar: I shall make my own speech in my own time. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman puts such store on the advice given to him by those organisations, why has he accepted their general blessing but repudiated almost every one of the specific pieces of advice that they have given him?

Mr. Rifkind: That simply is not true. There have been a number of extremely useful contributions and suggestions from the STUC, COSLA and other organisations, some of which we have accepted. I have not the slightest doubt that, as the Bill is debated in the weeks to come, there will be constructive suggestions from a variety of organisations. I hope that the Labour party will be included in them. If it moves away from its emotional, pigheaded reaction to measures and its partisan political view, and instead addresses the contents of the Bill, I have no doubt that the consensus that currently includes the rest of Scotland might be extended also to include the Labour party.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to ask a question relating to clause 1(b), which talks of a body to be known as Highlands and Islands Enterprise, which shall have the general functions of

"preparing, concerting, promoting, assisting and undertaking measures for the economic and social development of the Highlands and Islands."

Where does the tourist industry stand with regard to that part of the clause? The right hon. and learned Gentleman will recall that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry called for a United Kingdom body for the tourist industry. Will he assure the House that, under the Bill, the Scottish tourist industry and board will remain autonomous bodies for the next two years?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much hope that they will remain autonomous bodies for longer than that. The Government have no proposals to limit the autonomy of the Scottish Tourist Board. The Bill will not have any effect on that matter.

The central thrust of the Bill is the integration of training and the Scottish Development Agency into a new body to be called Scottish Enterprise. I shall explain why the Government and a wide spectrum of Scottish opinion believe that to be highly desirable. The first and most obvious reason—and one that industry has pointed to—is the desirability of a single door for industry with regard to business support and training. It is always easier and more simple for those who are to benefit from the support that is given by Government if they can go to a single organisation or body to identify what is available and come to a conclusion as to the extent that such a body can assist with their economic opportunities. The integration of the two organisations has much to commend it, rather than a continuation of parallel organisations each seeking to help industry in a different but interrelated way.

Secondly, it is wrong to imply that training is other than another form of investment. Training is a form of investment and, in that sense, is similar to the general work that the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board have done for a number of years. If we wish to continue the strategic involvement of such an organisation, working with the Scottish Office, to carry out its duties, those matters should operate in an integrated way. It is that integration that has been most commended by all the organisations that I have mentioned and also by the CBI in Scotland, the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), Scottish Business in the Community and various other organisations.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]* Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the infrastructure, particularly transport services, is vital for industrial development? He may be aware of the distressing news today that British Rail plans to discontinue direct services from Stranraer via Girvan and Ayr to the south of England. That will cause great harm and difficulties for industrialists not only in my constituency but in the constituencies of the right hon.

Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) and the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang). My colleagues and myself, along with some Conservative Members, will be meeting British Rail officials next week to ask them to reconsider the matter. Will the Secretary of State join us in that campaign to persuade British Rail to reconsider that unwise decision that will be detrimental to industrial development in the south-west of Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: My friendship with the hon. Gentleman goes back 20 years and I take no offence at his initial form of address. We are all disappointed by any proposal to limit or reduce British Rail services in any part of Scotland. There will be an opportunity for the reasons that British Rail has put forward to be considered and for a conclusion to be reached on whether they have substance. There will also be opportunities for comments and representations to be made to British Rail. The announcement was made only today, and it is clearly necessary for the ideas behind it to be properly examined.

The thrust of the proposals is the integration of the SDA and training. I have given the reasons why, in my view and the view of virtually all those who have commented on it apart from the Opposition, the integration of the SDA and training makes great sense.

The second main ingredient is the transfer of responsibility for training from Sheffield to Edinburgh and from the Department of Employment to the Scottish Office. It is a profound change because it involves the transfer not only of policy responsibility, but of the resources that have previously been the responsibility of the Department of Employment. That is of great significance. The need for it flows from several different reasons. First, if there is an integrated body called Scottish Enterprise, through which new enterprise companies are to be established, it obviously makes sense for those companies to be answerable to one line of response and to one Government Department. To have a split of responsibility in an integrated body answering to two Government Departments simultaneously would not have made sense or have been wise. Therefore, the Government came to the conclusion, which has been well received, that this is a sensible change.

In addition, it is a Scottish solution to meet Scottish needs. The Scottish Development Agency has no exact parallel south of the border. If it is to continue with its important role of business support, environmental improvement and other works—it is the Government's intention that it should—it is sensible and desirable that that economic activity should be linked to the work of the Training Agency in Scotland, which is comparable and interrelated. Therefore, it makes sense that the Scottish Office, which is already an industrial and economic Department, should have an enhanced role.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The Secretary of State referred to the transfer of control for training to Edinburgh. Do the provisions mean that the Secretary of State will be able to give up the employment training scheme unilaterally?

Mr. Rifkind: I made it clear at the beginning of the debate that it is in the interests of youngsters and others in Scotland that the qualifications that they obtain should help them to gain employment either in Scotland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The same applies to my colleagues in the Department of Employment, the Welsh Office and the Northern Ireland Office.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's specific point, the Government have a United Kingdom training policy—of that there can be no doubt. Indeed, it is something of which Her Majesty's Opposition also approve. In the unlikely event of my wishing to promote completely different training policies in Scotland from those applied elsewhere in the kingdom, it would obviously be necessary for me to get the approval of my colleagues before moving in that direction. That goes for any Department at any time. However, I cannot think of a more undesirable course on which to embark. It would mean that the qualifications of youngsters in Scotland would be of little help to them in obtaining employment in other parts of the kingdom.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: Perhaps I may finish this point. It is important that the training policy should be applied with sufficient local flexibility and sensitivity and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) for leading me on to the third major ingredient of this part of the Bill.

I should have thought that Her Majesty's Opposition, with their professed belief in decentralisation and devolution, would enthusiastically endorse the creation of enterprise companies instead of carping and criticising. For the first time, we shall have the opportunity to create in each region of Scotland enterprise companies that will have the responsibility for delivering not only the training responsibilities of the Training Agency in Scotland, but much of the business support responsibilities of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. In delivering those local services, we envisage significant flexibility that will enable those companies to adapt to the way in which such policies are implemented, in response to the needs of the locality.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On the Secretary of State's point about decentralising local enterprise companies, we in the rural areas of Scotland have some legitimate concerns because the present provisions have guaranteed a relatively stable and systematic standard throughout Scotland, which has served the rural areas just as well as the urban areas. Although I understand that the problems in urban areas can sometimes be greater, I am concerned about the demands and requirements that will be placed on those who are expected to participate in the local enterprise companies in rural areas. Those people will have to travel long distances for little reward, which is asking a great deal unless the Government can come up with real resources and a real package of support to make it worth while for local business men to become involved in rural areas.

Mr. Rifkind: With all due respect, I advise the hon. Gentleman to contact the enterprise trusts and business community in his constituency and in his own part of Scotland. If he does, he will find that there is already enormous interest from the rural areas in Scotland. There is not the slightest sign of any lack of response. Quite the opposite—the Government have been enormously delighted not only by the number of people coming forward, but by the calibre of those wishing to be identified

[Mr. Rifkind]

with enterprise companies. That applies in the rural areas as well as in the more industrial parts of Scotland. We can already say with confidence that attracting people of calibre in sufficient numbers to carry out the responsibilities of the enterprise companies will not be a problem. Indeed, far more such people are already coming forward than can be accommodated within the framework of the proposals.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue for a little while, I am sure that I shall find it possible to give way to him in due course. I wish to get on with my speech because I can see that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate——

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: Very well, I give way to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray).

Dr. Bray: Although the point about local participation may be impressive in principle, is the Secretary of State aware that there is a great variation in the quality of people coming forward in the different industrial areas? In Lanarkshire, for instance, the biggest employer, British Steel, is not taking part and another major international company has nominated its property manager. Generally, Lanarkshire will not have a first division board.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must be responsible for his own comments on that. The people who have been mentioned to me as being interested in taking part in Lanarkshire and in other areas include a number of important persons within the local economy. However, the hon. Gentleman is entitled to his own view.

The importance of the enterprise companies flows from the following facts. First, when training was introduced some years ago in the early 1980s, it was at a time of mass unemployment and inevitably the method of training that was applied was relatively unsophisticated. Over the years, the training has become more sophisticated, and with falling unemployment those who are seeking and obtaining training, whether they be youngsters or older persons, are in a much stronger position to obtain employment thereafter. With the demographic changes that are already taking place in Scotland, which will lead to a massive reduction in the number of school leavers in the next few years, the need to have a training system and a business support system that is more tailored to the requirements of each locality in Scotland is greater than ever.

The simple fact is that the economic, training and business support needs of the north-east of Scotland are not necessarily the same as those of Glasgow. The needs of Edinburgh are not necessarily the same as those of Dumfries and Galloway, and those of the Borders are not necessarily the same as those of Lanarkshire or Dumbarton. Only by a system of effective decentralisation can one hope to meet such requirements.

Mr. Darling *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: Perhaps I may continue this point. It is of great significance that the Scottish Development Agency was already in the process—it has been doing this for some time—of decentralising to its own employees in various parts of Scotland the administrative responsibility for implementing a number of the schemes for which it is responsible. We are taking that process an important stage further and devolving and decentralising responsibility not simply to the officials of the SDA, but to the local community—primarily to the local business and industrial community, but also to those from other sections of the community who have an interest in the economic development of the locality. That is profoundly different from what we have ever had in Scotland. It has been widely welcomed by both sides of industry and I repeat that it is a matter of great sadness that, for reasons that have not yet been properly articulated, the Labour party seems unable to identify with the view that is so widely held.

Mr. Darling: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. Perhaps I can tell him why there is some concern. I am all in favour of decentralisation, but I am not in favour of decentralising decision-making to one narrow category of people such as business men. The old town of Edinburgh has been targeted by the SDA, mainly because it wants to see more tourism there. However, people living in the old town are concerned that, through the local boards, business men may identify gap sites from which they individually and their companies could profit, and those business men may then use the umbrella of the power and prestige of their enterprise boards to acquire and free that land and then, lo and behold, their own companies may buy up the land and make a profit from it. My fear is that the boards could be used as stalking horses for individual business men because there is no countervailing balance provided by the local community to any meaningful extent.

Mr. Rifkind: Those are interesting points. However, the hon. Gentleman's proper response should be the more constructive approach of the STUC, COSLA and others who have commented on these matters. Some of them have expressed similar concerns to those of the hon. Gentleman, but that has not stopped them welcoming the broad thrust of the Bill. They have said that they welcome the thrust of what the Government are doing, although that could be improved in certain ways, but irrespective of whether it is improved, it is far better to have the Bill in its present form than not at all. That is the fundamental difference between the Labour party and the rest of Scotland on the issue. The Labour party would be well advised to raise those matters of detailed concern as the Bill goes through the House. Scottish opinion finds it difficult to understand why those are being used as a perceived justification for opposition to all the proposals.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): My right hon. and learned Friend might observe to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) that the new town of Edinburgh was built by the enlightenment of business men and its prosperity lies on it.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. and learned Friend is entirely correct and the inheritance that enterprise has given to the modern grandeurs of Scotland can hardly be exaggerated.

I have commented primarily on the position in Scotland as a whole. However, the position in the Highlands and Islands is comparable and there has been a great welcome for the Government's proposals throughout the Highlands and Islands. In our consultative document we put various

proposals to Highlands and Islands opinion, including a continuation of the status quo or the proposals now referred to as Highlands and Islands Enterprise. It was clear that the overwhelming weight of opinion supported the proposal for an integrated approach, giving to the successor body to the Highlands and Islands Development Board comparable powers to those exercised by Scottish Enterprise.

In putting forward the proposals, we do not wish to imply any criticism of the SDA or the HIDB. I say without qualification that their role and contribution to Scotland during the past years since their creation has been of profound significance and importance. The HIDB—which this year celebrates its 25th aniversary—has operated through a period of profound change to the well-being of the Highlands. When we think of the history of depopulation in the Highlands, it is of enormous encouragement that since 1971 the population of the Highlands and Islands has increased by 25,000, or 8 per cent. The HIDB is entitled to credit in contributing towards that.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Secretary of State confirm that his endorsement of the past record of the Scottish Development Agency is not shared by the progenitor of the Scottish Enterprise scheme, Mr. Bill Hughes, the vice-chairman of the Scottish Conservative party, who has made some sweeping attacks on the performance of the Scottish Development Agency?

Mr. Rifkind: Bill Hughes is perfectly able to speak for himself, but at least he has remained in the Conservative party, unlike some of those in the Scottish National party who take a different view from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

The Government's views are quite simple: the SDA, particularly with the changes introduced to its powers after 1979, has made a sterling contribution to Scotland's well-being, which is why combining the SDA's present responsibilities with those of the Training Agency will strengthen its future contribution. I say categorically—because this is a matter that has given rise to some concern—that we have every intention that the SDA will continue with its strategic responsibilities to the wider Scottish economy. There is to be no change to inward investment as a result of the proposals and Locate in Scotland will continue, as at present, to co-ordinate with the Industry Department for Scotland and Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The Secretary of State referred to the value of the Scottish Development Agency. I served as a board member of the SDA in its initial period. It has had 14 years to build up considerable success. The SDA has a good track record and an identifiable image. Why has the Secretary of State resisted the advice given by all the organisations that he has prayed in aid in his speech and decided that the name, Scottish Development Agency, should now disappear?

Mr. Rifkind: The SDA made it clear that it did not take any exception to the proposed name, Scottish Enterprise. If we create a new body, combining two quite separate organisations to come into existence at a time when enterprise companies are also being created with a profoundly new role to play, this constitutes a new start. There is no question about that and the SDA has been the first to acknowledge it. I do not attach enormous importance to nomenclature. When we have a new organisation with new powers and responsibilities, it makes sense to reflect that in the organisation's title. I was pleased that in its representations the SDA made it clear that it had no objection to that proposal.

Part I of the Bill deals with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Clause I establishes the two bodies and gives them general functions in economic development, environmental improvement, training, and, in the case of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, social development. It also gives effect to schedule 1 which provides for the constitutions, proceedings and staffing of the two bodies. Clause 2 enlarges on their training functions, while clauses 3 and 4 make further provision as to the functions for the two bodies. Clauses 5 and 6 make particular provision for the two bodies' functions for the improvement of the environment and derelict land.

Clauses 7 to 13 provide for the powers that the two bodies may exercise in carrying out their functions. As I have said, they include the full powers of their predecessors. Restrictions on some of those powers are set out in clause 12: again, the restrictions are no greater than those which were placed on the predecessor bodies. Clause 13 enables me to give the two bodies directions, following consultations with them. Clauses 14, 15 and 16 make various provisions with regard to the two bodies' training functions. They cover such matters as payments equivalent to industrial injuries benefit in approximate cases, the treatment of disabled ex-service men and women, and the prevention of sexual or racial discrimination.

Clause 17 allows the two bodies to delegate their functions and powers to others. It will be principally through this provision that local enterprise companies will be able to carry out functions under contract to the two bodies. Certain functions and powers are excluded from delegation. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie might now have read the Bill, compared to when he made his previous comments, and if so he will realise that the powers of delegation do not include compulsory acquisition of, and entry to, land and powers to obtain information. Clause 18 allows local authorities and new town development corporations to act as agents for the two bodies.

Clause 19 defines the two bodies' areas of operation and clauses 20 and 21, together with schedule 3, make provision for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities to the two bodies from their predecessors. Clauses 22, 23 and 24 make provision for the financing of the two bodies.

Mr. Worthington: I concede that derelict land is excluded from delegated powers. However, I made another point about planning permission, which is referred to in clause 5. Under the Bill, that is not excluded.

Mr. Rifkind: Enterprise companies will not be public bodies. They will be private sector companies, with the same legal position as any other such company. It flows from that that they can have no involvement in the planning process, any more than any other planning application. If the hon. Gentleman will not accept my word for it, perhaps he will accept the advice that he is clearly now receiving from the hon. Member for Garscadden, which I suspect is identical in content and conclusion as mine.

Mr. Dewar: But I draw a different conclusion.

Mr. Rifkind: I look forward to the interpretation of the hon. Member for Garscadden in due course.

Clauses 25 and 26 make provisions concerning the two bodies' powers of entry on to Crown land and the service of documents. Clause 27 provides for the two bodies to furnish the Secretary of State with accounts and annual reports, and for the statements of account to be examined and certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General before being laid before Parliament. Clause 28 restricts Scottish Enterprise's involvement with the media industry, while enabling it to advertise in connection with its investment functions without requiring authorisation under the Financial Services Act 1986. Finally, clause 29 makes provision for the registration of agreements made by the two bodies with landowners.

Let me deal now with provisions in the Bill for the Scottish new town development corporations. As the House is well aware, there are five new towns in Scotland and the oldest, East Kilbride, was designated in 1947, and the youngest, Irvine, in 1966. The main objectives in creating them were to assist the dispersal of industry and population from overcrowded inner-city areas, especially Glasgow, and to provide locations for economic expansion.

Development corporations have provided good quality housing and new industrial infrastructure for post-war Britain and have encouraged economic and environmental development. Scottish new town residents have responded well to changing technology, demonstrating their flexibility and capacity to adapt to the needs of the market place. Firms that have set up in the new towns have grown and prospered. The Scottish new towns continue to make a contribution to the economic and social well-being of Scotland and the United Kingdom.

The aim of the New Towns Act 1946 was to attain thriving, balanced communities that would ultimately be able to stand on their own feet, and be treated in the same way and have the same status as any other town. The Bill is necessary to bring the new town programme in Scotland to its completion. The Government have always made it clear that new towns should not continue to be distinguished from other towns by the perpetual presence of special public sector support and our policy will enable the new towns to become self-sufficient communities.

Our proposals, on which we have consulted at length and in considerable detail, are similar to the arrangments that have operated for the English new towns, but there are significant differences. For example, we have concluded against having a residuary body for Scotland, but there is scope under the proposals for the transfer of corporation assets to a range of bodies, including Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Homes, to the extent that the assets have not already been disposed of to other parties before dissolution of the corporations takes place.

The present statutory provisions governing the transfer of corporation undertakings and their wind-up and dissolution are contained in sections 35 and 36 of the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968, but they are inadequate and out of date. New provision is required and I shall now describe briefly the relevant provisions in the Bill.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is a member of the Standing Committee considering the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. Who will do the valuations of the properties, and how will the Property Services Agency fit into the new schemes of Scottish Enterprise?

Mr. Rifkind: The corporations have traditionally been responsible for their own valuations and that may be an appropriate way of dealing with the matter. But there are recognised and well-established procedures for the valuation of public sector assets.

On the relationship between new towns and Scottish Enterprise, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, there are proposals for the creation——

Mr. Dalyell: I asked about the relationship between the Property Services Agency and property holdings and the new Scottish Enterpise. I asked that partly because, with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), I am involved in considering the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill in Committee.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying the question, but I am not sure that I can clarify the answer. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall have the matter involving the PSA looked into and my hon. Friend the Minister of State may be able to deal with it when he replies.

Clause 30 amends the provisions in sections 36 and 36A of the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968 relating to the procedures for the wind-up and dissolution of the development corporations. It also provides for individual wind-up orders to be made, allowing maximum flexibility in determining when a development corporation should begin the wind-up process. It extends the scope for development corporations to dispose of their property, rights and liabilities and provides for their transfer after a wind-up order has been made. It also empowers the Secretary of State to relieve, by making grants, any financial burden that is imposed by the transfer of corporations' property.

The Bill also contains new financial provisions affecting the development corporations. The new town development corporations have always been financed mainly by borrowing. The original expectation was that corporations would incur revenue deficits in their early years, which would be met by borrowing. It was also expected that development of the new towns would create sufficient surplus in time to repay that borrowing. Those assumptions were largely fulfilled for the first generation of new towns. However, it became evident in the early 1980s that in general they would be unlikely ever to generate sufficient surpluses to service and repay their accumulated debt. To remedy that, the Government in 1985 took powers in England and Wales under the New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act to carry out a reconstruction of the debt of the English and Welsh new towns. That Act also introduced new financial arrangements in the form of grant for the provision of facilities that could not be expected to pay for themselves. Therefore, clause 31 provides for financial reconstruction of the Scottish corporations, and clause 32 provides for the payment of grant to meet the cost of essential infrastructure provisions that cannot be financed by borrowing.

Clauses 33 to 37, and schedules 4 and 5 to which they give effect, contain the necessary supplementary, miscellaneous and general provisions of the Bill.

In conclusion, let me comment on the local enterprise companies to which I referred. They are crucial to the proposals that are before the House and we have been enormously encouraged by the enthusiastic response that has already made itself known throughout Scotland. Already we have 11 applications from the lowlands of Scotland and a further six from the Highlands and Islands, and I understand that in every other part of Scotland proposals for consortia, which will be put to the Government, are already at an advanced stage of preparation.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for allowing me to intervene a second time, but why was the opportunity not taken to impose a social as well as an economic requirement on the new local enterprise companies operating outside the old Highlands and Islands Development Board area? As the House knows, a social requirement has been imposed on the Highlands area, but there is still no social requirement south of the Highlands and Islands.

Mr. Rifkind: We have replicated the traditional role of the Highlands and Islands Development Board. The fact that the Scottish Development Agency, when it was created in 1975, was not given a social role, unlike the HIDB, was the result of a recognition at that time, which is still relevant, that the particular needs of the Highlands and Islands are distinct from the rest of Scotland. That is reflected in the current legislation.

It is important to remember that the local enterprise companies can be established without the need for primary legislation. They are private sector companies that do not require statute, so they can come into existence at any time. If, as we expect, they come into existence over the next few months, any contractual relationship that they enter into will be not with Scottish Enterprise, which will not yet have come into existence, but with the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency in the first instance, but that will be temporary.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Will the Secretary of State explain the difference between the arrangements in Scotland and those in England and Wales? He will know that the initial impetus for the change in the delivery of training came from the experience in the United States. He will also know that in England and Wales the Secretary of State for Employment is imposing performance contracts on each training and enterprise council. A performance contract will require a guaranteed placement of trainees before payment is made. Will those same performance contracts be imposed by local enterprise companies on providers of training?

Mr. Rifkind: I advise the hon. Gentleman not to exaggerate the relevance of the experience of the United States to the proposals. Naturally, one is interested in the experience of any part of the world, but essentially we have been influenced by the needs of the Scottish economy and our perception of what would be most appropriate and relevant to the Scottish requirement.

The hon. Gentleman asked about a comparison with TECs in England. There are some similarities, but the differences are even more profound. The role of the enterprise companies will be far wider than those of TECs in England, which will be restricted to training. In Scotland, enterprise companies will also have the significant role of business support and development, representing some 80 per cent. of the projects presently carried out by the Scottish Development Agency. In addition to that, there is no counterpart to Scottish Enterprise. Essentially, the relationship will be contractual and it will be necessary over the next few months to work out the precise details of how that contractual relationship will operate. In many respects, it may be similar to that in England and Wales, but not necessarily so. It will be accommodated to meet the specific requirements in the various parts of Scotland.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): Will the Secretary of State confirm that he intends to set a maximum number of 12 persons to serve on each local enterprise board? Only four of those places will be allocated to local authorities. Lanarkshire has five district councils, as well as Strathclyde regional council, covered by one local enterprise board. Will the Secretary of State further confirm that he has instructed the managing director of East Kilbride development corporation to serve as a public sector representative on that board? If that is so, how can all those local authorities make an input into the running of the local enterprise company in Lanarkshire?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting that we have instructed the general manager of East Kilbride development corporation, but that is not so. The Secretary of State will have no power to determine who serves a local enterprise company. I repeat that local enterprise companies will be private sector companies, and nothing in the Bill or in any other provision enables the Government to determine their composition. We have said that we shall be prepared to enter into contractual relations with enterprise companies that are private sector-led, with broadly the proportion of private sector involvement of the type that has been mentioned. However, we shall not be identifying precisely the individuals who should serve on enterprise boards or in enterprise companies—other than in Scottish Enterprise itself.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I have given way many times during my remarks, but I shall not do so again as I know that other hon. Members wish to participate.

The central theme of the Bill is a devolution—if one wishes to use that word—or a decentralisation of responsibility from Sheffield to Edinburgh, from the Department of Employment to the Scottish Office, and from the centre of Scotland to each of its regions and local communities. It is one of the great ironies that the Labour party has for the past few years been droning on about its belief in the principle of devolution and decentralisation but is now presenting itself as the only body of significance in Scotland that opposes a Bill that provides for major decentralisation and devolution of power both to Scotland and within Scotland.

The hon. Member for Garscadden may tell the House that he is opposed not to the Bill's broad principles but to its detail—and the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) nods his head vigorously. The hon. Member for Garscadden has long been a Member of Parliament and will be aware, even if the hon. Member for Fife, Central is not, that if one supports the broad principles of a Bill but disagrees with its details, one does not oppose it on Second

[Mr. Rifkind]

Reading but seeks to amend it during the later stages of its progress through the House. That is the view taken by others in Scotland who have some reservations about the detail of the Bill.

I say in a spirit of friendliness to the hon. Member for Garscadden that in recent weeks he has been very critical of the Scottish National party for seeming to ignore, for narrow reasons of party political advantage, real Scottish interests. The hon. Member for Garscadden has warned and advised, with all the authority that he can muster, that political parties that seek to give prominence to narrow partisan advantage rather than to identify wider Scottish interests are doomed to failure, rejection and contempt.

I repeat that the hon. Member for Garscadden cannot call on his traditional friends and allies for support. He cannot call on the trade unions, local authorities, or even the Committee on Church and Nation—which must make him, on this issue if not on others, one of the loneliest men in Scotland. Knowing him to be a man whose nature is of the essence sweet, reasonable and conciliatory, I have no doubt that after due consideration, and after examining all the pluses and minuses, and subject to all the necessary reservations, caveats and recommendations, the hon. Member for Garscadden will end up endorsing the Bill. If he does not, he will be repudiating the interests of the people of Scotland and something that the whole of Scotland is anxious to see implemented as soon as possible.

5.54 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to insert instead thereof:

"This House declines to give a Second Reading to the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill because it fails to provide the right framework for rebuilding the Scottish economy and to make proper provision for a true partnership between the private sector, local authorities, trade unions and the wider community and threatens the central strengths of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board; and because it fails to guarantee the financial support required for economic resurgence and to ensure that control of training policy is given to Scotland; deplores the absence of any guarantee that when New Town Development Corporations are wound up, tenants will have the choice of landlord and tenure that they want; fears the loss of the momentum generated by the Corporations; and believes that the interests of the residents will not be put first in the disposal of New Town assets."

Apparently I have entered the Chamber naked, at least in the mind of the Secretary of State for Scotland. I suppose that I ought to be grateful that at least he did not descend to describing me as an honest politician, which he does when in a particularly uncharitable mood. I unrepentingly move the reasoned amendment in my name and the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends. It is a little harsh of the Secretary of State to describe me as being harsh and pigheaded, and as someone who spends most of his time sulking in a tent. My commitment to the open air life certainly does not run to an enthusiasm for tents.

I accept of course that enterprise and new towns have a number of factors in common. One of them is their rather unlikely linking in the Bill, which raises for both rather more questions than it answers. The Bill blissfully disposes of new towns in three clauses that are tagged to the end of it. They deal with winding up and disposal in a brief outline of statutory powers and enabling legislation which advances very little the knowledge of those whose lives are tied up in the new towns, and which offers little more than "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead", which was published last July. The Secretary of State must be aware that that document gave rise to many fears and questions.

The legislation is an anticlimax in respect of new towns, which attaches special significance to the Committee stage —when I hope that Ministers will be a great deal more forthcoming about the way in which winding-up will be effected and the disposal of assets tackled. I accept that winding-up must come. We have always accepted that new towns were there to do a job and that at some point they would form part of the normal administration in Scotland. I pay tribute to the development corporations, to their staff, and above all to the people living in new towns. The vitality and drive that they contribute have undoubtedly made new towns a significant success story.

In Committee, we shall want to probe several matters of concern in the minds of almost everyone in Scotland, including the district councils within which new towns are contained, those involved with the development corporations, and those living in the new towns themselves. One concern is how the new towns will be able to maintain their economic momentum during the winding-up period. We shall want to know more about the role of the local enterprise companies, which we are told will be profit driven and have a normal share structure, articles of association, and a board of directors.

The company will be a normal commercial animal, yet it will inherit a residue of public functions during an important but perhaps destabilised period. We shall want to know more about the relationship between Scottish Enterprise and the companies that will operate in each new town area, local authorities, and the local development boards. There will be a complex mosaic of interlocking responsibilities, and having examined the Bill and the other documentation that has been presented, I have reached the conclusion that a great deal more information must be produced before the House should be asked to put the Bill on to the statute book.

We want to know on what basis assets which, as every right hon. and hon. Member knows, have been generated and developed in the public sector will be valued and sold. We do not want to find that the public sector or even the local development corporation is left with an unattractive residue that it cannot flog off at some figure to other parts of the commercial world. We want to know much more than is revealed by the bare bones of the Bill.

The final point, and I apologise that I have had to make these remarks fairly quickly, is one that the Secretary of State knows balks large in the debate in the new towns at the moment—the future of the housing stock. I do not want to be unfair, and I accept that the Bill does not rule out the possibility of a wide range of choice to individual tenants at the time of winding up. There are saving references to local authorities, but I hope that there will be rather more than that. There are also references to a number of other organisations and possible recipients of the new towns' assets and the housing stock.

In Committee we shall want to convince the Government that they must go considerably further, and that they must give a full range of choice to individual tenants before, and at the point, of winding-up.

The Minister must be aware that in almost every test of public opinion, and in every investigation carried out by

opinion polls, whether they are organised by a new town corporation such as East Kilbride or by the Government, it is clear that there is at least a significant block of tenants in the new towns who are interested in becoming district council tenants when they have to make a choice. In East Kilbride some 70 per cent. showed that preference. In the Government's inquiry, when asked what they would like now, 63 per cent. of tenants opted for the district council, and when they were asked the more hypothetical question of what they would opt for at the time of winding up, the figure dropped to 47 per cent. That may represent a significant shift in opinion, but it still represents a massive number of people whose choice must be respected. Compare that with the preference for Scottish Homes which some 4 to 5 per cent. opted for, or for private landlords, which only 1 per cent., dropping to something unquantifiable, opted for, and one begins to see that it is important that we make provision for a transfer to district councils, as that is the choice of the individual tenants.

It makes a mockery of choice if it exists only if it is exercised as the Secretary of State wishes. The range of options must be comprehensive. I hope that I am giving the Secretary of State fair notice that we shall return to this subject in Committee with energy and persistence.

I do not think that the Secretary of State will object to my quoting one other opinion outwith the Labour party or the new towns themselves, as I think that it is fairly representative. I know of no evidence to show that any organisation does not back my basic case at the moment. I shall quote the Scottish Consumer Council's view on the subject. Peter Gibson, its director, says:

"It would be a surprising vote of no confidence in the attractiveness to tenants of potential new landlords, whether housing associations, co-ops, building societies or new housing trusts set up by development corporation employees, if the government were not to allow district councils to compete on equal terms."

That is a fair way of putting it, and it is in the language of the new Conservative party, and it will no doubt appeal to the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) who is so influential in the counsels of the Scottish Office. I hope that we shall have no trouble and that in Committee we will find that we are pushing at an open door.

There is largely a deafening silence in the Bill on the subject of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The Bill says absolutely nothing about the local enterprise companies. I recognise that the Secretary of State said that they do not need a statutory base, but, as he has described them as the heart of the matter, lying at the centre of the scheme, it makes it more difficult to take a balanced look at Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise. That is particularly puzzling to me, because I had an exchange with the hon. Member for Stirling recently on television, in which I predicted that there would be problems controlling the enterprise companies' budgets because of the balance of power between Scottish Enterprise and the constituent companies operating in the area. I was told, in a very nebby way by the Secretary of State, who sounded just like an Edinburgh advocate patronising a Glasgow solicitor, that I clearly had not read the Bill. I have read it with enormous care, but I have found no word, or scrape of the pen, about those issues. I wish that he would be more accurate with his abuse in future, and not put us in this difficult position.

I recognise that the Government were running hard to catch up with what was already happening when they drafted the Bill. The lack of available information reinforces the impression of muddle and confusion and I believe that a sense of direction is lacking. As I have said consistently from the beginning of this debate, we are not convinced about the structure that the Government are commending in Scottish Enterprise. We welcome unreservedly the fact that there should be a Scottish training agency—I will return to its powers in a moment—but we are not convinced that it has to be behind one door of the Scottish Development Agency. Of course there are links, there has to be interaction and co-operation—I concede that—but it need not necessarily be with the same management structure.

Let us consider the SDA and the HIDB. They have succeeded because they are tight, professional organisations with short lines of communication and with an integrated operation from the top to the bottom. They are the opposite of what is now being proposed in many ways. Those enterprise functions—the supporting of excellence, the use of pump priming funds from the public purse—and all the work of business advice and promotion with which the SDA and the HIDB are associated are very important, but I do not think that they require the same sort of management structure as that needed to organise the hundreds of outlets that provide on-the-ground training, whether employment training, the youth training scheme or some other form. That is not necessarily a happy marriage.

I remember that the Secretary of State said in a Scottish Grand Committee debate that, of course there would have to be a compromise. The structure that he again referred to today that the SDA has evolved for its own purposes and its present range of responsibilities will be torn up and another substituted. That shows that, given its traditional role, it is not only a compromise but one that it would not have wanted.

I am not ashamed to stand alone on this issue, although I do not think that I do. I accept that the weight of institutional response probably welcomes the present proposals more than I do. I do not know why the Secretary of State should think that it is dishonourable to stand and argue for what is right—he has made a lifetime career of it. I find it extraordinary.

My impression is that much of the support started with a nod to the general structure but, when one reads the documents, one discovers that that support was heavily qualified. At times it has broken into private grief. Peter Carmichael is one man who speaks for many people in the SDA and he is an interesting witness. In the *Glasgow Herald* on July 14 last year, Dr. Carmichael, who is the ex-director of the SDA in Scotland, talked about the break-up of the Scottish Development Agency and the weakening of an organisation dedicated to help Scotland expand its economy. He went on:

"I fear for any real strategic business development in Scotland at the national level".

He may have put it in somewhat populist terms in that article, but I believe that he reflected the genuine private unhappiness that anyone who has talked to those involved during the past few months will be aware of.

I admit that this is anecdotal, but the *Glasgow Herald* of 30 October carried a report that emanated from the international forum held by the Scottish Council (Development and Industry). The article said that the area away from the forum floor was buzzing with comment and that reflected a powerful unofficial agenda and widespread concern that the planned changes would damage

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Scotland's present development, and usher in a system that is incapable of delivering what is promised for it. That is my experience: when people are pushed into corners and asked what they really think, the doubts start to emerge in a pronounced and urgent fashion.

Mr. Rifkind: The response that is already emerging from people anxious to play a part in the proposed consortia belies the hon. Gentleman's analysis. I hope that at some stage he will tell us whether the Opposition believe in decentralising major powers to enterprise companies. I am aware of his reservations about their proposed composition, but I should like him to make clear whether he believes that such companies should exist at all. If he does, I hope that he will appreciate that, if training and the Scottish Development Agency are not integrated, local enterprise companies will have the extraordinarily unattractive responsibility of entering into contractual relations with two entirely separate Government agencies. For that reason, among others, both sides of industry have opposed such arrangements, and have said that an integrated agency would be infinitely more desirable.

Mr. Dewar: I understand the points that the Secretary of State has made. It seems that we shall have some interesting debates in Committee. The Opposition are heavily committed to a genuinely devolved structure, but we are not convinced that the Scottish Enterprise companies will constitute the best way of carrying out such wide-ranging duties, or that they will be properly composed for such a task.

I do not want to make too much of the issue of the one-door approach. Let me say in passing, however, that if my suggestion that we retain a development agency and set up a Scottish training agency is such arrant bunkum as the Secretary of State seemed to suggest, he must have some very interesting conversations with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. As he will remember, his right hon. Friend has decided to retain the Welsh Development Agency and to have a Welsh training agency as well, for exactly the reasons that I have advanced.

I do not deny for a moment that this is a matter for genuine debate; none the less, to suggest that anyone whose ideas differ from those of the right hon. and learned Gentleman is unrepresentative, or has taken leave of his senses, is to advance a view that the Secretary of State for Wales would find extremely interesting.

Mr. Rifkind: I am content for the hon. Gentleman to promote himself as representative of Welsh opinion, as long as he is happy to concede that I am representative of Scottish opinion.

Mr. Dewar: I do not believe in arguing the impossible, and on this occasion I shall decline the Secretary of State's invitation.

I believe that there is something of a political motive behind some of the current restructuring. I too remember the attack launched by Mr. Bill Hughes, referred to earlier by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). Let me quote from it:

> "The SDA has done nothing for Scottish business. It is one big bureaucracy and it hasn't delivered the goods. The best thing about it is its PR organisation."

In fairness to Mr. Hughes, I should record that he told me that he had been speaking specifically about the SDA's policy on small businesses—although his reservations were stated in terms rather too wide to make that defence entirely convincing.

I believe that the aim is to remove the SDA—both the name and the organisation itself—because it is a constant, unacceptable reminder of a considerable success for the public sector. It represents a distinctly Scottish approach to partnership, which I believe should be retained but which we are in danger of sacrificing.

We shall want to look carefully at the local enterprise companies, both in the Highlands and in the SDA area. For me, they are a largely unknown quantity. We are told that we are to hand over vast powers to the private sector, which will have almost a semi-autonomous fiefdom to administer—all of it based on a narrow ridge of between eight and 12 board members in the SDA area, and between six and 12 in the Highlands and Islands. That must leave little room for trade unions, local authorities and indeed the wider community, whose members ought to be able to make an enormous contribution but will be left to struggle in through the side door.

To understand my doubts, the Secretary of State need only consult his own original White Paper on Scottish Enterprise. A much-quoted passage from paragraph 3 referred to the research carried out for the then Training Commission, which showed that

> "less than one in three of those employers asked had a training plan and even fewer had training targets for their labour force. Less than half of the workforce covered by the survey received any training at all in 1986-87."

Of course we need the important input from the commercial and industrial sectors, but we should not hand them exclusive jurisdiction when they have not even shown enough interest to plan their work force requirements. How can we assume that they will make an excellent job of other people's?

I know about the recent interviews and press publicity concerning the consortia. I do not make too much of the fact that Miss Kay Stratton was involved, as I do not know how influential she was in the evolution of the scheme; what strikes me as important is that she is from the Department of Employment, and was, I believe, a personal adviser to the late lamented Secretary of State. I do not know whether she holds the same position with his successor.

Then there was Mr. Brian Wolfson, chairman of Wembley Stadium—which did not, in my view, make him a particularly relevant or sympathetic figure. I know that the Secretary of State will wish to remind me that others too were involved: there were, for instance, Sir David Nickson and Alistair Mair of the CBI, whose dislike of devolution is a source of constant wonder to me. He must feel very uncomfortable while helping to preside over what, if the Secretary of State is correct, constitutes an element of devolution.

There was also my old school companion, Mr. Angus Grossart: I think that the House will wish to congratulate him on his recent award of a CBE, clearly well earned. I note that one of his first tasks was to interview Sir Michael Herries, a figure not unknown to the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). I gained some amusement from the idea of a very junior member of the Royal Bank of Scotland board interviewing its chairman to find out whether he was a fit and proper person to run an enterprise

company. It was probably quite a testing little exchange, but I think that it was testing for Mr. Grossart rather than for Sir Michael.

I am entirely prepared to accept that many people are allowing their names to go forward, although some of them may be guid familiar and guid predictable. I note that Sir Norman Macfarlane has had to be slapped down by the Minister of State because, in his capacity as chairman-designate of the Glasgow company, he suggested that his bailiwick—I use the term advisedly—should include Bearsden and Eastwood. I am indebted to the *Glasgow Herald* for the information that he suggested half jokingly that the new company should be called "Glasgow Corporation": clearly he has ambitions to become the Pat Lally of Scottish Enterprise.

Then—surprise, surprise—there was Ian Wood of the John Wood Group, and Sir Charles Fraser, who I understand will head the operation in Edinburgh. I had a quick look in the most recent edition of "The Directory of Directors", and discovered that he currently holds 48 directorships. If we add Scottish Enterprise, he will have 49, one for each Labour Member—a splendid idea.

I do not want to make too much of the matter, but I feel that there will be problems over the time and commitment that such people will be required to give Scottish Enterprise. Although I do not doubt that they will set out with the best of intentions, there is a danger that the arrangements will degenerate into a board meeting once a month, and the equivalent of a report to non-executive directors. I also fear that the consultants will have a field day. No doubt Conran Roche and Peat, Marwick, McLintock are already hard at work, and they will be followed by many others.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) will probably point out later in the debate, it is likely that a raft or horde of sub-contractors will all be asking for the right to provide places, and any real innovation and control will be extremely loose.

Sir Donald McCallum of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) voiced his worry about fragmentation in a speech on 8 December. Many others have made the point that the dangers are real and genuine. There is a danger that the enterprise companies will become very much hyped by their considerable powers. We understand that they will be able to spend up to £250,000 on projects. That is the glitzy side of the job. They will also be able to compete by trying to attract major developments, such as the 14,000 jobs being created in Renfrew and yet another national stadium which has been offered to Paisley only in the last week or so. I foresee that competition of that kind will lead to fragmentation.

The Secretary of State must provide information in Committee about the contracts that are to be made with Scottish Enterprise, which are to last for three years. In my television exchanges with the Secretary of State, I asked him whether the budgets would be controlled or monitored by Scottish Enterprise. I was told that I was mistaken, and that there would only be contracts. I accept that, but I want to know how the contract will be monitored. Will there be sanctions for non-performance? Can the contract be broken and taken away? I do not know the answers to those questions. Before we hand over to a self-selecting and largely self-appointed group of business men a public budget which, according to the Government, could in some areas be as high as £70 million or £80 million, we are entitled to know a great deal more about it. For obvious reasons, it will not be a short Committee stage. The Scottish Office will have to tell us how independent Scottish Enterprise will be of the Scottish Office. Very real restrictions concerning training, economic powers and directions are written into a number of clauses. Those restrictions may already be enshrined in the 1975 legislation and are being repeated in the Bill. We shall want to know how the powers will be exercised.

We shall also want to know how independent of the Department of Employment the Scottish Office will be when it comes to training. I gather from the Secretary of State's rather evasive answers today that the Department of Employment will be very much the dominating partner. Most of the Scottish Enterprise companies will simply be implementing established Government policy, which will be overseen by a national task force, in which Sir David Nickson is bivouacked as a nominal and token Scot.

If the Secretary of State thinks that I am the only one who has these worries, I intend to bother him with the views of one of those who enthusiastically supported the concept—Mr. Hamish Morrison of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry). According to a report in *The Scotsman*, he said:

> "Now we have this Scottish Enterprise model. Is it really going to be a decision-making body in its own right? Or is it going to be a retailer for schemes that are devised somewhere else according to different perceptions?"

According to *The Scotsman*:

> "Mr. Morrison said that he believed that the devolution of training proposed was more apparent than real and that Scottish Enterprise would be no more than a cheerleader for nationally constructed schemes."

He may be right. If so, it puts a different complexion on what the Secretary of State told us.

I do not intend to labour the resources issue. We shall have a go at it in Committee. We are told that about £500 million will be available for the whole shooting match. It is an impressive figure, but it is a standstill budget, an amalgamation of the status quo. I want to know whether the Secretary of State can do better than that.

I remember, because I always listen with attention to the Secretary of State, that when he appeared with Mr. Jonathan Dimbleby in "On the Record" he gave a clear hint that a good deal more money would be available than simply an amalgamation of existing budgets. We should like to know what, when and how much. I am not encouraged by the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill, which refers to the financial implications as being broadly equivalent to what they are at present. It is not a pledge which gets the pulse racing.

We want devolution, but we do not want a pretence at devolution to be paraded before the people of Scotland. Devolution must mean some form of democratic control. At the very least, it must mean a genuine measure of community involvement. I am not convinced that either of those conditions has been met. The very opposite is the case.

Something is fundamentally wrong with the proposal. It creates a new establishment that is narrowly based and unrepresentative. I do not doubt the genuine interest of those who are volunteering, but they are setting out on an uncertain course towards ill-defined objectives. I cannot get out of my head the phrases in the original White Paper about putting the employers into the driving seat and

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giving them a sense of ownership. I am not in the business of doing that. I want a genuine partnership and genuine co-operative effort.

When I consider the pressures that lie ahead, and the shake-up and shake-out that may come after 1992, I see that ministerial confidence about the proposal will be no great shield against economic reality. Only a week or so ago, the National Westminster bank suggested that during the next five years an ever greater gap would open up between the economy of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Scotland's share of United Kingdom output has declined over the last 32 years. I use that period because I do not want to be accused of partisan politics. In 1988, it was down 8·2 per cent. Our share of employment is below our population ratio. If we had been able to maintain our share throughout that period, another 200,000 people in Scotland would be in employment.

Despite all that has been said, our economy has been in decline relative to the United Kingdom and relative, even more markedly, to Europe. So long as that is the position, it is not right to set out a path that is going in the wrong direction.

Of course we shall encourage people to make what they can of the scheme. It would be silly and Luddite to do otherwise. There is no question of boycotts, or of trying to hold back, or of putting a spoke in the wheel of any enterprise company. However, it would be wrong and irresponsible not to state our reservations. I do not believe that the scheme is a quantum leap, to quote the Secretary of State, or that it will banish the spectre of high unemployment, or that it will make the Scottish economy a leader in Europe. It has been launched on the wrong basis. It has been based to some extent on ideology and political calculation. It does not provide the right structure and it is not the most hopeful way to harness the full range of Scotland's talents. That is why the Opposition cannot support it.

6.17 pm

Mr. George Younger (Ayr): My Scottish colleagues may be somewhat surprised if I begin by saying that it is enormously refreshing to see the hon. Member for Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) still in splendid form. He does not seem to have lost any of it. I cannot, however, agree with his conclusion. He has done his best to justify the lonely position that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland described him as holding. All that he has said amounts to an enormous agenda for asking questions in Committee and examining the Bill throughout its passage, but he has said nothing that would remotely justify hon. Members in voting against the principle of the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman did not succeed in making a convincing case. The more he tried to make it, the more it appeared that the vast majority of people in Scotland, including all those who were instanced by my right hon. and learned Friend, are right to say not that they approve every detail in the Bill but that its general thrust is right. Many of its provisions have been awaited for a long time by those who are concerned with the Scottish economy, but they had to wait until my right hon. and learned Friend succeeded in finding the means to put them into effect.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The right hon. Gentleman, who has been responsible for the defence of the country, among other things, over the last few years must find it difficult again to assimilate the Scottish mentality. The Scottish people say that they want training to be under the control of Scottish agencies but that there ought to be a division between training and the very good and progressive role that is played by the Scottish Development Agency. The Secretary of State failed to refer to that honest assessment.

Mr. Younger: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but I am certainly not trying to get back into the Scottish mentality as I never left it. Our attitude has to be guided by the judgment of hon. Members on both sides of the House as to what will best bring together the various energies and enthusiasms of the Scottish industrial community to help better development and training. The hon. Member for Garscadden's comments can be summed up by saying that he is strongly in favour of devolution, provided that nothing is devolved to anyone.

I start by welcoming particularly strongly the fact that at long last the training function for Scottish industry will be clearly the responsibility of the Scottish Office and the Secretary of State for Scotland. That is not to criticise the great efforts that have been made in recent years, including the degree of devolution of responsibility that has been achieved. The utmost good will has been shown and great efforts have been made to tailor the training effort to the needs of Scottish particularities, but it has not got as far as we had hoped. Now that we have a United Kingdom training policy with its Scottish component properly situated in the Scottish Office under the control of the Secretary of State—a member of the Cabinet of course—we have achieved the desire of many people in the Scottish economy. It comes at an appropriate time. At no time has the improvement of training, the widening of its scope and a change in attitude towards training been needed more than now.

Despite all that has been done in recent years to transform training—and the situation is completely different from what it was even 10 years ago—as a nation we still do not really identify or understand the cultural importance of training to our jobs. To some extent, we are still a nation of amateurs who admire the person who can get by and tend to look sideways at the person who is so meticulously trained for what he does that he works really efficiently and methodically all the time. That is a matter of our national attitude which goes way back in history. A closer relationship between the Scottish community and the organisation of training will be a quantum leap, as my right hon. and learned Friend suggested, and will certainly represent a major shift in attitude of everyone in the Scottish economy to the importance of training.

Training is overwhelmingly important. No business, large or small, can afford to continue its operations without paying close attention to training. Even the smallest firm has to find a way of taking part in it and making sure that its training is of the highest standard. I should like to pay tribute to Bill Hughes for the way in which he produced the scheme and catalysed it into what my right hon. and learned Friend has put into the Bill. Of course it has widespread support throughout Scotland. That is quite remarkable and is a great encouragement to those involved in it. I am sure that when they get down to work they will be backed up with a wide range of support.

Much of the debate so far has been concerned with the local enterprise companies. My right hon. and learned Friend had a very good point when he made it clear that if one does not approve of the idea of enterprise companies, certainly in the Scottish context—I do not know anything about the Welsh context which has been mentioned—one has to explain why it would seem sensible to continue the divide between industrial development and promotion generally and training, which is such a vital part of it. Over the years perceptions of training, the ability to provide training and the quality of training have steadily taken a more important role in industrial promotion, and particularly in attracting industry from outside Scotland. It is taking an even more important role now as in many cases industries which are trying to find a place to settle find that the real barrier is not sites, because sites are available, or finance, because there is finance, including grants in some areas, to back them up; the limiting factor is almost always the availability of skilled labour. That is very much the case today even in areas of high unemployment. On that score, the local enterprise companies will bring together promotion and training and that should be undertaken by local business people.

The hon. Member for Garscadden is among those who are dubious about control of the scheme being in the hands of local people who have been selected from local areas in Scotland. One of the great secrets about the success of the SDA has been the extraordinary efforts that it has made —very successfully—to involve in its work every sort of other body, interest, people, units and firms. In recent years, it would never have made such remarkable achievements by being a public enterprise authority only and trying to do things from above. It has achieved them overwhelmingly in co-operation with local authorities and private enterprise.

It is an extraordinarily good time to make such a change, to look at the enormous successes in the past few years, and to look to the future for the changes that may be needed to do even better. Of course there are still numerous problems in our economy. Of course there are still parts of Scotland where unemployment is higher than it should be. The main reason for that is that the people who are unemployed are not being trained effectively. That is not their fault; it is our fault over many years.

However, irrespective of that, the Scottish economy is incomparably different and incomparably better than it has been in the past. It has a better record on growth and productivity. It has one of the best records in the United Kingdom for the earnings of people in employment. There are increasing numbers of people in employment in Scotland. For most of the past year there has been the largest ever number of people at work in Scotland.

All those factors suggest that the Scottish economy is in a very good state. That is the overwhelming impression one gets from talking with Scottish business people running large and small businesses throughout the country. The CBI, the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) and many further afield have confirmed that the current climate for business in Scotland is very good, and that optimism and confidence are high throughout Scotland. It is sad and unfortunate that, because that has not had anything like the presentation that it ought to have had, many people in Scotland do not feel the remarkable pride that they should take in a Scottish economy which has been doing extremely well compared with most others in Europe.

I do not think that we should give the Bill a Second Reading today without referring to the record of the SDA and the HIDB. Although I hope that many of their functions and people will continue for a long time in future under a new name if the Bill is passed, nevertheless it is still a good opportunity to look at the achievements of the SDA.

The general format of the SDA changed quite substantially in the early 1980s and was brought into a much more private enterprise context. Some criticised that as a retrograde step and thought that it would not do so well as a result, but quite the reverse has been the case. We should pay a warm tribute to it for the immense efforts that it made to change the context in which it did its business. It moved from its offices in Glasgow into the community to join not only private enterprise, which was an extremely important part of its work, but local authorities, regional authorities and district councils. Many people who work for the SDA can speak of the difficulties that they had in persuading some local authorities to co-operate with them, but they succeeded in getting that message across and many people and local authorities in Scotland have been thoroughly converted to the fact that they can do effective business with the SDA.

There is no better example of that than the city of Glasgow. This is its year of culture, but that is something smaller than the enormous transformation in the fabric, spirit and everything that has gone on in Glasgow for the past few years. Overwhelmingly the SDA has not only contributed but has taken the initiative. Perhaps it was essential for somebody to do that, but all the big initiatives in Glasgow had their origins in the SDA, such as the exhibition centre, which undoubtedly was a private enterprise organisation but which was initiated by the SDA and for which it arranged funding from local authorities and the private sector.

There is no question but that the cement that held together the four different components of the Glasgow area eastern renewal and made it so enormously successful was the SDA. It offered its officials, skills and diplomatic skills and held them together in a way that nothing else could have done. It also had to give leadership on the environment to convince people whose sights understandably were set solely on the main objective; but that main objective of a better Glasgow with more jobs and better industries would not have been achieved unless the SDA had first put right the environment. Some of the worst eyesores in Glasgow were cleared up. The SDA introduced private housing into areas that needed, and got, a lift, and many parts of Glasgow are a monument to that. Although it did not have much to do with it, one can add to that the enormous boom in housing association activity in Glasgow. Much local enthusiasm was harnessed and driven by local people, which led to many marvellous homes of great quality and remarkably improved the appearance of the city in recent years.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Notwithstanding the enormous improvements in housing in Glasgow, including housing association housing which has recently been built in my constituency in particular, the massive problem of unemployment remains. Of the 20 worst constituencies for unemployment in Britain, no fewer than eight are in Glasgow. How will enterprise companies provide training when jobs are not available?

Mr. Younger: I respect the hon. Lady's feelings, and I am sure that I would share them were I in her position, but it does nothing for Glasgow not to recognise its enormous achievements. Unless we recognise what has been done, why it has been done and by whom, it is most unlikely that we shall be able effectively to tackle the next stage of solving the worst problems. As the hon. Lady rightly said, there is still much to be done in Glasgow, but it is no good turning our backs on what has been done and belittling it. One should be proud of it, and I believe that Glasgow is; that certainly is the impression that one gets from talking to anyone in it.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to what I said at the beginning of my intervention. If he reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will find that I acknowledged the improvements in housing in Glasgow. Far from ignoring them, I acknowledged them at the beginning of my intervention.

Mr. Younger: I do not dispute that, but I urge the hon. Lady to do more to solve the remaining problems and not to pretend that many have not already been solved. There may be lessons in that that we can all learn.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): The right hon. Gentleman said that we should recognise what has been done. I am prepared to recognise the role of the SDA in the Glasgow eastern area renewal—the so-called GEAR project—but he failed to mention the role of Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council, which was vital to the success of that project. With that in mind, will he impress on Ministers that local authorities have a vital role to play in Scottish Enterprise?

Mr. Younger: I emphasised that the SDA has been very successful in working with local authorities, and I pay tribute to it for that. It is unnecessary to suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend that local authorities have a vital role to play in Scottish Enterprise because he acknowledged that in his speech. The hon. Gentleman and I agree on that.

In Glasgow, the St. Enoch centre and the garden festival were enormously influenced by the SDA. We should pay a great tribute to Sir Robin Duthie and George Matthesson, who did much for the SDA over the years, and all the staff who worked with them.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) is anxious for me to mention that the transformation in Dundee has been no less remarkable than that in Glasgow. Anyone who has not visited Dundee for 10 years would hardly know what city he was in if he did so today. That has been achieved with the enormous co-operation of the local authorities, people with interests in Dundee and private enterprise, but the catalyst was the SDA, and no one can take that away from it. I hope that in Committee —I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State believes this—we shall ensure that the skills and expertise that the SDA has used so effectively are carried through as much as possible into the new organisation and given a new opportunity to flower.

In the interests of time, I have not dealt with the Highlands and Islands Development Board. It has achieved many successes and I have no doubt that its work is equally appreciated in the Highlands.

I must also mention the leg-up scheme—a strangely named scheme—which was the brainchild of the SDA. It has been used in many smaller communities throughout Scotland. As hon. Members will know, the catalyst for it was the SDA and much of the money was private, but one brought about the success of the other. It was a great success story, and I hope that Sir David Nickson, whom we wish every success in his work, will be able to capitalise on it.

The key element in much of the success of the SDA has been the skill and dedication of its staff. They are impressive people of great ability, and we must never take them for granted. There are two things that we must not take for granted when talking about them. First—I know that my right hon. and learned Friend will probably have difficulties with his colleagues and the Treasury on this —we must ensure that we pay what is necessary to get the best people to run the technical side of Scottish Enterprise, as we had with the SDA. I know from my colleagues that it is difficult to obtain agreement for that, but it is vital.

Secondly, we shall not keep the best people to do the jobs—even if we pay them as we should—if they do not feel that they are working in a team in which their peers are of similar quality. These people are mobile and very much in demand. I am sure that Sir David Nickson wants the teams working in Scottish Enterprise to be of as high a quality as those who have worked with such success in the SDA.

I agreed with the hon. Member for Garscadden when he said that the Scottish new towns were a remarkable Scottish success story. They have always been different from the new towns south of the border. In most cases, they have been outstandingly successful. Over the past seven years, no less than 40 per cent. of inward investment by value has been attracted to our new towns. I know from visiting many overseas companies which were thinking of coming to Scotland that one could talk as much as one liked—and I did—about the opportunities everywhere in Scotland but that there was an enormously strong pull from the new towns because companies liked what they saw there.

Some of the lessons have spread beyond the new towns and other areas have benefited. The achievement of 40 per cent. by value is impressive and over 30 per cent. of jobs has been provided by the new towns. The hon. Member for Garscadden touched on that lesson.

Mr. Ingram: The right hon. Gentleman will remember that when he was Secretary of State for Scotland he issued a policy statement on the housing aspects of the new towns. He said:

> "Once the winding up process begins housing still held by a corporation will be transferred as soon as practicable to the District Council within whose boundaries the town is situated."

It was not long ago that he made that statement, but I assume that he has changed his mind as he now supports the Government's policy. What has caused him to change his mind? Does he accept that it should at least be an option for the tenants of development corporations to choose the district council if all the houses are not to be transferred to the same district council?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate that, but, having read the Bill carefully, I believe that it contains that option. The hon. Member for Garscadden also said that he assumed from the Bill that those possibilities were not ruled out. People

will be able to exercise choice. I do not know how practical it will be for each householder to exercise a different preference from his neighbour, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to tell us what options are in the Bill. I assume that tenants will have options and that is certainly in keeping with the enormous change that has taken place in Scottish attitudes to homes in the past few years. That is especially true of the new towns. More than 50 per cent. of people in the new towns have elected to become home owners, which shows a remarkable change of attitude in the past 10 years.

I have now spoken for long enough and I am grateful to the House for listening to me. The whole House should support the Bill and I hope that the hon. Member for Garscadden will think hard before he votes against the principle of the Bill. He has every right to try to alter it in Committee, and I am sure that he will try to do so, but there are no grounds for voting against the principle of the Bill. The Bill is another Scottish first and comes at a time when the Scottish economy is a pillar or success in western Europe. The Bill has a wide measure of support among the people of Scotland, as is shown by business people and others who have expressed their views.

6.43 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I shall not follow closely the speech of the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). He made a fairly substantial speech and clearly he is setting out his stall, as it were, to become Leader of the House of Lords. I am sorry to say that he will be disappointed because he will be shadow Leader for the Conservatives in the House of Lords. However, he has made such a good case for the new towns this afternoon that I intend to submit his name to the Committee of Selection so that he can be selected for the Standing Committee and can give us a hand in making the case for the new towns. I hope that I shall be appointed to that Standing Committee.

I shall not say a great deal in detail about the proposals that apply to Scottish Enterprise, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, but will confine my remarks to the new towns. In Committee I shall, of course, play my part in debating the other important matters.

My first interest in the new towns arose in 1967 when I was appointed a district officer for the National and Local Government Officers Association. My first job there was to deal with a problem in Cumbernauld. I was surprised 12 years later to discover that I was Member of Parliament for that new town. Throughout my 23 years' association with Cumbernauld and the other new towns, I have never doubted the mertis of the new town idea. Like the right hon. Member for Ayr, I believe that their record speaks for itself. I am proud of that, because new towns were set up by the 1945 Labour Government. They are a distinctly Socialist idea—and a very successful one at that.

At the end of the war, the great cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh had serious housing, social and environmental problems. It was clear that solutions could not be found within the context of those great cities and that there had to be another way forward. The new towns were one of the solutions. They offered green field sites, quality housing, jobs and a planned environment. The development corporations were instruments of economic intervention and no one can deny their success in that respect. I remember the right hon. Member for Ayr telling me in reply to a parliamentary question some years ago that about 70 per cent. of all inward investment to Scotland was located in the new towns. That achievement speaks for itself. The new towns continue to attract the new sunrise industries on which Ministers place such importance and the case for public sector development corporations is established by their record in that respect. The case for private sector development companies remains to be proven. I am sorry that the Government are motivated by their ideology in all that they do at present.

When he was Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was keen on selling off the new towns. At that time, the right hon. Member for Ayr showed more sense and resisted the winding up of Scottish new towns. He was right then and he would be right now if he were to say that the job for the development corporations remains, and that there is still much to be done in coping with unemployment and creating jobs in the new towns. That is best done by the development corporations, so I am sorry that, with the proposed timescale, the Government are determined to wind up the new town corporations.

By and large, the new towns built quality houses, although some mistakes were undoubtedly made. Some estates were badly planned and we have suffered as a consequence, but, on the whole, good use was made of the green field sites and public confidence in that housing is reflected in the high level of sales in the new towns.

I remind the House that the concept of selling houses in new towns did not arrive with Conservative rule. There was always a tenant's right to buy in the new towns. Although undoubtedly the tenants rights legislation changed substantially the terms on which that could be achieved, the principle that houses could be bought always existed.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I had the good fortune to be at the planning conference of landscape architects at which Cumbernauld was thought up. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is remarkable that there is nothing in any of the new towns that the corporations have built that is ever likely to be listed as something which we should preserve?

Mr. Hogg: I am not in a position to comment on other new towns and I have no doubt that hon. Members who represent other new towns will refer to the issue which the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised. By and large, the houses built in new towns are good and are selling. But I agree that there has been a disappointing lack of buildings of note and I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that we have not done as much as we might have achieved in that sphere.

I am sorry to say that the Government have not, for example, given the green light to a proposal by Cumbernauld and Kilsyth district council to build a proper civic centre for the town to replace the nasty prefabricated local town hall that was built by a previous SNP administration, the members of which have joined with the Tories in opposing the proposal to build a proper civic centre. We expect that of the SNP in Cumbernauld, though I assure the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), lest he attacks me, that I do not associate him with the SNP in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

There remains a case for new building. The lifting of the moratorium on new town building for which the Minister of State was responsible did not create the conditions to

[Mr. Hogg]

resolve the continuing problem of young people being able to find a home in the town in which they were born and raised.

Today in Cumbernauld there is a waiting list of 1,230. We have 37 single parents without homes and 325 single persons and 183 engaged couples on the waiting list. Indeed, 545 young people who were born and bred in the new town are unable to find homes there. They are not able to find a way into the private sector because of high interest rates, low pay and youth unemployment. That is why there is a strong case for a public sector new build programme.

Another problem for tenants is that the proposals in the Bill do not say that tenants will be given the choice of having the district council as their landlord, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out. I cannot understand the Minister's reluctance to offer such a choice. I understood that even under the new regime in Chester street—under the proposals of some strange people who have taken it on themselves to run the Conservative party and who are insisting on a peculiar ideology of their own—the Tories were in favour of choice.

We are simply asking that district councils be included in the choice available to tenants. If the Minister cannot assure us tonight that that choice will be written into the Bill, my hon. Friends and I will table amendments to that end in Committee. Such a refusal by the Minister would ignore opinion in the new towns. It would be wrong for the Government to ignore public opinion on an issue as basic and important as the future ownership of people's homes, and I hope that he will change his mind about what is proposed.

On the local government side, I note that the planning function is to go to district councils. That important shift is to be welcomed because, whatever may have been the achievements of the development corporations in attracting jobs and investment, they have not been popular as landlords and planning authorities. Indeed, we continue to face problems over their responsibilities in those respects, as other hon. Members who represent new towns will agree.

That is why we welcome the proposal to place planning matters in the hands of district councils. May we be told how and when the planning function will be transferred to district councils and whether financial assistance will be available for receiving authorities which will have to increase staffing levels to deal with the new responsibilities? Perhaps the Minister will answer those points when he replies to the debate or give an assurance that he will answer them in Committee.

The Bill is curiously silent on what is to happen to existing employees. In previous measures—for example, those which dealt with the reorganisation of local government—the interests of staff were clearly defined. Those provisions served Scotland well because proper arrangements could be made for the transfer of staff.

What arrangements will be made in this case for the continued employment of staff where functions are transferred? Will any of the arrangements that were employed in, say, local government reorganisation be introduced in this case? In other words, will arrangements be made to ring-fence the staff and will assurances be given that on wind-up staff will be absorbed in local authorities which take on additional functions? What arrangements will exist for severance payments, superannuation, pensions and so on?

I have been asking questions in wide terms rather than specifically because I appreciate that the Minister may have difficulty in answering them tonight.

Mr. Dalyell: They are important questions.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right to say that they are important, and at some stage they must be answered. If necessary, I shall table probing amendments to discover exactly what will happen to the staff. It is important that they are maintained in employment, right up to the point of wind-up, and a continuing job will remain to be done. It would not be in the interests of the new towns if skilled teams were lost. I warn the Minister that if he does not answer my questions tonight or if we do not receive satisfactory replies in Committee, I shall write seeking a meeting with him on these important issues.

I do not like what is being proposed for the new towns. It flies in the face of what new town dwellers and workers have expected and planned for in the last 40 years. Indeed, it flies in the face of all that was envisaged by those who pioneered the new towns idea and who went to live in new towns in the early days.

I am sorry that once again the Government have founded their views on their strange ideology to such an extent that they deny people choice. That is carrying matters too far. I would go as far as to say that the Bill reduces tenants' rights. As I understand it, that is not what the Government would describe as one of their objectives in previous legislation. I believe that the Bill's proposals place at risk the continuing economic achievements of the new towns and for that reason I shall oppose the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the debate started late. I ask hon. Members to keep their comments brief so that I can call many of those who wish to participate.

7 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the Bill. That will not surprise my colleagues on the Front Bench or Opposition Members. It is wise to integrate training and the economic regeneration of the two parts of Scotland covered by the two development agencies—the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency. I also welcome the fact that we shall control training in Scotland because the special Scottish aspects of training must be addressed.

The House and anyone who cares about what happens in Scotland must consider the awful fact that we have unemployment in some areas yet in others there is an enormous skills shortage. That shows that things have not been done right over many years. There will be a skills shortage because demographic changes will result in a 20 per cent. fall in the number of 18 to 24-year-olds by 1995. That is only five years away. Through the vehicle of the Bill and by the changes that we hope to make when it becomes law, we must address that problem.

The House will know that I recently spent a little time looking into the plight of the cardboard community in London. I was particularly interested in the position of

teenagers, although one could spend much time talking about other groups. The nation must face the fact that the family unit as many of us knew it when we were growing up is not the unit that is common today. It is breaking up in front of our eyes. More families are noted for breaking up than for stability. That has resulted in many teenagers leaving home. I shall not go into the reasons why they leave home; it is simply a fact that they do so. Some leave because they can no longer accept the conditions in their family home and others do so because they will not accept discipline from their parents. So they find themselves out in the big world.

Earlier today we heard of a pregnant 16-year-old who was looking for a house. We must address the problems of such people. It is no good saying that they should not happen because they do. I have some ideas about what we should do about them. It will be within your memory, Mr. Speaker, and that of other hon. Members that at one time large firms, particularly in London, had hostels to encourage young people to come to London to be trained to work in the company. That was before the second world war and immediately afterwards. Sadly, in the 1960s most of those hostels disappeared. If we still had them today at least we should have an opportunity to provide some sort of accommodation for young people.

Young people migrate mainly to large towns and cities, whether London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee or wherever, because they think that the opportunities to find work and accommodation will be greater. I should like the enterprise companies to encourage large and medium-sized firms there to provide hostel accommodation. Companies in my constituency tell me that they are desperate for young people but that there is no accommodation for them. I should like to think that the new training and enterprise companies would put together a package whereby the private sector, assisted by public funding, would find a way of providing hostel accommodation linked to a training commitment.

We should take the opportunity that the Bill provides carefully to consider skills training. For too long we have not considered it in sufficient depth. In the 1960s I played a part in establishing the training boards and I was proud of what we did. I was saddened at the way in which the boards drifted away from their original purpose of training. I, and others who were keen in the beginning, grew disillusioned. That is no reason for saying that we were wrong in what we attempted to do in the 1960s. If we had got it right, we should not today be facing problems of skills shortages.

We must ask why the taxpayer is prepared to pay for those who have the ability and good fortune to go into higher education. The taxpayer picks up the cost of all their training and education, yet any young individual who has tactile skills—the type of skills that are required for skilled work—does not receive the same support from the taxpayer. In recent years there has been the development of employment training, which now lasts for two years. As a result of the changes made by the Bill, we should develop three-year skills training programmes through the enterprise companies. If we do that and fund them properly, we shall effectively give every youngster the option of skills training or higher education.

By skills training I do not necessarily mean the narrow, highly technical skills but all skills. People who go into shopkeeping need good communications and human relations skills. We certainly need to develop human relations skills because such skills are sadly lacking. We must also develop management skills. Managing people is a highly developed skill and, sadly, that is another area in which we have not enhanced our reputation in the past 40 years. I should like skills training in its widest sense to be encouraged at all levels and the enterprise companies and new enterprise agencies to be developed.

I notice that the Government have set a target of 12 enterprise companies. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was right when he said that many individuals had come forward for these enterprise companies. I may add that the 12 companies will be in the Scottish Development Agency area. I apologise to the House if my main interest lies in the SDA area, but that is where my constituency is. It is not in the Highlands and Islands area although people in the Highlands area of my constituency say that it should be, because of the advantages, whether real or imagined, that exist in the Highlands.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman spoke about industrial training boards. Was not Mr. Robert Carr persuaded to introduce the Industrial Training Act 1964 because industrial firms refused to train their work forces? What sanctions can be used now, by way of the Bill, against such firms? The Bill will not be amended in Committee because the Government do not like to accept fair-minded criticism of their Bills. What sanctions can be used to persuade firms to train people instead of poaching them from other firms? May I also point out to the hon. Gentleman that unemployment and skills shortages can occur side by side?

Mr. Walker: I thought that I had made it clear that I realise that unemployment and skill shortages can occur cheek by jowl. I also understand the problems that companies face when the people whom they have trained are poached. I always thought that reflected on the training schemes that I ran in the companies for which I was responsible, and I never looked upon it as a down side. The benefit, I always thought, was that one kept the really good people. That was my experience, although I cannot speak for other organisations.

I am not as keen on imposing sanctions as I am on providing an environment in which people are encouraged to participate. The changing of attitudes is very important. We need to bring together enterprise, with which the SDA has been involved, and the Training Agency so that we can create arrangements that encourage both enterprise and training. The two have not always moved in tandem, and that has been part of the problem.

Had the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) been listening carefully, he would know that I suggested that training be paid for from the public purse. That may astonish him, coming from me, but I have advocated that throughout my adult life. I never understood why, if one went to university, the public picked up the cost, whereas if one wanted to be an engineer —the nation is desperately short of engineers—the cost of one's training must be borne entirely by one's industry or company. That has never struck me as a sensible use of national resources.

I regard the Bill as an opportunity to bring together the aims for which I have worked and to try to ensure that we train young people for the world of today and tomorrow. That is much more important than all the nonsense that is

[Mr. Walker]

talked and all the charades about defending jobs that should have gone a long time ago in industries that are out of date and no longer competitive. We should be encouraging the sunrise industries and encouraging young people to go into them. We must also encourage people to go to work where there are opportunities. In my constituency, that means going to work in tourism, and that is why I am so interested in the service sector, in which human relations skills are vital.

The Bill will bring together two essential parts of Scotland's development and future. We shall have to consider the details of the Bill in Committee, but I welcome the principles behind it.

7.12 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I listened to the Secretary of State using the same enthusiastic rhetoric this afternoon as he used in his statement on 26 July last year in enlarging on his plans for the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency. I am acutely aware, however, of the existence of clause 21, which allows for the dissolution of the SDA and the HIDB. Many of us still ask why that has to be the case. The Secretary of State has not yet made it clear why that has to happen, while the Bill is vague and imprecise and gives no idea of how the new agencies will work better than the old.

Why are the Government getting rid of the well-known and much-respected names of the agency and the board? Is it normal practice in the business world to drop a brand name that has proved itself and sold well? Time, money and effort are spent in establishing a name with which customers identify and in the private sector, particularly, the protection of names is considered to be a top priority. To substitute for the SDA and HIDB a phrase containing the overworked and desperately boring word "enterprise" shows a lamentable lack of understanding and foresight.

We have heard fulsome praise, and rightly so, for the work of the SDA from the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger). But everyone should be aware that the agency has gone through a period of uncertainty and that, as a result, the work force is severely demoralised. Programmes have not gone ahead and the number of staff who have left since 1987 gives great cause for concern. There is no doubt that we are talking about a politically determined change of direction. To achieve that change of direction, the Government are destroying instead of building on what is already there. The suspicion remains that the Bill is a move by the Government to get their own placemen into the structure. By selling the public assets of the SDA in a headlong ideological venture, the Government will reduce the influence of the public sector and benefit the few private business men in Scotland who still support them.

As the hon. Member for Ayr said, the SDA is the envy of many in England and has also been studied by many Europeans. It is admired for its flexibility, independence, creativity and effectiveness. The danger is that the Government are throwing it out in the interests of achieving short-term political goals.

We have heard much about training, and a highly skilled and competent work force is crucial for the economic and cultural well-being of Scotland. I, too, welcome the transfer of decisions about training from Sheffield, but the Secretary of State has still to reassure us that there will, indeed, be full devolution of responsibility for training from the Department of Employment to the Scottish Office. There must be no suspicion that the Department of Employment is resisting the long overdue decentralisation or blocking what the Secretary of State admits should be a Scottish solution to meet Scottish needs.

The Government have not yet established a satisfactory case for the merger of the SDA with the Training Agency. Organisationally it is a horrendous prospect, but if it must go ahead, it must boost the role of training in economic development and hasten the process of urban renewal, as well as encouraging a more dynamic and innovative approach to training. It is vital that the deployment of Training Agency staff should be decentralised. I am still not confident that our business men and women will want to become agents for administering Government training schemes for any length of time. The Government are placing a disproportionate emphasis on the need for the private sector to take the lead in the management and design of training. We need a review of existing training schemes to see whether they are suitable for Scotland's training needs.

We need more effective training for trainers. The experience of the youth training scheme and the employment training scheme shows that the quality and professional competence of trainers varies enormously. Equally important is the need for effective monitoring of training standards. The provision for the inspection of training agencies is absurdly small and can give scope for abuse.

The Secretary of State himself paid tribute to the work of the HIDB. Will the Minister of State explain how the HIDB warrants such a wholesale upheaval? It has already devolved its work and personnel, it has been serving the Highlands and Islands well over the past 25 years, and it has been keeping in close touch with the people. Why try to mend it when it is not broken?

Is the Secretary of State confident that local enterprise companies will be truly representative of the various geographical localities and businesses, including crofting and farming? Is he confident that the best of our business men and women will again want to be agents for administering Government training schemes and that small businesses will be properly represented? The majority must devote all their time and energy to keeping their own businesses going in the face of continuing high interest rates. Is the Secretary of State confident that local enterprise company representatives will travel hundreds of miles to attend meetings and to perform public services without remuneration; that board members will not reject applications if they consider them to be in competition with their own businesses; and that confidentiality, particularly of business accounts, will always be observed?

Is it not anomalous that agencies are intended to serve the needs of local communities, yet the Government's proposals contain no provision for accountability to them? Will the Secretary of State consider a substructure in large rural areas? Will he consider my constituency of Argyll and Bute, in which local enterprise companies are to represent Argyll and Bute, Arran and the Cumbraes? It is a vast area. It will be extremely difficult to have frequent meetings. The needs of Bute are quite different from those of Lochgilphead.

The Secretary of State talked about an increase in the population of the Highlands and Islands. He was correct, but he should not be misled. That increase did not occur because the indigenous people are staying and multiplying or because they are returning in droves. On the contrary; too many local people have been forced to leave because they cannot compete for housing, farms and crofts. They cannot compete with newcomers with overflowing wallets. Is the Minister aware that in many villages in Scotland one would be hard-pushed to hear a Scottish voice? That trend will eventually take its toll on the tourist industry.

It is clear that people in the new towns fear that the Government are riding roughshod over residents' freedom to choose the sort of organisation to which they wish to belong. The Bill does not give tenants a statutory right to transfer to a relevant district council. Many residents face an uncertain future. They do not trust the private sector to safeguard their interests. Nor does the Bill contain an obligation to address the needs of homeless people in new towns. There are still far too many homeless people.

Because of its vague and superficial nature, the Bill leaves many important questions unanswered. The Government are resorting to a simple-minded, dogmatic and impracticable solution. The Bill will be passed because the Government have a majority, but they must not kid themselves that it has been greeted enthusiastically everywhere. People in my area say, "Well, it is coming." I say, "It is coming, and we must make the best of it." They shrug their shoulders and are sceptical. The Bill will not help Scottish people by creating the environment, the infrastructure, the skills and the opportunities that will encourage them to live and work in their own area.

7.25 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) will not expect me to echo her remarks, particularly those about her own constituency. No one is suggesting that the Highlands and Islands Development Board is not doing a good job. What is suggested is a change of structure to incorporate the economic regeneration functions of the HIDB and the Scottish Development Agency with the functions of the Training Agency. When the White Paper was published, the SDA warmly welcomed Scottish Enterprise and the fundamental proposal that training and development functions should be integrated.

The Opposition's amendment is disappointing. It is much more negative than the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). He said, "We want reassurances about this and we want to explore points about that," and so on. His speech contained many markers for the Committee. However, the hon. Gentleman failed to mount a coherent argument for a rejection of the proposals. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State mentioned some points of general principle that have been taken by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. COSLA states that the general objective of integrating the Government's support for training and for enterprise creation is welcomed by the convention. The convention went on to state that local authorities have been committed to this approach in practice for some time.

Dr. Godman: One of the reasons why I almost instinctively oppose Government measures is the intransigence and hostility of Ministers to any fair-minded criticism in the form of reasonable amendments. Ministers are almost always hostile to the honestly awkward critics as well as to the awkwardly honest critics in the House.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has said that he is not prepared to consider proposals on their own merits. Sitting next to him is the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg). During the Comittee's deliberations on the Scottish education Bill, about 13 of his amendments were agreed as a result of reasoned argument with the Government. It is highly possible that the Bill will be amended in Committee.

Will the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) confirm that the approach to the subject that the Scottish local authorities maintain they have been adopting for some years is wrong? On behalf of the Labour party, will he say officially that the approach taken by COSLA and local authorities to the basic principle of integration is completely wrong? I suspect that he will not do so as he is in conversation with his Whip rather than listening to the debate.

I welcome the principle of the Bill for a number of reasons. Training is likely to be more and more important in the process of economic regeneration. Let us consider the recent changes in eastern Europe and think not of the political consequences but of the economic consequences. We all hope that those changes result in eastern European economies becoming more integrated with those of the European Community. Eastern Europe has rejected state Socialism and is moving towards the capitalist West. That means that there will be a whole range of new countries competing with Scotland, something that we should all welcome. At least, initially, they will be low-wage countries —but they will be competitors for inward investment. That is an additional reason why we must emphasise our strengths, and the greatest strength that we have is the skills of our people.

The hon. Member for Garscadden took a different line on resources from that of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie. If this morning's *Glasgow Herald* is correctly quoting his views, the hon. Member for Garscadden accepts that the Bill does not propose any change in the level of resources for the joint bodies, although he is arguing for a commitment to more resources. That is a perfectly reasonable position to take. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie puts forward the quite different notion that the Bill inevitably means a cut in resources to the new organisations. It does not.

The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to the boundaries for the local enterprise companies in west central Scotland. I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on their decision to reject the approach by the Glasgow consortium to change the boundaries in the greater Glasgow area. I hope that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie agrees, as the proposals created as much criticism in Clydebank and Milngavie as they did in Eastwood. The consortium was entitled to put forward those proposals, but there was a strong reaction against them. If my right hon. and hon. Friends had taken the other course open to them, there would have been considerable disruption to the existing plans for those areas. The fact that it would have meant a split in my own constituency is perhaps a parochial point

[Mr. Stewart]

—there were wider considerations than that—but my right hon. and learned Friend knows the reaction from the Eastwood district council and we congratulate him on a sensible and swift decision that ended what would otherwise have been a period of uncertainty.

As always, the Scottish economy faces a period of change. It must adjust to the changes resulting not only from the single European market but from demographic factors. The number of 18 to 24-year-olds in Scotland is estimated to fall by about 20 per cent. by 1995. That is an additional reason to concentrate on improving our skills.

I join hon. Members on both sides of the House in paying tribute to the new towns. They have been a dynamic and progressive force for change in the Scottish economy. We all accept that new towns cannot be new towns for ever; eventually they must revert to being the same type of community as other towns in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Garscadden is right to say that many points need to be explored in Committee. However, that is not the point of this debate, which is about the principle of the Bill, and on the principle there can be no doubt about how the House should vote.

7.35 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Unlike some of my hon. Friends, I oppose the principle of the Bill and will vote against it. The whole concept of the Bill was introduced when an idea entered the head of Bill Hughes, a director of Grampian Holdings and a vice-chairman of the Conservative party. He used that idea to attack public sector organisations such as the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board and to give a private sector lead to training and industrial regeneration in Scotland. Unfortunately, he took his idea to the Prime Minister, who was heard to say, "As Bill is one of us, I shall support it." It is unfortunate that as soon as the Prime Minister supported the concept our weak Secretary of State for Scotland was forced to accept the whole principle of the Bill.

I was surprised that the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) welcomed the principle of the Bill. I thought that at one time he was giving the funeral oration for the Scottish Development Agency, which will be killed by the Bill. I am willing to bet that if the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for Scotland, the Bill would not be introduced now. He would have followed the policy decision of his colleague the Secretary of State for Wales to separate the Welsh Development Agency from the training facilities. I congratulate the Secretary of State for Wales on maintaining his independence. I am disappointed in the Secretary of State for Scotland and his Minister of State for just accepting the diktat of a person who has never shown any interest outside his own during his whole period as head of an industrial establishment in Scotland.

That is nothing new. Not only is the vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland dictating to the Secretary of State, but the chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland is inside the Scottish Office as a junior Minister. However, I do not want to embarrass you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by mentioning the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) after all the trouble that the House has had today. The Bill has been designed by two people who do not represent the people of Scotland or the decent Conservatives—if there are any in Scotland—who will be affected by the Bill.

I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) say that there is a movement of officials and employees out of the Scottish Development Agency,. They are not moving out of the Scottish Development Agency because they are confident about their futures when the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament. I have found as a Member of Parliament—I am sure that this applies to my colleagues—that when one tries to contact officials or employees of the Scottish Development Agency about various matters, I am told, "We are sorry, Mr. Lambie, that person is no longer here". People are taking early retirement or moving on into the private sector to take advantage of the facilities that will be afforded to the private sector when the Bill is enacted. Those in the Scottish Development Agency show no confidence in their futures, and neither will the employees of the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Indeed, I am willing to bet—and I am not usually a betting man—that if the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament, Iain Robertson, the chief executive of the Scottish Development Agency, will also move on to new pastures. Knowing him in the past and his work both as a civil servant and as the chief executive of the SDA, I am certain that he will not put up with what will happen to the SDA when it is downgraded if the Bill is enacted.

To whom are we handing over the future industrial and training policies of Scotland? The answer is to the private sector—to the people who in the past have let down the people of Scotland over their industrial base and training facilities. Not so long ago Scotland and Scottish industry depended for its skilled craftsmen on our heavy industries. Unfortunately, we have few heavy industries left. Many of my hon. Friends represent shipbuilding or former shipbuilding constituencies. In the small town of Ardrossan, near where I stay, the Ardrossan shipyard is now closed. Every year it used to take on 100 apprentices and put out 100 skilled craftsmen to help the new companies coming into the area. The shipyards produced the skills, but they no longer exist and those that are still in operation no longer train apprentices. The same applies to the steel industry, the heavy engineering industry and the chemical industry.

The people who will man Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies are the very people who at present are not prepared to train in their own companies. That is a general statement and there are one or two exceptions to it. I refer, for example, to the chairman designate of my local enterprise company, the Ayrshire enterprise company Mr. John Hornibrook, the works director of Roché of Dalry, a man who has spent his entire life trying to get the companies in Ayrshire to put money into training, without much success. Although there are one or two exceptions, the majority of people appointed to Scottish Enterprise and to the local enterprise companies such as those in Ayrshire will be appointed by the Government. Yes, they will be Government appointees, placemen of the Conservative Government, appointed to carry out the Conservative Government's policies.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Ayr is no longer in his place. I hope that the Minister of State will not appoint to the Ayrshire enterprise board some of the right hon. Gentleman's friends because as far as I can see they are not interested in training. Most of them are

interested only in the honours list and in whether they will get the CBE or the OBE, which will be just another arm to their careers and reputations.

The only way in which we can achieve anything in training is by giving companies serious financial incentives to carry out their training obligations. We should also apply severe financial penalties to those companies which do not carry out their responsibilities, but which poach from companies that have spent money on training. If we do that, we shall make progress.

Both private and public industry should carry out their training functions and increase the number of their skilled craftsmen. However, they should do so without being incorporated into this new Government organisation.

Dr. Godman: I sympathise with my hon. Friend's serious reservations about privately led employment and training initiatives, because the Inverclyde Initiative, which is a privately led initiative, has done little or nothing for the people of the lower Clyde.

Mr. Lambie: I agree with my hon. Friend because I have experienced Taskforce and local enterprise groups. Because of the serious decline of employment potential in my area, I have always been a leader in trying to get some new Government initiatives. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) knows that when he served at the Scottish Office he helped me to set up the Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston enterprise initiative, which did little for the people in the area. However, such organisations certainly provided a lot of jobs for the people who will now be looking for jobs in the new organisations. It was always a case of jobs for the boys.

I shall vote against the Second Reading because the Government have included in the Bill their provisions to wind up Scotland's new town development corporations. Why? It seems strange that this Bill has two sections. One deals with the future of the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Scottish Development Agency and the Training Agency, but that is joined with the provisions to wind up the new town development corporations in Scotland. Why are the Government doing that? The answer is because they do not have enough Tory Members of Parliament to man the Committees on two Bills. The Ministers are punch-drunk with not only defending themselves against the likes of Bill Hughes and the hon. Member for Stirling, but with defending themselves against the people of Scotland also.

Two totally different subjects are being taken together in one Bill because the people of Scotland are not prepared to vote for Tory candidates. If by some unfortunate chance after the next election the people of southern England vote Conservative again and we have another Tory Government in the United Kingdom, we can honestly say that there will be no Tory Members of Parliament representing Scotland. What will the Government do then? How will they man the Committees? What about the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? The Government are in difficulties now, but they will certainly be in difficulties later if by some unfortunate chance the people in southern England are still as stupid as they have been during the past three general elections.

I represent the new town of Irvine. The people there are asking about what will happen to their housing when the new town development corporation disappears. My development corporation of Irvine will disappear in 1999 and I shall be lucky if I am around then. I shall certainly not be the Member of Parliament for Cunninghame, South then. By that time there will have been at least two general elections and we will have the possibility of a Labour Government. I say to the people in East Kilbride and Cumbernauld, whose new town development corporations are to be wound up quicker, that they might be caught before we have a new Labour Government, but by the time Irvine new town is wound up there will be a Labour Government and therefore the legislation being passed tonight will not apply to my area. The people in my area are asking what will happen to the houses that are still tenanted. There are more than 5,000 houses in Irvine new town: just over 1,000 have been sold and we are left with 4,000 tenanted houses.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Who is left with them?

Mr. Lambie: I shall listen to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, carry on and never mind the interjections by those who have just come in. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) was one of the best members of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs when I was its Chairman because he always did what he was told.

The people of Irvine are asking what will happen to those houses. I was interested that in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), the right hon. Member for Ayr looked down at his colleagues on the Front Bench and said that people in the new towns would surely be given the opportunity of choosing to go to their local district councils. In my case that would be Cunninghame district council. The Minister did not look, nod or give any sign of agreement with the previous Secretary of State for Scotland. Unlike my hon. Friends, I will not wait until this matter is discussed in Standing Committee. If the right hon. Member for Ayr was correct and the Government are to give the tenants a choice of going to their local district councils, I want the Minister to say now that his right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr was correct.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): If the hon. Gentleman can contain himself until my wind-up speech, I shall address the matter then.

Mr. Lambie: Usually, whenever we reach the wind-up speech we are told to wait until the Standing Committee. When one has been here long enough one has heard all these stories from Ministers.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): My hon. Friend makes an important point. I assure him that I know what the Minister's answer will be. When the Scottish Special Housing Association existed, we constantly asked the Minister to give the SSHA tenants the right to ballot to decide whether they wanted to go to the SSHA or to their local authority. If that had happened in Linwood, Erskine or such places the folk would have voted overwhelmingly to go to their district councils.

Mr. Lambie: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. When the right hon. Member for Ayr was Secretary of State for Scotland he gave the guarantee that when the Scottish Special Housing Association was wound up the houses would be handed over to the local authorities. Previous Secretaries of State from both the Labour and Conservative parties said the same. We know that Scottish

[Mr. Lambie]

Homes was set up to replace the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Minister of State, Scottish Office, who is present, reneged on the agreement and a private company was set up to administer the houses of the Scottish Special Housing Association.

The people in the new town houses are afraid because Scottish Homes not only gives people the right to buy their homes, which the Labour party accepts, but has the right to sell houses on the open market when they become vacant. Therefore, instead of a reduction in the housing waiting list in the Cunninghame area—which is now more than 4,000, with just under 1,000 in the new town—homelessness is increasing as Scottish Homes begins to sell houses that were formerly in the rented sector.

In a survey carried out by the Scottish Office, 59 per cent. of the people of Irvine said that, given the choice, they would rather be tenants of Cunninghame district council. Only 7 per cent. said that, at the wind-up of the corporations, they wanted to be tenants of Scottish Homes. Yet the Government are to transfer, against the wishes of the people, houses to Scottish Homes if they have not been sold off to some other private enterpriser. I speak on behalf of the tenants of the IDC houses in the new town of Irvine and ask the Government to ensure that tenants of the houses that remain at the wind-up, which I hope will never come because by that time we will have a Labour Government, will be given the choice to go to their local district council.

7.55 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): The Bill contains the most important reforms of training and economic development since 1974, when the Manpower Services Commission was established, and since 1975, when the Scottish Development Agency was established. The Scottish Development Agency was established by a Labour Government, so it was refreshing when the incoming Conservative Government of 1979 did not abolish it, as was widely expected. Instead, they adopted, adapted and developed it in a way that showed flair and proved extremely successful. Perhaps that shows that the party divide then was not as great as it is now, which is fitting.

As has been generally recognised on both sides of the House, the SDA has been a success. It has a high reputation both inside and outside Scotland, and has an imaginative and dedicated staff. One reason for that success has been that it has moved away from a policy of throwing money at lame ducks and moved instead towards being vigorous and successful in helping Scotland to develop its sunrise, rather than sunset, industries.

Speaking as a Member for an English constituency, albeit a Scottish Member——

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the hon. Gentleman, with his detailed knowledge of Scotland, tell us of any single lame duck at which the SDA threw money and to which he objected?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I was making the point that the SDA has moved away from that policy and towards different policies encouraging the new industries that Scotland has needed, rather than trying to throw money at the dying industries of coal and steel.

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman has just made that up.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I have not made it up. The SDA has moved towards the new industries that Scotland will need to rely on in future.

England does not have a similar agency to the Scottish Development Agency, which has caused some envy in English circles. It does not have an organisation fighting for English enterprise, and perhaps it should. Clearly it is right that the responsibility for training in Scotland should be devolved in Scotland. That proposal is not opposed by any hon. Member. Training should not be dealt with in Sheffield as it is now, and there can be no argument about that.

The question then arises as to where training should be dealt with in Scotland. The advantages of transferring the responsibility for training to the Scottish Development Agency are considerable. A single organisation, providing an integrated system of enterprise promotion and training, is more likely to produce the skills that business men need than would a separate body.

Another problem is that the demographic decline as a result of the end of the post-war baby boom—I lay claim to being part of that boom—will cause an extreme shortage of skills in Scotland. In the United Kingdom we are facing a shortage of skills which, unfortunately, is not faced by our competitors. That makes it all the more important that we should enhance the skills of the young people whom we have, quite apart from any natural desire to do that in any event.

It is vital that the training of our young people should be inextricably linked to the jobs that they will be required to do. It is right to transfer responsibility for that training to Scotland and to the body most closely concerned with investment in Scottish enterprise, and to treat the training not just as another investment but as the most important investment in Scottish enterprise.

For that reason the general secretary of the Scottish TUC welcomed the integration of training and development, and it is hardly surprising that the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency said:

> "We welcome, we endorse and support the visions and the principles in the White Paper. The SDA is throwing its full weight behind Scottish Enterprise and, in particular, the proposals that training and the development function should be integrated."

Mr. Graham: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that there is to be no new money for training in Scotland, yet private industry has an appalling record on training and the creation of apprenticeship? Not long ago the *Evening Times*, a well-known Glasgow paper, carried an article on the serious problems to be found in training schemes run by private companies. They were a disaster. One of my constituents, who is supposed to be training for his HGV licence, has been running about as a chauffeur, carrying private employers all over the place. That is not what he should be doing. We need new money to ensure that training can happen and that apprenticeships develop. Private industry will not lead the way. We need to see a better input from the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Hon. Members on both sides of the House have recognised the need for a far greater emphasis on training than in the past. I am not clear whether the

hon. Gentleman believes that only the Government should be responsible for training or that industry should place more emphasis on training. In 1978-79 about two thirds of the money that went into the Scottish Development Agency came from the Government and the other third came from business and the economy that it produced.

In view of the wide support for the changes that are being introduced in the Bill, in view of the support of the Churches, the trade unions, the SDA and the vast majority of the 420 representations that have been received, it is more surprising that the party, or parties opposite—I have now heard the Liberal party's view—have set their faces so firmly against it and, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, have stood in splendid isolation in opposing the Bill.

Mrs. Fyfe: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Scottish TUC is so concerned about the plans for training in Scotland that it has proposed setting up an independent body to monitor the carrying out of that training because it cannot trust the Government to do that properly?

Mr. Arbuthnot: The STUC has generally welcomed the Bill. Obviously, it disagrees on some issues, as do many others who have produced representations generally in support of the Bill. But the broad feeling in Scotland is that the Bill and the White Paper are along the right lines. The Labour party is sadly isolated if it says that the principle of the Bill is flawed. But is the Labour party saying that? Do Labour Back Benchers agree with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the Bill should be opposed? When my right hon. and learned Friend asked whether it was the detail rather than the broad principle of the Bill that was objected to, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) nodded his head. In that case, he and his colleagues should examine their conscience, support the Bill on Second Reading and propose detailed amendments in Committee. If they do not do that, they will risk being accused of petty opposition for the sake of it, and rightly so. They also risk being trampled in the rush of local authorities and local trade unions eager to take part in the local enterprise companies. They are putting forward applications to take part. If the Labour party is not to be trampled in that rush, it should consider changing its stance. The local trade unions and local authorities are eager to endorse the principle of this excellent Bill.

8.5 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I do not intend to comment in detail on part I of the Bill which deals with Scottish Enterprise, but I fully endorse the points made in relation to that by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). I represent the first Scottish new town and I have lived in East Kilbride for the past 20 years. Therefore, I want to confine my remarks principally to part II, which deals with the winding up and dissolution of the new town development corporations.

The residents of the new towns expected and deserved something better than an imprecise three-clause addition to another piece of legislation, sneaked out in an unacceptable way over the Christmas and new year holiday period. The way in which that was done, and the lack of detail contained within the measure relating to the new towns, treats the 25,000 people who live in the new towns with nothing short of contempt.

The Secretary of State and the Minister with responsibility for the new towns appear to forget that Scottish new towns are places where people are born, brought up, and educated and in which they live and work. They are total communities in which one in 20 of the Scottish people live and work.

Why have we not been presented with a proper piece of legislation which takes account of the ongoing housing needs of the new towns? Why have we not been presented with a Bill which takes account of the benefits gained by having the overall community environment planned and run by bodies with a degree of democratic accountability? Why have we not had a piece of legislation which recognises the economic benefits to be gained from having a democratically accountable body responsible for the economic development of the new town areas? Why should five new towns find themselves being privatised and run differently from every other town, city or community in Britain?

Two key areas give major cause for concern—housing and economic development. The future of new town tenants and those who would have expected to be housed by the new town development corporations in the future remains decidely uncertain. The real fears and worries of tenants will be increased by what the Bill does not say as by what it does say.

As other hon. Members have said, in the past year the Government have commissioned an independent survey on the attitudes of new town residents to housing choice within the new towns. It makes salutary reading. I shall not go into that in detail, but I want to take one prime aspect. In reply to one question, two thirds of tenants said that the district council would be their preferred landlord on wind up. Only 8 per cent. said that they would choose a housing association, 9 per cent. a housing co-operative, 5 per cent. Scottish Homes and 1 per cent. a development corporation buy-out. No one said that they would choose a private landlord. That is a clear expression of tenant choice—something that the Government claim is their overriding and highest priority.

If the Government are so committed to tenant choice, why does not the Bill contain a simple clause stating that at any time prior to or during the winding up process tenants' wishes will be respected and that they will be able freely to choose their own landlord? One simple clause would put at ease the worries of all tenants living in development corporation houses. I suspect that such a clause was not inserted because the Secretary of State and the Minister knew that tenants would choose their district councils and did not want to offer them that choice.

At present, development corporations in East Kilbride, Glenrothes and Livingston are planning to transfer their housing stocks to private management agencies, and they have not asked tenants for their views on that development. Recently I tabled a parliamentary question asking the Minister whether he would be prepared to advise or instruct development corporations to consult tenants prior to any transfer to management agencies of new town housing stock. His simple and stark answer was no. Tenants are being given little choice, and the management structure is being transferred over their heads.

We are left with a public housing authority that takes no account of tenants' wishes, and a Secretary of State and Minister who are not prepared to defend tenants' interests. When the Bill is enacted, I envisage the Secretary of State

[Mr. Adam Ingram]

establishing in each new town an office on whose door will be the sign "Tenants' choice—no inquiries please." Even the people of Romania are not prepared to put up with that kind of thing any more. What is happening even before the Bill is on the statute book will occur to an even greater and more dramatic extent when it is law. Tenants will have the choice only of accepting what the Government say is right for them—and if they do not like it, they can get out. I refer to people who have lived for years and decades in new towns, and who have brought up their families there and are now seeing their children marry and bringing up their own children.

The Bill is silent on which body will be responsible for new towns' ongoing housing needs. Existing new build programmes are inadequate to meet the current requirements of new town areas. The situation has deteriorated steadily over the years and seems likely to become an even greater problem in the years ahead. Figures from Shelter reveal an alarming increase in the number of homeless and the extent of waiting list problems in new town areas. In my own new town of East Kilbride, the number of homeless doubled in the seven years between 1981 and 1988—increasing from just over 2,000 to more than 4,000—as a consequence of Government policies. No one else can give development corporations the authority to build new houses. Such instructions have not been forthcoming in recent years, even with the lifting of the moratorium after considerable pressure was placed on the Scottish Office by Scottish local authorities and tenant representatives.

The Bill makes no provision either for local authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations to the homeless and to other special needs groups. The proper solution would be to provide for a transfer of the relevant special needs housing stock to district councils. That would set to rest the worries and fears of those already living in special needs housing and the many on the waiting lists for such accommodation—as well as of the many thousands of homeless in new towns who are searching for a home within the community but cannot obtain one because of circumstances outwith their control.

There is no mention in the Bill of the way in which the relative success of new towns in recent years will be maintained. Other hon. Members have mentioned that in recent years 40 per cent. or more of inward investment in Scotland has gone to new town areas. That success is built on long-term planning, investing for the future, and the careful use of public assets in developing new town areas. Those assets have been developed at considerable public expense and managed successfully over the years through a form of democratic accountability in partnership, to a greater or lesser extent, with local authorities. That formula for success and the experience that has been built up will now be cast aside.

Although the Bill says nothing about the successors to the development corporations, the White Paper does. It makes it clear that the successor bodies will be run on a private sector basis and will be profit driven. Instead of the existing bodies dedicated to long-term development, there will be groups of entrepreneurs with an eye on the main chance and a fast buck who will be more dedicated to getting what they can out of new towns—probably by asset stripping—than to what they can put into them. Now is the wrong time—with increasing competition for inward investment not just within Britain but across Europe, and for economic development—for the Government to throw away the major business expertise that exists within new towns and to dispose of well integrated, developed and properly planned industrial and commercial assets to the highest bidder. Even then there is doubt as to whether they will go to the highest bidder.

The Bill's failure to provide for local authority involvement in the successor bodies also gives cause for concern. Local authorities will have a role, albeit minimal, in Scottish Enterprise and in local enterprise companies, but they will be denied a similar involvement in local development boards. Why should that be so? Why should local authorities or democratically elected councillors be denied a place on the local enterprise boards, when there is acceptance that at least some form of local authority representation should be permitted in respect of local enterprise companies? In the case of East Kilbride and Glenrothes, there is a fear that the development corporations will be wound up before Scottish Enterprise is up and running and has a chance to establish itself. To subject new towns to a changing and uncertain environment could prove disastrous not just for their areas and their wider communities but for the whole of the Scottish economic scene.

Everyone associated with new towns takes pride in the housing, social, industrial and commercial environment that they provide. Those of us who live in new towns are proud to do so, but nothing in clauses 30, 31 and 32 gives cause for hope in their future. Those three clauses are analogous to the three-card trick, but instead of it being a case of finding the lady, it is a matter of finding the Government's commitment to democratic accountability and freedom of choice. We all know what happens to the lady in the three-card trick: it is shown briefly and then palmed by the con man.

Fortunately, the people of the new towns will not be conned by the Secretary of State. They know that they will not have even a chance of glimpsing freedom of choice in respect of housing or democratic control over their communities' commercial and industrial assets. That is why the people of the new towns strongly oppose the Bill and why I, as a new town Member of Parliament, give them my full support.

8.18 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The debate had an unusual start, when the speech of the Secretary of State for Scotland was disrupted by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I was glad that the hon. Member for Tayside, North did not get shown the red card—not so much because we would have missed his speech later but because, rather embarrassingly, I would have been constrained for the first time to support Mr. Speaker's ruling on such a matter.

The right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), making one of his first speeches as a Back Bencher on a Scottish subject, paid a handsome tribute to the work of the Scottish Development Agency, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, and new town development corporations. His tribute was so handsome that I wonder why he so enthusiastically supports legislation that abolishes those institutions. That is an important point. Opposition Members are entitled to be certain, before we

endorse or support the legislation, that what replaces those institutions will be more effective than the SDA, the HIDB and the new towns have been. Criticisms along those lines are not carping and minor but substantial and major.

There is no doubt that the legislation has been oversold and that occurred from its genesis when the progenitor of the scheme, Mr. Bill Hughes, the vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland, boasted that it would eliminate Scottish unemployment within a matter of years. If claims of that sort were to be brought to fulfilment, there would have to be something in the scheme—either in its finance, its function or its performance—that would allow such extravagant claims a semblance of reality. If we consider the issues in turn we will find nothing in the legislation that could meet such an ambitious target.

As other right hon. and hon. Members have pointed out, no new money is being made available for investment work or training in Scotland. The best that can be said is that finance under the legislation will be broadly equivalent to what is available at present. There is a real danger that a diminution of finance is on the agenda. One might reasonably expect that private employers taking a larger funding role in training in the future is part and parcel of the Government's logic of privatisation of the training services.

Opposition Members are entitled therefore to ask for guarantees that the hints of an expanded budget that the Secretary of State for Scotland was prepared to give in a television programme will be transformed into legislation. Perhaps, when the Minister replies, he will tell us what will happen to the funding pattern of the SDA, the HIDB and training under the Scottish Enterprise proposal.

Nor is there any great change in the functions that will be undertaken by the new system. The Secretary of State has made great play of the devolution of the training services to the new Scottish Enterprise organisation. As other hon. Members have said, when one analyses those training services, one sees that 95 per cent. of the funding will remain dominated by programmes determined by the United Kingdom Department of Employment. All the Secretary of State had to say when he was questioned about whether that represents a "Scottish solution to Scottish needs" was that it would be a problem if Scottish qualifications were different from those in England. Does that not also apply to the present Scottish education system? There does not seem to be any problem with Scottish labour mobility into England—just the opposite. The key priority is that training qualifications should be appropriate to the needs of the economy in which they function.

If the scheme was a genuine Scottish solution to Scottish needs there would not be a superficial devolution of training programmes but the right to evolve training programmes that are appropriate to Scottish conditions.

When we consider the likely performance of the new agencies, we are entitled to ask why the new set-up will be better than the old one. For example, the Scottish Development Agency has just undergone a major reorganisation and decentralisation of its functions. How will the investment function of Scottish Enterprise perform better than the SDA, with a similar decentralisation by area?

A number of hon. Members have criticised certain aspects of the SDA's performance in the past, but on the whole, and one can only judge these things in that way, it would probably be the virtually unanimous view of the House that the SDA has performed well under the circumstances. Why should we expect the new organisation to perform its investment function better than the SDA or the HIDB did in the past?

We already know that 95 per cent. of the training schemes will be United Kingdom dominated. The Government are placing their faith in the intervention and introduction of private sector employers into the organisation. They will dominate local enterprise schemes by a ratio of two thirds to one third. What is the training track record of that section of the Scottish community and why does it lead us to expect that their performance within Scottish Enterprise will be dramatically better than their performance within their own companies? The Government claim that they have a consensus on the proposals, but I do not see that one exists. There is certainly a consensus in favour of devolution of training to Scotland, but, as Hamish Morrison, chief executive of the Scottish Council has said, that is "more apparent than real."

There is a large measure of agreement that there should be integration of training and investment because they are closely interrelated. However, that should not mean that the existing institutions—the SDA and the HIDB—should have to be dismantled. Why was it not possible to use the new area structure of the SDA as the basis for the new organisation, and, underneath that, along the model of the present local enterprise trusts, have agencies that would deliver local training needs from the training budget?

In my constituency the proposal from Banff and Buchan Enterprise made the important point that training needs are not likely to be identified best on a Grampian level. They are more likely to be identified in the same way that local enterprise trusts identify them at the moment —at a really localised level with detailed knowledge of the local economy. We could have kept the best aspects of the SDA and its structure as well as integrating the training requirements.

Any agreement in principle that there may have been at one time about the proposals has been shattered by the total imbalance in the structure of the proposed organisation. There is a real danger and a suspicion that these proposals will mean the replacement of the professionalism of the SDA with the patronage of the Conservative party.

The Secretary of State for Scotland said that he does not appoint local enterprise companies. That is true. He appoints the committee that vets the local enterprise companies. He also appoints Scottish Enterprise, which monitors the performance of local enterprise companies. Therefore, there is a real danger that that is effectively an extension of Scottish Office patronage into an area which, in the past, was administered professionally.

The SDA and the HIDB are the latest in a list of Scottish institutions that have been attacked by a range of policies. Education local authorities and the Health Service have also been subject to reorganisation and restructuring, often for no good reason, at the hands of the Government.

We should consider why the two thirds bias towards the private sector is wrong. First, it is wrong because it fails to realise that local employers are in competition for scarce labour resources. Take the Grampian example. There will be a maximum of eight private sector local employers in the new Grampian Enterprise organisation. What about the many other private sector employers within the region?

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

Will they not have any input into the organisation? Secondly, the scheme devalues the role of local authorities. They are not just major employers; they are major providers of training services through local authority colleges. Again, in the Grampian example there is a maximum of four places available to non-private sector sources. Therefore, the odds must be against even one councillor from, say, Banff and Buchan becoming a member of the new organisation. The proposals belittle the legitimate training role of local authorities.

The third problem is the lack of effective trade union representation, particularly in training. There is a potential conflict of interests between employers, and between employer and employee. The union movement should be properly represented to ensure that people are confident that they are being trained to enhance their skills, and not because it suits one part of the private sector. There will be no consensus support for the Bill until the present proposals, which are biased in favour of the private sector, are replaced by proposals that provide for a genuine partnership between private sector, local authorities and trade unions.

I agree with much of what was said about new towns by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg), although I cannot endorse his architectural attack on the Scottish National party. In view of his past comments on such matters, the hon. Gentleman probably did not give us the complete picture of Cumbernauld's architecture, and in any case I do not know a great deal about that subject.

One of the tenants who lobbied hon. Members today gave me a copy of a letter sent on behalf of the Minister of State in June 1988. The letter dealt with the position of new town tenants following the abolition of the new town corporations, and stated—as Ministers have stated before—that the Secretary of State

"will take full account of the views and wishes of the tenants concerned before reaching his decision."

Various surveys and expressions of opinion have made two things clear. First, in general the district council represents the most favoured landlord for new town tenants; secondly, private sector landlords were the least popular choice—so unpopular, indeed, that they barely registered in the surveys. I feel that we are entitled to a definite statement that each new town tenant will at least be given the option of moving into district council tenure when the new town corporations are finally wound up.

Significantly, the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Ayr, did not seem to be aware of the amount of evasion, convoluted logic and survey-rubbishing in which the Minister of State has been engaged. The Minister's statements have led us all to suspect that district council tenure is the last option that he wants to offer, but we believe that the new town tenants should be given the freedom of choice that they were originally promised.

I want to make two specific comments on the Scottish Enterprise legislation, followed by a more general point. First, have the Government considered the fact that European social fund applications are processed through the Department of Employment? Will that task be devolved to the Scottish Office, to the SDA or to Scottish Enterprise?

Secondly, let me ask on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) whether the Government have considered the anomalous position of her constituency and Moray district. At present, some 25 per cent. of population is in the Highlands and Islands Enterprise area, with about 75 per cent. in the Scottish Enterprise area. My hon. Friend argues that the whole of her constituency and district should be brought within the Highlands area, with the important proviso that funding should take account of the increase in population.

Finally, let me make my general point. There is no doubt that labour supply factors can be important to economic success, and over the next two or three years certain industries in Scotland are likely to face severe labour shortages in jobs that require key skills. Construction is an obvious example, because of the current oil boom. Economic structure and demand are also important, however. I wonder whether the Secretary of State or the Minister watched a BBC television programme last Friday in which a successful Scottish business man, Mr. David Murray, was asked for his views on the outlook for the next decade. Far from replying that he believed that the Scottish Enterprise proposals would lead to some great Scottish economic renaissance, Mr. Murray expressed regret about the erosion of indigenous ownership in the Scottish economy, and pointed to the damage done to Scotland's economic prospects by penal interest rates that are designed not for Scottish economic conditions, but for the overheated economy of the south-east of England.

Until we have a real economic policy that provides a genuine Scottish solution to Scottish needs, the Scottish Enterprise proposals will be at best irrelevant and at worst damaging.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Four hon. Members have sat here for a long time trying to catch my eye. I understand that the Front-Bench Members wish to reply to the debate at 9.20 pm, which leaves 43 minutes. I hope that the arithmetic will not be lost on hon. Members.

8.37 pm

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that we have heard a rare speech from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), a Scottish National Party Member. It was not constructive; we would not expect it to be. It was not instructive either. What was rare about it was the fact that it was not even destructive, and I am sure that we all learnt very little from it.

I was impressed to note that the only titter that we have heard throughout the debate came from Labour Members when the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) said that even the Romanians would not stand for the Government's proposals. Let us not forget the principal new town housing policy of President Ceausescu: he bulldozed all the villages and forced people to live in Socialist new towns. I have just returned from a visit to the Socialist new towns of Warsaw, Witowice in Czechoslovakia and East Berlin, and I can understand why the Romanians would not want Socialist new towns. I was horrified by what was said by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) about human beings

who had had the effrontery to buy their own houses. His remark may well rank in the history of Socialism, along with "We are the masters now": he said that "we" had been left with only 4,000 houses.

Who are "we"? Are not houses meant to belong to people? Why should we arrogantly assume that they wish a Socialist organisation, which has been left with only 4,000 houses, to be perpetuated?

Dr. Godman: There are only 4,000 left.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: There is only one in my constituency. Why does the hon. Gentleman say that only 4,000 are left? I pay tribute to him for his kindness and his compliment to me in allowing me to be a member of his committee, even though my peccadilloes were always put into shadow by his own.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) made an interesting point when he asked us to give an example of a factory or industry that had not been destroyed in Scotland. He should be the last person to ask such a question. Ron Todd prevented the most important modern factory that Scotland could ever have had from coming to Dundee.

The Opposition want bureaucracy to continue in its most strangling form. The successes which the Minister of State and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State have brought about for the Scottish Development Agency will be increased by the Bill. Enterprise companies in Perthshire and Fife are enthusiastic about the Bill, but they are frightened that the regional councils or the Socialist district councils will attempt to make the magnet of the city of Dundee do down the city of Perth. We want the enterprise companies to benefit small towns and villages in Scotland by developing tourism and trade.

The most essential element for future employment is training. I read the *Dumfries Courier* every day. It is the only newspaper that still carries advertisements on its front page, with the news in the middle. Each day there are probably two advertisements in the "Situations Wanted" column. There are probably 200 advertisements in the "Situations Vacant" column. At the other end of the newspaper there are sophisticated advertisements, usually between 50 and 100. The reason for that large number of vacancies is not because people do not want to work; it is because we do not have trained people to do the work that is available. It is work that they would like to do.

People need to be trained and encouraged to be flexible so as to be able to adapt to changes in working practices. The development of skills is the most important manifestation of education in all its variety. The Bill combines training with what is, for Scotland, a unique benefit—one Government agency to which any person who wishes to invest in Scotland can go, knowing that everybody whom he will need to consult will be under the same roof. He will not have to visit different departments and different officials, as happens in England.

I was in New York last year where I helped to promote the Scottish trade exhibition. American business men told me that, apart from Scotland, there was no place in Europe to which they could go where they would meet under one roof all the people that they needed to see. If training is to be combined with the Scottish Development Agency, we shall be able to attract industry to Scotland. Industrialists will not then prefer to go to other European countries.

8.45 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, (Sir N. Fairbairn) made a rather obscure reference to his hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford publicly insulted the Scottish Development Agency by saying that in the past it had supported lame ducks. I invited him to name one of the lame ducks that the SDA had supported. We do not know what would have happened in the case mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, because the SDA was not involved. It can hardly, therefore, be described as a lame duck; it never even got there. However, I invite the Minister to give an example of one of the lame ducks that the SDA is supposed to have supported. I am not aware of any lame ducks. I am sure that the SDA would feel insulted if it thought that it was supporting lame ducks.

The Bill will lead to the axing of one organisation that has a good track record in Scotland. It was the envy of English Members of Parliament on the Employment Select Committee who toured Scotland with me last year and examined the work of the SDA and other agencies.

The SDA has been investigated regularly by the Treasury and the Industry Department for Scotland. According to the most recent investigation, published in February 1987, the SDA's

"high standing with the Scottish business community and financial institutions, the generally supportive attitudes of the local authorities and its reputation beyond Scotland are also indicative of the Agency's performance . . . What the Agency primarily supplies is an integrated delivery mechanism . . . At a time of continuing rapid structural change in the Scottish economy, there remains a real advantage in having a flexible economic development instrument directly answerable to the Secretary of State . . . Conversely, the Agency's position at arm's length from the Government has contributed to its achievements, notably in its ability to form constructive partnerships with local authorities and to adopt a distinctive action-orientated and opportunistic style of operation."

According to a training organisation based in Sheffield, just under a quarter of all employers had a training plan in 1986-87. However, the SDA, which has taken positive initiatives in Scotland, is to be brought under the control of people who are training fewer than 50 per cent. of their employees. A clear case can be made for the SDA to be allowed to carry out its own distinctive role, according to the devolved form of management that the agency devised for itself last year.

A particular Scottish influence needs to be reflected in any training policy. The Secretary of State sought comfort in the support of the STUC, but he failed to tell the House that the STUC had said that if training in Scotland was to be taken seriously, it had to reflect the Scottish experience and not simply be dictated by the national policies decided by the Secretary of State for Employment. We know all about that in Scotland. Dundee was used for pilot projects for the many schemes which failed miserably. That is why the Government had to look outside Britain and to the United States for examples of how to organise training.

There have been various references to who was the author of this or that policy. According to the Scottish Office, when the Employment Select Committee was in Scotland in June 1988,

"The genesis of the White Paper resulted from a suggestion by Bill Hughes of the CBI (Scotland) about the benefit of bringing together the SDA and the training agency. This attracted the attention of the Prime Minister and"—

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

—someone whom I cannot identify—

"was asked by the Secretary of State for Scotland to look at the suggestion. The Prime Minister explicitly adopted the proposal in a speech made to the CBI (Scotland) in September."

That is just a pile of nonsense. What really happened was that the former Secretary of State for Employment, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), visited the United States, doing the same tour as the Select Committee, saw private industry councils in America and picked up the idea of getting women back into employment by paying for child care. We are tired of hearing that the Government invented that idea as well, because we all know that it came directly from employment practices in the United States.

Although I do not think that I shall be on the Standing Committee, I hope that it will examine the experience in the United States. The Committee will need to consider the successes and the failures. There are always successes such as Bill Hughes' brilliant idea, although when my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) led a delegation to meet Mr. Hughes, who is also a director of Grampian Holdings, we knew more about the training initiative than he did. It appeared that he had not been paying attention to Kay Stratton who had worked for Senator Dukakis in Boston and who had brought the idea over when she became a personal adviser to the former Secretary of State for Employment. Obviously he listened briefly to Kay Stratton and then had to be filled in later by the person who worked on the proposal so that the Prime Minister could make the speech to the CBI in Scotland in September.

Initially private industry in America sent minions instead of chief executives to private industry councils in America which took off only when the chief executives became involved. The United States became aware of the demographic time bomb and realised that they needed to get people back into employment. They needed the people whom the American system had failed—the blacks, the ethnic minorities and the women. That is why they began those projects. In the mid-1980s corporate conscience was developing in the United States. Corporate conscience meant that capitalists, instead of looking at the figures at the end of the year to ensure that a firm's accounts were in the black, were quite prepared for it to slip slightly into the red if it was spending money on training people and bringing them back into employment to ensure that the company would prosper in the years when there would be a gap in the work force because of the demographic time bomb and the flattening-out of the baby boom.

I hope that the Standing Committee will look at the experience in the United States. There are good and bad examples, but, without some guarantee of a corporate conscience, some of the local enterprise companies will make the same mistakes that were made in the United States.

The private industry councils in the United States showed great concern for ethnic minorities and for those who had fallen through the safety net. When the Employment Select Committee went to Scotland, we examined the failure of employment training to deal with those young people who used to be called "mode B" youngsters on the YTS. They ended up on community programmes having to be employed by organisations such as Goodwill Enterprises. The Select Committee saw no real evidence that the young people who were disappearing from the community programmes like snow off a dyke on a summer's day were being picked up by other schemes. Given the employers' domination of local enterprise companies, they are hardly likely to be concerned with training people without the necessary basic skills. When the Minister replies to the debate, we need to hear that the Government are concerned and have particular proposals for dealing with that problem. The private industry councils in the United States had to concentrate on that if they were to be meaningful in the community.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred to the role of the Scottish tourist board which gave evidence to the Employment Select Committee on 13 December 1989. When I asked Tom Band and his colleague what they had done to ensure that there would be sufficient representation from the tourist boards and the tourist industry in the local enterprise companies, he said that one or two people were involved in Scottish tourist board activities. However, the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Industry Department's evidence to the Select Committee on tourism make it quite clear that tourism will be the main employer in certain parts of Scotland. Someone who concentrates on tourism obviously has different concerns from someone who concentrates on industry. We must be assured that the needs of the tourist industry in Scotland will be recognised by the local enterprise companies.

I know that a number of my hon. Friends are still trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I should like briefly to return to one of the most important aspects of training. Earlier, I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland a question, which cleverly he did not answer; the Minister of State, Scottish Office may do so when he replies to the debate. The difference between local enterprise companies and the training and enterprise councils in Scotland and England is the performance contract. In the United States, before training managers are paid, the people whom they train must be in employment. We need to know from the Minister whether the local enterprise companies will have to agree such a contract with the central board before they gain control of training finance. If we are not given that guarantee, there will be serious doubts about whether that training will be meaningful.

8.59 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): One of the main failings of the Bill is that it represents an abdication of responsibility by the Government. It seeks to encourage others to carry out training rather than the Government financing it themselves. That will not surprise those who have watched the Government in recent years. None of the United Kingdom's main competitors does not have a major responsibility for publicly funded training. They know the value and importance of training in an advanced and advancing economy, but it appears that the Government are content to leave that vital function, like so many others, to the vagaries of the market.

United Kingdom employers—and Scotland is no exception—have shown over many years that they have little inclination to take training seriously, at least when it costs them money or lost production. Unfortunately, that

applies evenly across the spectrum in Scotland, from manufacturing industry to the service sector and particularly to insurance companies. Given the low priority that the private sector consistently gives to training its work force, on what basis can it or should it be assumed that it can be galvanised to take on a leadership role in training provision?

The Secretary of State was quite happy to refer to the support of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, but it said:

"Scottish employers . . . have been unwilling to invest in training programmes; they have not taken a pro-active role in respect of the unemployed; and they have not been prepared to assist in long term planning. It is unlikely, therefore, that employers will be able to deliver on their own the strategy as outlined by the Government."

Yet, quite perversely, the private sector has been given an in-built guaranteed majority on Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and on the local enterprise companies.

Surveys in Scotland have shown that fewer than one in three employers have a training plan or training targets, yet they are to be given two of the three places on local enterprise committees. They have clearly illustrated an inability to plan or even to appreciate the value of training, yet they are to be entrusted with the responsibility for planning and implementing training programmes for entire communities or areas. If there is a logic in that, it is beyond my wit to find it.

Local authorities, education departments, trade unions and voluntary bodies make no provision to ensure that they are able to make the positive contribution that they are clearly qualified to make. Indeed, the voluntary sector in Scotland currently provides one third of all employment training places involving a budget of more than £40 million annually. Surely such expertise should be taken advantage of, or treated as the undoubted resource that it is, to allow the voluntary sector a guaranteed role in the local enterprise companies. Surely it should be regarded as a partner, not a client. To do otherwise is simply wasteful.

Local authorities in Scotland have promoted economic development with conspicuous success in recent years. The Glasgow eastern area renewal, the Dundee project and the Govan initiative, which were all mentioned earlier, are good examples of local economic regeneration and the creation of jobs on both sides of Scotland. They are examples of projects in which vast investment was demand-led and often involved the channelling of resources to areas of deprivation. Where is the incentive in this legislation for the private sector to channel investment into such areas? The White Paper made no mention—nor, as far as I could detect, did the Secretary of State—of the long-term unemployed, many of whom are poorly educated, live in poor housing and feel alienated from the real world. Who will want to invest in them?

That begs the question about the intention of the Bill to tackle the chronic problem of long-term unemployment, which has been mentioned too infrequently in the debate. It seems much more likely that the local enterprise companies will be content to churn out trained workers for the hi-tech industries. To do that would be to betray the thousands of Scots who desperately want real training to enable them to re-enter the job market. Unemployment remains a major blight on Scotland's economic landscape. That is especially true of youth unemployment, which, in the west of Scotland, stands at 25 per cent. One in four of all young people seeking work cannot find it.

For that reason, how employment training and the youth training scheme will be dealt with under Scottish Enterprise needs urgent clarification. The employment training scheme continues to be virtually ignored in Scotland, where employers have almost no interest in it. When they have taken it up, it has been well exposed in the media that there have been many abuses of public funds and of the training needs of thousands of Scots who find themselves used as cheap labour. The Secretary of State should spell out clearly whether local enterprise companies will have the right to opt out of employment training and the YTS in favour of real training initiatives or whether, as many of us suspect, they will be welded irrevocably to the United Kingdomwide task force of the Secretary of State for Employment, which fails completely to take account of local needs.

The establishment of Scottish Enterprise will mean the disappearance of the Scottish Development Agency. It is clear that over the past 10 years the Government have found it difficult to accept the successes that the SDA has achieved. The roots of that go back to 1975, when the SDA was established by the Labour Government, which is clearly a sore point for those currently in control at the Scottish Office. Having cut the funding of the SDA by 25 per cent. in real terms over the past decade and still having failed to damage it seriously, the Government have resorted to getting rid of it by subsuming it in Scottish Enterprise.

In doing so, the Government are discarding wantonly several vital assets. As we have heard today, many of the high-calibre staff of the SDA have been leaving for some time because they are dismayed by the prospects that face them under the Bill. Even more damagingly, the establishment of Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies will destroy the strategic Scotlandwide analysis of economic development, leaving a dangerous vacuum at the centre. The central role that the SDA has carried out successfully will also be lost. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, in its submission, to which the Secretary of State referred, said:

"the convention's view is that the national bodies should retain sufficient responsibilities centrally to provide the strategic context for the rational and effective development of the LECs."

That is a vital resource, which should not be allowed to be discarded.

A more tangible disposal of assets can be seen in the decision to dispose of the portfolio of investments that the SDA has assembled to underwrite its initiatives. Taken in totality, the plans represent nothing less than a criminal waste of talent and resources for the people of Scotland. Unfortunately, they are yet another example of the Government's narrow thinking in an area where additional public resources channelled to those with expertise and experience allied to the necessary will could have achieved so much more.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary of State encouraged Opposition Members to amend the Bill in Committee. It remains to be seen whether it will be possible to insert some safeguards or whether, as has so often been the case, the minds of the Secretary of State and his colleagues are already firmly closed on this issue.

9.8 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Earlier today I asked the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) how he expected that we should get enough employers from a sufficient variety of enterprise to conduct training when the unemployment level in some areas was so high. I reminded him that unemployment in Glasgow was especially high. I must add now that the current unemployment level in Glasgow is 52,000. In Scotland as a whole, there are 40 travel-to-work areas where the unemployment level is higher than the United Kingdom average. In those circumstances, how will training be conducted for the industries that do not exist in some localities yet are needed for the economic regeneration of the country as a whole? We have been putting that point all day, and we are still waiting for an answer.

I also worry about the thoroughness of training and the wider education of those who are being trained for industry. It seems obvious to the Opposition that the local enterprise companies will naturally be tempted to concentrate on the narrow needs of the employers who are running the enterprise companies.

In recognition of that, and in an attempt to overcome the narrow interests of particular employers, craft training has in the past been conducted at work, in the firm, and craft apprentices have gone out for training to local further education colleges where they could learn how other companies performed various tasks. Hon. Members will appreciate why we are now worried lest the scope of training is narrowed to such an extent that any training that is given is inadequate.

Nothing has been said about the wider education implications of what is proposed for young trainees, remembering the importance of training for their future. If they are trained simply to carry out narrow tasks, without having a wider idea of craft skills—I shall not go into the question of time being spent on their general education—they will be less able to transfer such skills as they have elsewhere, to other employers. That will, in turn, make them less able to conduct themselves as good adult citizens, effectively promoting their own rights. We are concerned about those and other dangers.

It is incredible that local employers are to be put at the forefront of the proposed scheme, with local authorities and people who have spent their lives in education being pushed to the back, their views and experience not receiving consideration. Running training courses is not something for amateurs. To set achievable targets for learners, to devise suitable written lessons and practical work and to test students' achievements are matters in which success has not always been achieved, even in the circumstances I have described, when we have brought together local authorities, educationists and employers.

I have witnessed students failing courses partly through their own immaturity but partly through inadequate standards being set for them and the poor monitoring of their performance. Instead of responding to the worries that we have on those scores and improving the present system, it seems that the Government are creating a system under which those shortcomings will be even more likely to occur because of inadequacies in monitoring and shortcomings in devising lessons.

Unless there is a preponderance of people with experience of preparing lessons, marking exams and running courses, we shall continue to worry about the outcome of the new scheme. In tandem with what is proposed, industrial training boards have been abolished. That gives us more reason to worry about the future.

Several other aspects of the same problem have not received much airing in the debate. Clause 16 of the Bill says that it would be unlawful to discriminate against any person providing training. Such a provision is to be welcomed, but how does the Minister square that with the views of the former Secretary of State for Employment, who has denied the child care allowance to married women who apply for training?

It seems incredible that when a married woman with three children under five whose husband's pay could not stretch to three lots of child care appealed against being refused child allowance for training, and then won her case at an industrial tribunal, the Government threw the might of the state against that solitary woman and appealed against the tribunal's decision. That step was taken by the bunch we see on the Government Benches who say that they are interested in equality of opportunity and in women having equal rights to training—*[Interruption.]* Is the Minister not even interested in listening to the points that I am making?

I would be interested to hear about the track record of those who will be running local schemes, in particular their track record on training opportunities and securing jobs for women. I dare say that some of them are adequate, but one is left wondering whether such matters have been examined in a coherent way.

Does the Minister intend to establish a body to monitor his proposals? If so, may we be told? Not a word has been said about how the scheme will be monitored. We are left to worry lest, as usual, women's job and training opportunities are limited in the main to a narrow range of skills and low-paid jobs with little opportunity for women to obtain the traditional skills which have normally been held by men.

If women are to receive proper employment and training opportunities, the whole issue must be examined more seriously than the Government have shown any signs of doing so far. It is all the more vital that the Scottish Trades Union Congress proposal to set up an independent body to examine the scheme is acted upon. The Ministers have shown no sign of taking any interest in those matters. They have not even seen fit to mention them tonight. That is how interested they are in the training of girls and women in Scotland.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I shall not use up too much time. Not only was I listening to the hon. Lady, but if she looks at clause 2(4)(a) she will find that specific provision is made to

"include arrangements for encouraging increases in the opportunities for training that are available to women and girls or to disabled persons".

Mrs. Fyfe: That proves that the Minister did not listen to what I said earlier. I said that if married women are not given an allowance for child care clauses 2 and 16 will be utterly meaningless. They are just words unless they are followed through with proper child care allowances for married women in particular. When the Minister says that opportunities will be given to women, let him spell them out. Local enterprise companies have been talked about for months, yet no ground has been broken in terms of training opportunities for women. If the Minister can give concrete examples in his reply, I shall be all ears. For all

the reasons given by other hon. Members, and for the reasons that I have outlined, I for one will vote against the Bill.

9.15 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I promise that I shall be brief. I have been here during the whole debate, as you know. I am not sure that it has been a worthwhile exercise. We have listened to fair-minded criticisms of the Bill, and if I thought for one moment that the Government would take some of them on board by way of reasonable amendments, I should have a lot more faith in this Parliament. However, the reverse will be the case. Ministers hate honestly awkward critics on the Opposition Benches and they despise honestly awkward critics on the Conservative Benches, not that any of them are present now.

I despair about the passage of the Bill. If it were amended along the lines suggested by Opposition Members, including suggestions from the Liberal party and the Scottish National party—the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) is not present—I should be more hopeful.

I should like the Minister to answer a specific question on clause 3(3), which says:

"In exercising its functions, Scottish Enterprise shall have regard to the requirements of agriculture and efficient land management"

It goes on to mention the desirability of safeguarding the environment. In the Minister's view, is fish farming an element of agriculture? Another important indigenous industry is the fishing industry. Will it, too, benefit from Scottish Enterprise having regard to the requirements of its employees? Training for fishermen is important, especially on safety.

We know that the local enterprise companies will be dominated by the private sector, with two thirds of their members coming from business and the remaining third from elsewhere. Apparently, the idea is that business men and women will give up their time to run the local boards. The Secretary of State said in the Scottish Grand Committee:

"They will be the non-executive directors of the local agencies. It may require a few hours a week—less in some areas and a little more in others."—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 20 March 1989; c. 9.]

That is an appallingly complacent attitude on the part of the Secretary of State. I have witnessed the failure of the Inverclyde initiative, a privately led initiative to deal with the serious problems of unemployment in my constituency and part of the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). I think that my hon. Friend will agree with me that that privately led initiative has, to a considerable extent, been a failure.

I view the proposals outlined this evening with despair.

9.21 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I am grateful to my hon. Friends for their speeches and continued attendance. One could not make a similar comment in respect of Conservative Members.

The Secretary of State said that the whole country was behind Scottish Enterprise. That was because the question that had been asked was whether the country was in favour of stronger links between economic development and training. Everybody is in favour of that. It is like asking whether one is in favour of truth and beauty. Of course one is in favour of better links between economic development and training. No one can possibly imagine anyone voting against that.

The Opposition are concerned about the muddle that lies behind the Bill. We are faced with a conundrum. The private sector is to lead us into the promised land. After 10 years of free enterprise and a market-led economy, we apparently need a new flagship Bill. That immediately poses the problem, "Why has the private sector not already reached the promised land?" Why are we in the House—the centre point of the public sector—preparing to take a great deal of parliamentary time to let the private sector take the lead? Surely the private sector can just get on with it. Why do we need to pass a Bill when the private sector has been given all that it needs.

Look at what the Confederation of British Industry demanded in the early 1980s. The CBI said, "We want the removal of price and dividend restrictions, growth in profitability, restrictions on trade unions and cuts in income tax and corporation tax." All that has been granted to the private sector, yet we are still a long way behind our major competitors.

"If the relative growth of output per worker were maintained at its 1983-87 levels, it would take us about 10 years to catch up with the present levels in France and West Germany, and the United States and Japan are even further ahead".

Who said that? The CBI, in its latest training document.

The truth is that the Bill quite inadequately attempts to create an optical illusion to try to persuade us that we are talking about a private sector initiative when all that is happening is the laundering of £0·5 billion of public money, which is to be handed over to business people. It is being made to look like a private sector initiative.

Another muddle that lies behind the Bill is that we have been told for 10 years that the business sector needs incentives to operate effectively. If it does not have carrots, it does not work hard. That is why we have the so-called enterprise culture—tax cuts, and high, even exorbitant, salaries for business leaders. Yet here we have a Bill that offers no profit or wages, just, in the words of the Secretary of State, an opportunity to serve the local community—to do good rather than make money. It seems strange that the Government should now believe that this will work. There could be a strong inducement for the wrong kind of business man to become involved because local enterprise companies will have access to privileged information. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) about the potential for corruption has not been tackled at all. It is difficult to believe that top business men will devote much time to LECs. If an entrepreneur gives his or her time to LECs it cannot be anything other than damaging to their own company.

This is an enabling Bill. Regrettably, there is little detail in it—we must look at White Papers and the handbook on the subject. The Opposition's major fear is that the Government are deeply muddled about the SDA, which they do not ideologically back but which has been proved to be successful. It is an interventionist Socialist body and the Government are embarrassed by its success because they do not believe that it should be necessary—the SDA should be able to do it all. Opposition Members believe that there will always be an essential place for an SDA, and most successful economies would agree with us.

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

However, the Government are setting up Scottish Enterprise, expecting it to go out of business. That is stated in the section on the financial consequences of the Bill. The ultimate objective is the creation of a dynamic, self-sustaining Scottish economy in which investment and training are private sector led and financed. In other words, the Government regard financing the body as regrettable and as a sum to be reduced and then removed from the public sector. They regard the present £500 million as a reducing budget.

Opposition Members regard training and economic development as woefully resourced. What is the Government's attitude to funding? For example, if, for demographic or other reasons, numbers for the youth training scheme or employment training fall what will happen to funding of the training budget? The Government seem to claim that if the number of people out of work falls, we will need to spend less on training. What nonsense, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said in the debate on the Queen's Speech. The major problem with training is that we need to train better those who are already in jobs, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) seems not to realise that there is no money in the budget for those who already have jobs.

How well funded is the SDA at present? Its budget last year was about £150 million, of which 60 per cent. was grant in aid and 40 per cent. was income earned by the SDA. About £90 million was directly spent on the SDA. For what else do the Government pay that sort of money? They correctly spent £150 million on compensation for the third or fourth-rate Barlow Clowes investment company. They have been spending £140 million in subsidies to Network SouthEast. It costs £4·5 million to train a Tornado pilot. For the SDA, £90 million would buy 20 Tornado pilots. The Government will spend £200 million on 1,800 metres of road in Limehouse in Docklands. On that criterion, one could get 800 yards of London road for the SDA. The Government want to reduce that sum.

The Government believe that the economy has been transformed during their years in office. So it has been. In July 1979, there were 141,000 unemployed. In July 1989, there were 233,000 unemployed. One third of all manufacturing jobs in Scotland have been lost—in Strathclyde the figure was one half. According to a European Community report a fortnight ago, the number of people in poverty in Britain has doubled since the mid-1970s. Britain's inflation rate is well over the rates of France, Germany and Japan. We are running a £20 billion deficit, and 53 per cent. of Scotland's exports are dependent on whisky and office technology.

Using the acid test of whether people want to live in Scotland—net inward and outward migration—in 1978-79, we lost 7,000 people. In 1987-88 we lost 17,000 people, while in contrast Wales—as always—gained 18,000 people, which was three times as many as in 1978-89. We have had a transformation but not one about which to boast.

There is no reference in the Bill to the links between the central Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise company. The Government are asking that at least two thirds of the directors must be senior figures from the private sector. Will those people turn up and stick at it or will they be anything other than names on the top of the notepaper? It is absurd to think that one can gather a dozen senior figures from private enterprise at a table and expect them to work together in partnership.

The Government frequently pay tribute to the enterprise trust movement. I compliment those organisations that have done much good—but how much? How good are they and how many front-rank business leaders have been involved? Are they not really private sector fronts for public sector money? Who supports and runs them?

The annual report of the enterprise trust movement shows that the Ayrshire enterprise trust comprises of four district councils, the Strathclyde reegional council, the Irvine Development Company, the Department of Employment and some local employers. That, apparently, is a private sector-led enterprise. The north-west Fife rural initiative is a partnership between the SDA, Scottish agricultural colleges, Fife regional council, North-East Fife district council and the north-east Fife enterprise trust. That hardly sounds like a private sector-led initiative. Glasgow Opportunities had some private people. The Glasgow Easterhouse partnership is all public —the Department of Employment, the SDA, Strathclyde regional council, the Training Agency and the Drumchapel initiative. That is the enterprise trust in that area.

Some 60 per cent. of funding for the whole of the enterprise trusts in Scotland is public sector finance. If public money was withdrawn from the enterprise trusts, they would all collapse, but if private sector involvement was withdrawn, they would still operate, even if at a reduced level. I have grave doubts whether those bodies dominated by private sector—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is the cavalry".] At last my groupie, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has arrived.

Even if the private sector was serious and was committed to training and economic development, disillusionment would soon set in when it found that it was overwhelmingly expected simply to administer the United Kingdom-wide youth training and employment training schemes. That is what it is being asked to do. How can that be a Scottish answer to Scottish problems? The Secretary of State has lost out. He was in conflict with the Department of Employment because he would have liked Scotland to control its employment training and YTS but the Department of Employment would not give that control.

It is important that we have compatible training schemes throughout the United Kingdom, but that does not mean identical schemes. Nothing would be lost if employment training was scrapped and the money used for proper serious training on a Scottish basis. The CBI said that the YTS has only reached the embryo stage of a training system.

What will business people say when they find that they will have to administer the appalling employment training scheme? What will they say to two of my constituents who have successfully completed the employment training scheme? One wanted training as a typist but never saw a typewriter and the other was promised training as a barman, but never saw the inside of a bar. They spent their days playing Scrabble, Cluedo, Trivial Pursuits and cards. They were asked to list the items for survival on the moon in order of importance. They sang religious songs and

successfully completed their employment training scheme. How did that train the workers without jobs for the jobs without workers?

All too frequently Ministers say that ET is the biggest scheme ever mounted. They are right, but it is also the worst. It bears as much resemblance to serious training as Zsa Zsa Gabor does to monogamy. It is designed to lower the unemployment figures. It is about the numbers game. It is the largest massage parlour ever opened. It has all the characteristics of a massage parlour—it provides only temporary relief and does nothing about the reason why the person went to the massage parlour in the first place, which in his case is to acquire serious training.

When he replies to the debate the Minister of State will have the opportunity to make quite clear what can be done in Scotland and what has to have London approval. I asked the Minister of State a simple test question in a written question recently—whether there were any proposals to alter the level of travelling expenses available on an ET scheme. The question was referred to the Department of Employment. It was a trivial issue, but it was referred. Will the Minister of State have control over the travelling expenses on ET schemes in the future? Will it be as big a control as that?

How are the local enterprise companies to exercise their training function when there is no guaranteed place or places on the board for the body which does most of the serious training in any area and which is the major preparer for careers—the local regional council's education department? The reason for their absence is the Government's continuing hostility to local authorities. Every submission wants the local authorities to be involved, but the Government continue to be hostile. When everyone else wants the boundaries between the public and private sectors to be lowered, the Government build obstacles.

There are gratuitous insults to the public sector in everything the Government do. There is the absurd pretence that the best people or the only people with enterprise are to be found in the private sector when over the past 10 years at least the truth is that the real drive for development in Scotland has come from the local authorities and the burden has been the Scottish Office.

During the Bill's passage we shall be pressing for full local authority representation as of right. The Government should also learn to work with the trade unions which would be working to promote quality training and which recognise the importance of the unemployed and the needs of those in work.

We recognise the valuable contribution of the voluntary organisations. One of the scandals that has been inadequately defended by the Minister was the amount of community care that callously collapsed when the community programme was converted into the employment training programme.

I am grateful to hon. Members who have spoken about the Highlands and Islands because there is a real fear that the provisions mean change for change's sake. Something much more evolutionary should have been tried. Labour Members who represent the new towns—my hon. Friends the Members for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) and for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram)—put their fears about the proposals on the new towns extremely well. Those dynamic public enterprise-led agencies, which have been praised by the Government, have achieved considerable success in inward investment. However, what will replace the new town teams when they are broken up? East Kilbride will spend £70 million on its capital programme this year—£30 million of its own money and £40 million of private money. What will replace that? Too rapid a wind-up will dissipate the force of the new town corporations. It is a fundamental right for new town corporation tenants to be able to choose to become district council tenants.

We have tabled a reasoned amendment to expose the muddle at the heart of the Bill. We all want to improve this country's training system. The Bill will not do so. We all want to end the north-south divide. We all believe that unemployment and poverty are far too high in Scotland, we need new high value added jobs in manufacturing and services, and better links should exist between training, education and economic developments. That would greatly improve matters. However, the underfunded, dogmatically biased and confused way in which this measure is being introduced by the Government undermines those aims, which is why we tabled the amendment.

9.40 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) said—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] He has apologised to me and to Opposition Members for not being here because he has an unavoidable commitment outside the House.

The debate has revealed no major philosophical objection of principle to the proposals. Instead, a large number of Committee and niggling points have been raised by Members of the Opposition parties. I shall answer as many of them as I can in the time available and return to the rest in Committee.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) made an unfortunate start to his new role as spokesman on these matters when he complained that we had rushed the Bill out in a furtive manner at the end of the previous Session. The Bill was published in a perfectly normal way and presented to the House when it was sitting. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman may have pushed off home for an early Christmas. He made matters worse by reading the Bill over Christmas and making a number of assertions, such as that local business men would have the power compulsorily to purchase land, and be able to avoid local planning permission and to obtain confidential information on planning matters—a point that he repeated in his speech tonight. He tossed in a gratuitous insult to the entire Scottish business community by talking about the potential for corruption and insider dealing. He was wrong on all counts, and if he looks at clause 17(2)(a), (b), (c) and (d), he will find those points covered, and I dare say that we shall return to them in Committee.

I fear that, as so often when legislation is going through the House, the Labour party will pursue its usual policy of raising scares and alarms that have nothing to do with the reality of our proposals. The Labour party is friendless in its opposition to the Bill, if we discount its satellites in the Scottish National party and the Social and Liberal Democrats. It is out of tune, just as it was out of tune over the sale of council houses and with the mood of Scotland over the setting up of school boards.

[Mr. Ian Lang]

As has been said, when organisations such as Scottish Business in the Community, COSLA, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Church of Scotland Committee on Church and Nation all support the principle of the Bill, we can see how isolated the Opposition are. The Opposition do not like the Bill because they do not like, trust or understand enterprise. Above all, they dislike and distrust decentralisation, which is one of the keys to the concept of Scottish Enterprise.

Our policy is one of devolution, which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that he wants. However, our devolution is that from the centre to the rest of Scotland, from the Government to the people, whereas the Opposition parties' idea of devolution is to set up another centralised body, imposing a still larger burden of taxation on the Scottish people. Nothing could be more ruinous to the future of enterprise in Scotland. Ten years ago Scottish Enterprise would have been inconceivable because of the state to which the Labour party had brought the Scottish economy when in government. Successive bouts of Socialism in the 1960s and 1970s had undermined and weakened the economy.

Mr. Graham: Ten years ago there were 166,000 manufacturing jobs in Strathclyde alone. They no longer exist under this Government.

Mr. Lang: Ten years ago industrial output in Scotland was 6·5 per cent. lower than it is now, even with that large number of extra employees. It is the improved competitiveness, output and productivity rate which has taken Scotland from the bottom of the productivity league to the top during the past decade and which has given us the competitiveness to enable us to bring forward our proposals. That is why employment is now at its highest for the past nine years and unemployment is at its lowest for the past nine years. That is why we see enterprise emerging through the establishment of large numbers of new company registrations—50 per cent. more than there were a decade ago—and huge increases in self-employment, up to record levels. That is the evidence of emerging enterprise in Scotland as a result of the new, stronger and broader economic base that the Government's policies have created. That is what has made Scottish Enterprise possible.

But what makes Scottish Enterprise necessary is that, despite the improvements in our competitive position and industrial base over the past few years, we face new challenges. We face the challenge of demographic change that has been referred to this evening whereby the number of school leavers will fall over the five years to 1994 by some 50 per cent. We face the challenge of the single European market and the need to be more competitive to retain our European markets and to build on them still further. We face the challenge of the opening up of the economies of eastern Europe, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) referred.

What we have done over that period is to build on the changes to the SDA that were introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr when he was Secretary of State. He rightly paid tribute to the SDA, to the establishment of its regional offices, to its co-operation with the private sector and local authorities, and to its work in various individual initiatives around the country, particularly Glasgow. It does great discredit to the hon. Members for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) to denigrate the SDA area initiatives and the work done in the Garnock valley, in Ayrshire, and in Inverclyde. Those initiatives were set up in response to pressing needs and job losses in those areas. They have cleared industrial dereliction and have provided modern industrial premises. They have created new job opportunities and have laid the foundations for future economic growth.

Just as my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr inherited an SDA which was an instrument of Socialist policy, as the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie said, acquisitive and interventionist, in danger of displacing enterprise, so it has gradually converted to a more catalytic role, an enabling role, helping companies and individuals to do things for themselves, working in partnership with the private sector. I can assure the House that all the skills and experience acquired by the SDA during those years will be reflected in the new arrangements and will be carried forward into the new Scottish Enterprise.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked many questions, most of which he acknowledged would be best dealt with in Committee, but let me deal with one or two points that he raised. The relationship between the Scottish Office and Scottish Enterprise will reflect the present relationship with the SDA. We will set the policy framework, but it will have substantial powers and, I am sure, the initiative to operate creatively and innovatively as the SDA does now.

The Secretary of State for Employment will retain lead responsibility for training policy generally and, in consultation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, will continue to set the national framework. But we shall set the policy framework for Scottish Enterprise and it will be responsible to the Secretary of State for Scotland. Scottish Enterprise and local enterprise companies will have the flexibility to develop their own training and enterprise initiatives in the light of Scottish circumstances.

Mr. Worthington: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: I am short of time. We shall never agree on this point this evening, but let us develop it in Committee.

Mr. Worthington *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I give way.

Mr. Worthington: During the debate I asked a simple question. In future, will it be possible in Scotland to decide the level of travelling expenses on an ET scheme?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman knows the answer because I gave it in reply to a parliamentary question the other day.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood said that he welcomed the boundary decision affecting the Glasgow local enterprise company and those in Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire. Those are difficult decisions and, to some extent, they have to be subjective, but it is right to take account of the need to ensure a viable company in Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire, and I believe that we have got the boundaries right in those cases.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) referred to the Moray district boundary. We have made it clear that the present HIDB boundary will remain the same for Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The bid from the Moray consortium has been received and will be considered on its merits, but a local enterprise company straddling the boundary would have to resolve substantial practical difficulties.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) suggested that new towns were a Socialist idea, but the Reith committee was appointed in 1940 by a coalition Government, and the New Towns Act 1946 was not opposed by the then Conservative Opposition. The hon. Gentleman paid tribute to the achievements of new towns, and I join him in that. They have been a great success story in providing for the overspill from our major industrial conurbations and suitable locations for the development of indigenous investment and for attracting inward investment. However, the Government, in winding up the new towns, are not motivated by any ideology, for their winding up was always envisaged in the 1946 Act. That will not be pursued in any doctrinaire way but will be undertaken in an orderly fashion, taking account of the degree of development already reached by each new town —and phased over the next decade on that account.

As to the housing waiting list in Cumbernauld, both public and private sector house building in that town remains at a high level, with 456 completions in the current year and 486 next year, including 265 houses for the development corporation. Cumbernauld has £6·9 million available in the year ahead for its housing capital programme, which will provide further accommodation. I will not be able to do justice in the time available to me to the hon. Gentleman's questions on planning in the new town corporations and on the circumstances of the staff. However, I shall not forget that he raised them, and I hope that we shall return to them in Committee.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) raised the issue of the role of local authorities in local development companies, but I emphasise that they are not intended as straightforward successors to the corporations. They are designed to fulfil the property development function which the corporations currently undertake and which otherwise would be lost on winding up. There will be no scope for local authority representation as such in such companies, which will essentially be commercially driven.

A number of hon. Members raised questions concerning new town housing. I emphasise the importance of choice to the tenants of new town corporations, but it must be based on an informed assessment of the alternatives. It is clear from the independent survey undertaken at the Government's request, and from the number of houses that have been purchased, that the most popular choice of all in new town areas is private ownership. More than 50 per cent. of all new town development corporation houses are privately owned, and sales doubled in the first eight months of last year. The survey confirmed that no less than 40 per cent. of tenants of houses remaining in public ownership are interested in home ownership. That interest and the need for more information were the two clearest features to emerge from the survey, which is why we are distributing an information leaflet setting out the range of choice available to new town tenants.

Mr. Lambie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the debate, the Minister gave a guarantee that he would say whether new town tenants would be given the choice of having the district council as their new landlord. He has not answered that question.

Mr. Speaker: He has not been given an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Lang: I was about to move on to that very point. I repeat that the desire for private ownership and the need for more information were the two strongest features to emerge from the survey, which is why we are distributing a leaflet putting the choices to tenants.

The concern over the possible transfer of houses to district councils is much stronger among the councils themselves—who seem more concerned with the acquisition of assets than with the provision of services—than it is among new town residents. I emphasise that we have not ruled out the possibility of transfers to district councils, which are specifically mentioned as one of the options that we shall consider during the wind up. However, there is no need to take a decision now—and we would narrow the choice if we were to do so. As the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) himself pointed out, it will be 10 years before Irvine's wind up is completed, and there would be no point in moving now from one public housing body to another.

The survey showed that, of those surveyed, less than 20 per cent. would now choose to go to a district council. The hon. Gentleman will find that in paragraph 5.9 of the report. At the time of wind up, of the four out of five people who wanted that choice only half would choose a district council and more than a third did not know what they would choose.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr for welcoming the transfer of training activities to Scotland that is reflected in the proposals. I agree with him that, as a nation, we do not take training seriously enough, and I hope that the Bill will increase the recognition of the importance of training. As my right hon. Friend acknowledged, local enterprise companies will lead to that. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said, training is an investment. Local enterprise companies will integrate with other economic initiatives and make the best use of local skill resources.

A recent survey carried out by the Confederation of British Industry, which appeared in yesterday's *Scotsman*, revealed that companies expect to invest more next year on marketing, research, product development and training. They recognise that training is essentially the responsibility of industry.

I do not believe that the hand-wringing of the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie about the lack of investment and training is very persuasive when one looks back at the commitment to training schemes made by the Labour Government between 1978 and 1979 of some £471 million compared with the approximately £3 billion that we have put into such training schemes. We now spend more as a percentage of gross domestic product on training than Germany, the United States or Japan. One can see the increased priority that we are giving to training.

The youth training scheme now has a success rate of more than 80 per cent. of those who complete the course moving on to employment, further training or higher education. The employment training scheme, which the

[Mr. Lang]

hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie so derided, is filled to the extent of some 26,000 places in Scotland, and 59 per cent. of those completing the scheme go into jobs.

An important aspect of our proposals is to involve the private sector more so that they accept their responsibilities for training. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan was among hon. Members who made that point.

Paragraph 2 of the handbook emphasises the degree of flexibility that the local enterprise companies will be able to bring to bear on their priorities for training, maximising flexibility, shaping the balance of skills training and the geographic distribution of opportunities, determining which contractors to use and the levels of payment to sub-contractors, and in changing the design and content of programmes to meet local needs.

The Opposition dislike not just the nuts and bolts of the Bill, but the whole concept of enterprise. They do not like the idea—it is alien to them. We have not invented enterprise. It is a natural part of the human spirit—a quality or talent that is in all of us to varying degrees. The Government's contribution has been to release enterprise and provide it with a favourable, stable economic environment, free from the burdens of high taxation and the excessive regulation of centralised control and of nationalisation, and all the doctrinaire trappings of Socialism.

The independence of mind that enterprise engenders runs counter to Socialist philosophy, and that is why the Opposition see it as a threat. We see enterprise as a strength, a natural resource. The drive, energy, knowledge and commitment of individuals all over Scotland will help to build up employment and prosperity and enable people to realise the full potential of each area and to accelerate the national regeneration. That is how to spread the economic successes of recent years further and deeper. It is not what the Government do, but what they enable people to do for themselves. Enterprise is the antithesis of state control, and that is why the Labour party resists it. It is the antidote to Socialism, and that has been rejected all over eastern Europe as it is irrelevant, limited and sterile.

We see enterprise as a power for good that will allow a free and prosperous society to grow and flourish. That is the philosophy that drives the proposals in the Bill. The Bill will give a new boost to enterprise and employment growth in Scotland, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 253.

Division No. 31] **[9.59**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin

Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

ENTERPRISE AND NEW TOWNS (SCOTLAND) BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill ("the Act") it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) sums required by the Secretary of State for paying sums to Scottish Enterprise in respect of the exercise of its functions, other than those to which public dividend capital relates, and in respect of its administrative expenses, so long as the relevant aggregate amount outstanding shall not exceed £1,500 million;

(b) sums required by the Secretary of State for paying grants to Highlands and Islands Enterprise in respect of expenses incurred by it in the exercise of its functions and powers;

(c) sums required by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Act for paying grants under the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968 in respect of a disposal of land by a development corporation, or of any transfer of lands under a transfer order, or of expenditure incurred or to be incurred in providing facilities specified in the said Act of 1968;

(d) sums required by the Secretary of State for paying public dividend capital to Scottish Enterprise, so long as the relevant aggregate amount outstanding shall not exceed £1,500 million;

(e) sums required by the Secretary of State to defray any deficit arising from, by virtue of the Act, the winding up under the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968 of a development corporation;

(f) increases attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act;

(g) administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State or the Treasury in consequence of the provisions of the Act;

(2) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of any sums required by the Treasury for fulfilling guarantees given by them in respect of sums borrowed by Scottish Enterprise from persons other than the Secretary of State, so long as the relevant aggregate amount outstanding shall not exceed £1,500 million;

(3) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making loans to Scottish Enterprise for the purposes of the exercise of any of its functions, so long as the relevant aggregate amount outstanding shall not exceed £1,500 million;

(4) the reduction of the assets of the National Loans Fund by amounts corresponding to such liabilities of a development corporation to the Secretary of State in respect of advances made by the Secretary of State to that corporation as the Secretary of State may by virtue of the Act by Order extinguish under the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968.

In this Resolution—

"development corporation" has the same meaning as in the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968;

"general external borrowing" has the same meaning as in the Act;

"public dividend capital" has the same meaning as in Schedule 2 to the Act but includes such capital within the meaning of Schedule 2 to the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975;

"relevant aggregate amount outstanding" means the aggregate amount outstanding, otherwise than by way of interest, in respect of—

(a) the general external borrowing of—

(i) Scottish Enterprise and its subsidiaries; and

(ii) the Scottish Development Agency;

(b) sums issued by the Treasury in fulfilment of guarantees under Schedule 2 to the Act or Schedule 2 to the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975, being sums which have not been repaid to the Treasury;

(c) sums paid to Scottish Enterprise by the Secretary of State out of money provided by parliament but with there being deducted—

(i) any such sums repaid to the Secretary of State by the body other than in consideration of the receipt of public dividend capital;

(ii) any such sums paid in respect of enhancing skills and capacities relevant to employment in Scotland and assisting persons to establish themselves as self-employed persons there; and

(iii) any such sums paid in respect of the administrative expenses of Scottish Enterprise;

(d) sums paid to the Scottish Development Agency by the Secretary of State out of money provided by Parliament but with their being deducted—

(i) any such sums repaid to the Secretary of State, other than in consideration of the receipt of public dividend capital, being sums repaid either by the Scottish Development Agency or by Scottish Enterprise; and

(ii) any such sums paid in respect of the administrative expenses of the Scottish Development Agency; and

(e) loans guaranteed by Scottish Enterprise and by any of its subsidiaries;

"subsidiary" has the meaning given by section 736 of the Companies Act 1985; and

"transfer order" has the same meaning as in the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968 as amended by the Act. —*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

WAYS AND MEANS

ENTERPRISE AND NEW TOWNS (SCOTLAND) BILL

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(1) payment into the Consolidated Fund of amounts payable by Scottish Enterprise in consideration of the receipt of public dividend capital or in reduction of public dividend capital;

(2) payment into the Consolidated Fund of any surplus arising from, by virtue of the Act, the winding up under the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968 of a development corporation;

(3) payment into the Consolidated Fund of payments in or towards repayment by Scottish Enterprise of sums issued in fulfilment of guarantees given by the Treasury;

(4) payment into the National Loans fund.

In this Resolution—

"development corporation" has the same meaning as in the New Towns (Scotland) Act 1968;

"public dividend capital" has the same meaning as in Schedule 2 to the Act but includes such capital within the meaning of Schedule 2 to the Scottish Development Agency Act 1975.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

ENTERPRISE AND NEW TOWNS (SCOTLAND) BILL

Ordered,

That the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill may be proceeded with as if it had been certified by Mr. Speaker as relating exclusively to Scotland.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

PETITION

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

10.15 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition that has been signed by 1,125 people who live in the Dundee and Tayside areas. It asks the House to recognise that Britain's 4 million deaf people have the same rights of access to television as every other citizen and calls on the House to ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to provide complete coverage with teletext and subtitles of all programmes by a specified date.

The Government have not yet given that commitment, but I urge on them the necessity of doing so at an early date.

To lie upon the Table.

Mobile Homes

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise and to place on record the quite extraordinary state of affairs in my constituency at the Cambrian trailer park at Culverhouse Cross. It is the only residential caravan park in Cardiff, and in some ways it is the only remaining bastion in Wales of unfettered landlordism. Ceausescu and his wife may be dead, the Berlin wall may be crumbling, most of the east European and South American dictators may have disappeared, but I am afraid that in one small corner of my constituency people feel as though they are living in a police state.

The trailer park is owned by Maurice Lubin and the company that he owns, called Property Developers Mortgage and Loan Company. It is a private property company, and without question Maurice Lubin is a home-grown Rachman in Wales. He is creating a climate of fear and is acting like the godfather to the 147 caravan dwellers in the park. I should like to give some examples of the more inhuman aspects of his behaviour according to the information that I have received from the residents' association.

On Christmas day, he threatened to cut off the electricity of the caravan of a severely disabled, wheelchair-bound elderly lady who had recently returned from hospital. In early December, he sent an eviction notice for alleged arrears of rent, which do not exist, to a 92-year-old man living alone. On the same day in early December, he sent an eviction notice to a widow. She had been widowed on Wednesday and he sent the eviction notice the following Saturday. In November, he sent an eviction notice for overcrowding to a family on the very day that their newborn baby was delivered. He has threatened parents whose children, as young as six years old, ride their kiddies' bikes around the site.

The landlord has also taken strong measures to try to discourage the continued existence of the residents' association because the association has been in dispute with him. In October last year, it won a case on the level of ground rents to be set. He is trying to split people from the residents' association and in general he is creating a climate of fear.

For the benefit of the House, I shall quote from a letter that I have received. Unfortunately, I cannot give the name and address because of the request of the person who wrote it and when I read the relevant parts of the letter the House will understand why. The gentleman who wrote the letter is a young father with a wife and daughter. He says:

"He"—

that is Mr Lubin—

"has told me that I will not be able to live in my unit for much longer as it is too old and wants smashing up . . . My wife is frequently upset and cries a lot because of what this man says. She thinks we'll be out on the street with no-where to go because the £2,000 I have been offered for my unit will not even pay back half of my personal loan I am using to pay for it."

On the last page he says, even more tragically:

"I would be very grateful if you would treat this letter in confidence and not use my name or address for fear of retribution by the owner and I do not wish to put my wife through any more trouble."

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

If anything illustrates a climate of fear, that is it. It is the general feeling on the site, which is by no means restricted to that man, his wife and child. It is a general pattern that has been created by the behaviour of the landlord. People living on the site have said to me that they are living in a police state. That is wholly unacceptable.

To illustrate the landlord's attitude to the residents' association and his attempts to break it up, I want to quote again from a letter that he wrote recently to one of the members of the association. Regarding alleged rent arrears —which do not exist—Mr. Lubin says:

"I am writing to you personally in view of the good relationship which existed between us prior to your wife becoming a member of the resident's association Committee and because I feel that possibly you are not receiving the best advice."

He then quotes at length from the agreement that he has with this particular tenant and says that he and his family can have an arbitrator appointed if they so wish. That is fine.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is referring to a case before the court. I understand that one case was before the courts, but I may have been misinformed.

Mr. Morgan: I was referring to cases that have already been determined by the courts. There may be further aspects coming before the court for a different form of determination, but my quotation relates to the court case that has already been determined.

As is common in agreements involving caravan site owners and caravan owners, in this agreement there is a procedure for referring matters to arbitration. That is fine when the procedure is used in good faith by both sides. If, for example, there is a disagreement on how to apply the formula, on how much the retail prices index was last year, or on how much the owner has spent on improvements and how that money should be divided, that is fine, but the law can be used and abused by the owner rather than being used constructively as is intended, as is shown in the letter that I was about to quote when the Minister intervened. It says:

"All requests for arbitration will be made to the Cardiff County Court on an individual basis. With full costs being asked for if the application is successful."

That is using the law not as it was intended to be used, but as a threat.

The landlord is not saying that there should be a test case before the county court and that people would see how the county court judge determined one case so the formula could then be applied to the other 146 caravans on the site, which would be acceptable. All the owners would then not need to go through the rigmarole. However, this landlord is threatening that every case will be taken to Cardiff county court on an individual basis, which is clearly meant to scare people off from using the arbitrator formula at all, especially as he says

"full costs being asked for if the application is successful."

That is threatening the cost of legal proceedings on the less well-off in society. It is saying, "Don't you dare use the arbitration formula as laid down in your agreement with me because it will cost you a lot of money to do so." That way of proceeding—the landlord using the unequal relationship between landlord and tenant—seems a complete abuse of the legal process.

I am not willing to see my constituents being pushed around by this godfather in that way. His sole technique is to put the frighteners on people when they are in a vulnerable position, using the legal process. It is all done under the Mobile Homes Act 1983, which is supposed to confer security of tenure and the reasonable and peaceful occupation of caravan sites, subject to the agreement not being broken on either side.

There are major incentives for any trailer park owner who is greedy not to confer security of tenure. A trailer park owner makes his money fast by destabilising the site. He wants to increase the ground rent, but he finds when he buys the site that it is governed by a formula agreed to by the tenants when they originally bought their vans. By that formula, the rent can go up only by the rate of increase in the retail prices index, plus an allowance for what the owner has spent on the site. Hence, he cannot increase the rent fast, unless he spends a great deal of money, in which case he must spend the money before he can get it back, and if he is greedy he is not happy to do that.

The owner can make much more money when a tenant leaves because he can buy the van from the tenant cheaply. When a new tenant comes in, the owner sells the same van for six or seven times what he paid for it because the tenant must buy the van through the owner of the site. By that means, the owner makes perhaps £10,000 or £20,000 per van every time there is a change of tenancy.

That shows that there is a major incentive to get existing tenants out and new ones in. There is no incentive under the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to confer reasonable security of tenure on tenants. On the caravan site of which I am speaking, Maurice Lubin is harassing the tenants so that they feel they must leave, that they cannot cope any more because their wives are crying and they fear that they cannot carry on much longer before they will have to go, despite the fact that the Mobile Homes Act is supposed to confer on them reasonable security of tenure.

I am anxious to avoid dealing with a court case which will proceed in February in relation to further increases in rents in the years 1988-89 and 1990. If I were to deal with that, the Minister would be unable to give a reasonable response to my remarks. In other words, I am endeavouring to avoid referring to current court action.

What is the solution to the problem? There is great incentive for the owner of a caravan site to remove security of tenure, not through the law but by all other means at his disposal—by leaning on tenants and coming the heavy with them so that their lives are made miserable—then new tenants will sign new agreements containing different ground rents and different formulae governing annual increases in the ground rent and so on. That incentive is undoubtedly there.

We need an additional power, over and above that contained in the Mobile Homes Act 1983, to prevent that incentive to get existing tenants out and new ones in from acting as a means of making every mobile home site owner greedy. We need a formula similar to that conferred on the Housing Corporation, and on Housing for Wales or Tai Cymru in Wales to license not merely the site, which is already the case, but the owners of sites.

I recall our debates in Committee when what is now the Housing Act 1988 was going through Parliament. A beneficial side effect of what was otherwise a bad measure

was the way in which it conferred some useful quasi-judicial powers on the Housing Corporation and its equivalent body in Wales to license people who wanted to be owners of parts of the municipal housing stock. In other words, if one applied to be a new private owner, a housing association, a co-operative or any other body wishing to take over some of the existing housing stock, one had to register and be approved by the Housing Corporation. One could be unapproved afterwards even if one had been approved in the first instance.

Such a power would license not only the site, which is done annually by the environmental health departments of all local authorities, but the owner to ensure that his or her behaviour towards the tenant complies with the intention of the Mobile Homes Act 1983 to confer reasonable security of tenure and peaceful enjoyment of what, after all, are the tenants' caravans on someone else's ground. If the landlord infringed to an unreasonable degree the basic intention to confer security of tenure and peaceful enjoyment, he could have his licence removed because he was not a fit and proper person or company to own a trailer park or mobile home site. That would provide the power to say, "You have misused the law and your power over people who are frequently in a vulnerable position, very often elderly or young families with small children." If he threatened them and made their lives a misery in order to get them out and put in new tenants at much higher ground rents, the Housing Corporation or Housing for Wales could step in and issue a warning and then remove the licence to be a mobile site owner. He would no longer be considered a fit and proper person to be an owner and would have to dispose of his interest in the site. A new licensee, whether an individual or company, would have to take over and run the site perhaps at a slightly lower rate of return but in a more reasonable way with regard to the tenants' security of tenure and enjoyment of life on the caravan site.

I ask for such a power without great hopes of the Government providing it. However, there is some hope. After the Housing Act 1988 became law, there was excitement among the less desirable fringe of the landlord community. Many individuals and companies made inquiries about acquiring parts of the municipal housing stock. I understand from Housing for Wales that the only material inquiry about acquiring part of the municipal housing stock of Cardiff city council was by Maurice Lubin and the Property Developers Mortgage and Loan Company. It did not get as far as a serious inquiry but it was the only one that made it to the starting gate, much to my surprise.

Although the Housing Act 1988 was clearly intended to open the door to all manner of extensions of what is, to me, unacceptable, unfettered landlordism, I am glad to say that it has not worked out that way. I hope that the Government will consider seriously the idea that I suggested. The people involved are my constituents and could be those of the Minister. They all deserve better than they get now. Everyone likes to think that they live in a free country and can bring up their family and live out their old age without harassment or living in a climate of fear. They wish to live in the highest standard of freedom that this country and the laws provided by Parliament can allow.

10.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on this Adjournment debate. It follows an early-day motion which he and several other hon. Members signed.

I listened with interest to what the hon. Gentleman has had to say about the difficulties which his constituents who are resident on the Cambrian trailer park at Culverhouse Cross in Cardiff have recently encountered. As the hon. Member recognised, I cannot discuss the particulars of this site, not least because it is currently the subject of action in the county court. Nevertheless, the case raises several broad issues concerning mobile homes legislation and I should like to comment on them.

The system under which mobile home residents own their homes and yet rent the pitch on which the home stands is unique, and legislation has to cater for its particular requirements. Before 1983, mobile home residents lacked long-term security in their homes, but the Government passed the Mobile Homes Act 1983 that year to provide security of tenure, and it gave other important rights including the right to sell the home on the site.

Unless the planning permission for the site, or the site operator's interest in the land, is subject to a time limit, the resident has indefinite security of tenure and his agreement can be brought to an end only for one of the three reasons prescribed by schedule 1 to the Act: that the resident is not living in the mobile home as his or her main residence; that, because of its age or condition, the mobile home is having a detrimental effect on the amenity of the site; or that the resident has broken a term of his agreement, and has been told of this and given a reasonable time to put things right but failed to do so. In that last case the court must also consider whether it is reasonable to terminate the agreement on that ground. A site owner cannot bring an agreement to an end without going to court and cannot evict a resident without an order from the court.

The Act provides that the main rights that it gives are implied in every agreement. The resident has those rights whether they are mentioned on the face of the agreement or not. Other terms of the agreement, such as those covering pitch fees and the mechanism for reviewing them, are not specified by the Act but may be included as "express" terms in individual agreements. Such terms are open to negotiation within the legal framework provided by the Act and, once agreed, are legally binding on both site owner and resident. Unless an agreement says that he can, a site owner cannot normally impose new terms without the resident's consent. If the pitch fee is increased or new rules are introduced, it is always open to a resident to challenge in court the site owner's interpretation of the express terms of the agreement.

I appreciate that many people—especially the elderly—find the idea of going to court daunting and are worried about the cost, but county courts are not the forbidding places that some people imagine. In the longer term, the housing action proposed by my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor as part of his review of civil justice should offer a lower-cost, informal and accessible form of resolving disputes through the courts, and I hope that it will be used for mobile homes cases. The review proposed that the housing action would provide for arbitration by a registrar, with hearings kept informal and the parties not needing legal representation. It would be not unlike the

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

present small claims system. But until such arrangements are available, mobile home residents must have confidence in their ability to enforce their rights through the present system if they disagree with what a site owner is doing.

If residents accept that a proposed increase in rent for a caravan or in pitch fees is fair but it is nevertheless likely to cause them hardship, they can apply to the local authority for help in the form of housing benefit.

The fact that this debate has arisen from a case that has gone to court should not be taken to mean that the legislation is not working. There were some teething problems after the 1983 Act became law, and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), when he was Under-Secretary, instigated a review of the Act that involved discussions with representatives of residents and site owners to see whether the problems could be sorted out.

The review concluded that there was no need for new legislation, but it led to some important initiatives, one of which was the issue of a code of guidance by the mobile home industry for members of its associations. The code gives guidance on issues that had been the source of some concern. It encourages site owners to recognise residents' associations. It condemns harassment and it gives an undertaking that disciplinary action will be taken against members where harassment is proved, or even where it is not referred to a court of law.

The review also led to a review of the model standards for park home sites, and new standards were issued last year. Finally, the industry introduced an arbitration scheme for pitch fee disputes—which has now been set up by the Confederation of Park Homes Industry—known as COPHI—and an informal scheme whereby the industry agreed to look into complaints against individual site operators. COPHI hopes to put draft proposals for a formal complaints scheme to the Office of Fair Trading in the near future.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West argues that such initiatives by the industry are not enough. He thinks that we should have formal licensing of site owners and give mobile homes residents rights similar to those enjoyed by local authority tenants under the tenants' choice arrangements, although I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman would press the point or whether he believes that it would be appropriate to introduce a tenants' choice system. We have established the tenants' choice system for tenants who rent their homes in the public sector, whereas in this debate we are talking about home owners in the private sector, who rent the pitches on which their homes stand.

Mr. Morgan: I think that the Minister may have misunderstood what I said. The licensing to which I referred was an extension of section 94 of the Housing Act 1988, under which would-be purchasers of municipal housing stock have to be licensed by the Housing Corporation or Tai Cymru in Wales as fit and proper persons or companies. I was asking for that extension to determine whether landlords of trailer parks should also be licensed as fit and proper persons in the light of the circumstances that I have revealed.

Mr. Chope: I had misunderstood the hon. Gentleman. He is asking about approved landlord status and a system of formal licensing. That would be unnecessary and would go much further than the Government would think appropriate.

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): My hon. Friend the Minister will accept that the 1983 Act was private Member's legislation which was piloted through the House by our right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), the Secretary of State for Defence, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment. Serving on the Committee was our right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Sir N. Lyell), who is currently Her Majesty's Solicitor-General. Therefore, on the fairness and liberalisation of the law, there is no doubt about what was intended. It has taken many complaints off the boil. The House now hears far fewer complaints than ever before.

I must ask a hypothetical question. If the law were to be amended to proscribe certain people as being park operators, should it not be extended further to proscribe certain people as ever having rights to be tenants on caravan sites?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend has a good point. It underlines the Government's concern about having more controls over the people who can operate sites, and the same applies to people who apply to move on to sites. There is an absolute discretion at the moment. The answer is to have more competition between site owners, and that means having more sites developed. If there were more sites there would be more choice for potential tenants, and in the marketplace only the best site owners would flourish. That would ensure that people were not forced on to sites where they were likely to encounter problems.

Local authorities already have powers to control physical conditions on sites. There is a remedy in the hands of local authorities who need to consider the role that mobile home sites can play in their areas. They can control conditions on sites and they can also, through their planning powers, facilitate the development of more sites and thereby encourage more competition.

We are conscious of the need to have a comprehensive, up-to-date picture of the conditions on mobile home sites and the changes that have taken place over the last few years. As the hon. Gentleman may know, we have commissioned research into local authorities' policies and practices on mobile homes and into the physical conditions on sites and the views and experiences of site owners and residents.

The first part of that research, the local authority survey, is complete and should be published in the spring. Its findings were encouraging and bear out what my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) said. Complaints from residents were fairly infrequent, and were mostly dealt with successfully by informal arrangement between the site owner and the authority. Contraventions, mainly of site licence conditions, occurred on a minority of sites.

On the much larger physical and social survey so far we have only had the results of a pilot study, including a study of a site in Wales, which have also been very encouraging. A pilot study is not the same as a full survey, and it would be wrong to assume that the national survey will necessarily tell the same story. But the survey has revealed a high degree of satisfaction among mobile home residents and standards which are continually improving. The

Department is proceeding with the full survey on a national scale this year, and the results should be available towards the end of the year. The indications from both surveys are that problems of the kind the hon. Gentleman has been talking about do not appear to be widespread and would certainly not justify changes in the existing legislation.

I should like to say a little more about the problem of residents who are, or who feel they are, harassed by the site owner. Harassment is a very serious issue and one on which this Government have shown their determination to stand firm. We strengthened the law on harassment in the Housing Act 1988 and introduced a new right to civil damages. Local authorities have powers under section 3 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 to prosecute site owners whom they consider guilty of harassment or of attempts at illegal eviction. Allegations of harassment must be very carefully looked into; often it may be a matter of the parties misunderstanding each other's behaviour—the sort of issue which an established residents' association could sensibly handle with the site owner. However, where it is a more serious issue, the necessary powers exist and it is for the local authories to use them to protect people living within their boundaries.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern for his constituents, but, as I have said, I cannot comment on a specific case that is before the courts. In general, I believe that the evidence is that those who have made agreements under section 1 of the Mobile Homes Act 1983 are adequately protected and that we do not need to introduce further changes to back up the protection given by that Act, the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and the initiatives that I am delighted were introduced by the industry.

If, after court proceedings are finished, the hon. Gentleman has further points arising from this case that he wishes to discuss with me or with my colleagues in the Welsh Office, we shall be delighted to listen. In the meantime, it has been of value to us all to listen to his comments in this debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 10 January 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

1. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

3. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's contribution towards finding a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

8. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in promoting peace in the middle east.

12. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends submitting any fresh proposals aimed at resolving the middle east problem; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. William Waldegrave): We support the efforts being made to establish direct contact between Israel and a representative Palestinian delegation as an important step towards an overall settlement.

Mr. Latham: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his appointment to the Privy Council.

Does not peace require a three-stage operation comprising, as my right hon. Friend said, an early meeting to take on board the Mubarak, Baker, Shamir proposals; elections on the West Bank and Gaza; and full negotiations with Israel and the Palestinians, obviously involving the Palestine Liberation Organisation, for a final settlement based on United Nations resolution 242?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words.

My hon. Friend has it exactly right when he says that ultimately, a multilateral peace conference will be needed. However, I was very pleased at a meeting with Bassam Abu Sharif of the PLO earlier this week to find that he was clear in his mind that the first important step is direct contact with the Israeli Government. Therefore, I support the order of events that my hon. Friend described.

Mr. Townsend: In a distinguished speech on 18 October last, my right hon. Friend stated that resentment in the occupied territories was growing and that there was no way that the Israeli authorities could suppress the aspirations of the people of those territories. Presuming that my right hon. Friend still believes that that is so, will he explain to the Israeli authorities without ceasing that it is very much in the interests of Israel itself to work quickly for a speedy solution of this long outstanding problem?

Mr. Waldegrave: I certainly still hold the views that I expressed last October. I must place on record that the Israeli Government's latest step, which is to restrict the travel of a number of key Palestinian leaders at this particular moment, is most unfortunate. Powerful voices have been raised in Israel itself in support of the views expressed by my hon. Friend, and I hope that they will carry the day in due course.

Mr. Hicks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if meaningful progress is to be made, sufficient pressure must be placed on the Israeli Government by the Americans, so that the objectives that we all seek can be achieved?

Mr. Waldegrave: The American President and Secretary of State, and the American Government, are fully engaged in the process that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) described earlier, and they are serious about bringing together in face-to-face talks for the first time representatives of the Israeli Government and a delegation from the Palestinians. It is right that they should do so. I believe that the Israelis are finding, perhaps to their surprise, that the Americans are serious in their diplomacy—which we strongly support.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does the Minister join other right hon. and hon. Members in condemning the activities of the Israeli police in breaking up the peaceful demonstration in Jerusalem by 3,000 women on 29 December and by 15,000 Palestinians, Israelis and Europeans on 30 December—all of whom were endorsing a negotiated peace settlement? They should surely not have been attacked with night sticks, tear gas, rubber bullets and percussion bombs.

Mr. Waldegrave: We join the hon. Gentleman, as do many right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, in condemning the events to which he refers. They reinforce our belief that speed is of the essence in getting the negotiating process under way before yet more bitterness is created.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that the only route to a peaceful solution in the middle east, which is something that we all want, lies in the consent of both parties? Will the right hon. Gentleman use his influence with both sides and demonstrate that he understands the very real anxieties, worries and suspicions of the Israelis in respect of the PLO, which has been the Israelis' terrorist enemy for so long that it is difficult for them to make that organisation a partner in a peace process?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not think that anyone should underestimate the difficulties for the Israelis, and the courage and the vision of those people in Israel who have

taken steps to move forwards. Soon after I took office the hon. Gentleman gave me a book by Mr. Amos Oz, which sets out the fears and visions of what is possible. If only his vision were that of the Israeli Government.

Mr. Galloway: Is the Minister aware that one of the prominent individuals to whom he referred earlier who has been banned from travel, is Dr. Faisal Husseini? Anyone who knows anything about the area knows that Dr. Husseini's standing is such that he is indispensable to the peace process. Will the Minister join the United States of America's State Department utterly to condemn the decision to preclude him from overseas travel for the next three months or from any travel in the West Bank or Gaza, as that is a setback to any hope for a negotiated settlement in the area?

Mr. Waldegrave: I join the hon. Gentleman to make the condemnation that he asks for. I used words that I hope were fairly strong earlier today. I have talked with Dr. Husseini on several occasions and he is bound to be an indispensable part of any peace process, as are a number of other people who are under a travel ban, including some senior trade unionists.

Sir Dennis Walters: Does my right hon. Friend agree that progress towards a peace settlement remains painfully slow? In the meantime, conditions on the West Bank remain appalling. The PLO leadership, under Mr. Arafat in particular over the past few years, has shown great patience and statemanship. Is it not time for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to have a meeting with Mr. Arafat?

Mr. Waldegrave: When I met Mr. Bassam Abu Sharif on Monday I said, and I hope that I represent the majority of opinion in the House, that we support the tenacity with which the Palestinian leadership has stuck to its negotiating mandate. The longer that it sticks to that, and the more it resists any return to the methods of terrorism, the greater the moral force it gains for its cause. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary takes the same stance as both his predecessors, with whom I worked on this issue, and if a meeting between him and Mr. Arafat would take things forward, he would have a meeting, but meetings for meetings' sake are not our style.

Mr. Kaufman: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment to the Privy Council. Is he aware that when Mr. Rabin wisely released Dr. Husseini from prison, that was a signal for moderate Palestinians that dialogue was available? Only a few weeks ago, at an international conference in Milan, Dr. Husseini was engaged in discussions with among others, General Dayan's daughter, who is one of the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who wish to achieve peace through dialogue with the Palestinians. Will the right hon. Gentleman inform Mr. Shamir that no amount of manoeuvring within the Israeli Cabinet for internal party political advantage will stop Israel having to talk to the Palestinians in the end? The Israeli Labour party has wisely recognised that fact by accepting the proposals of President Mubarak and the principles of Mr. Baker. Will the Government do everything possible to make it clear to the Likud section of the Israeli Government that they are standing against history?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's kind words. He has summarised the truth eloquently. There is no question but that, at this moment of all moments, when we may be approaching the first face-to-face talks between genuine Palestinian representatives and the Israeli Government, to put those kinds of restrictions on moderate leaders of the Palestinian side is foolish in the extreme.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you tell us whether it is in order for a Minister to engage in multiple linking of questions? It restricts the number of Back Benchers who can be called to ask supplementaries. Following the linking of four questions dealing with what is obviously the most popular topic for today, only one Back Bencher has been called per three questions, and none of the others have been called at all.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is up to the Minister concerned to decide whether questions are linked. I have given the previous question a fair run, and there are others on the Order Paper, on which the hon. Gentleman may well be called.

Arms Control

4. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arms control negotiations he is presently involved in; what stage each has reached; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The United Kingdom joins in the two sets of conventional arms control negotiations taking place in Vienna, and in the chemical weapons negotiations at Geneva. All three are making progress; in particular, we hope that the negotiation on conventional armed forces in Europe—the CFE talks—will meet our ambitious target of agreement during this year. I shall be attending a conference in Ottawa in February, following up the initiative taken at last year's NATO summit to promote an open-skies agreement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend's response bears impressive testimony to the strength and resolution shown by the Government and their allies on defence matters. Does he agree that, had Conservative Members listened to the CND apologists on the Opposition Benches, he could not have made that response?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right—what is producing these results is strength followed by negotiation. We have shown the strength, and we are now gaining the benefits of the negotiation.

Mr. Cohen: Is not there some dispute over the specification of weapons to be included in the arms control talks? Has not the Soviet Union accused the West of dragging its feet, particularly in its failure to include dual-capable—that is, nuclear-capable—aircraft in the talks?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is a good bit out of date. A plentiful programme of work for the CFE negotiations still lies ahead and there is hard work still to be done, which is why the Canadians have suggested that, among other things, we should review progress at the Ottawa conference and establish whether any obstacles

can be removed. Nevertheless, although some arguing remains to be done, I think that we are on course for an agreement this year.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Although I welcome the political developments in eastern Europe, does my right hon. Friend agree that the situation is fluid and potentially dangerous? Although Warsaw pact countries such as Czechoslovakia may demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops from their territories, as happened yesterday, it is surely in the interests of NATO, of this country and of Europe generally to resist reciprocal demands by the Soviets for the withdrawal of British and French troops from West Germany.

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree, and no such demends have been received.

Mr. Kaufman: When discussing stages in disarmament negotiations—to which this question refers—the Prime Minister said yesterday that negotiations on short-range nuclear weapons would

"be considered when the agreements on reductions in conventional arms have been completed."—[*Official Report*, 9 January 1990, Vol. 164, c. 814.]

Last spring's NATO declaration, however, made it clear that negotiations on short-range nuclear weapons could begin as soon as the conventional arms reductions had begun. Why does the Prime Minister not tell the truth to the House?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is nit-picking. The comprehensive concept—to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was referring, and to which the right hon. Gentleman also clearly refers—is not in dispute; the allies are all agreed on it, and we are all adhering to it.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I welcome the progress in the talks at Vienna and elsewhere. Will my right hon. Friend nevertheless suggest to our NATO allies that they do not proceed too fast with reducing their own defence commitments? Britain—and, outside NATO, France—will maintain their own readiness while there is still uncertainty in the wider Europe; many of our allies in NATO, however, are already showing that, far from meeting the 3 per cent. target, they are dropping further behind.

Mr. Hurd: There is great advantage, when one is thinking of any reductions in defence spending or defence equipment, in continuing to hold negotiations on balanced and agreed reductions.

Nicaragua

5. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions are being taken by Her Majesty's ambassador in Managua to observe the elections in Nicaragua.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): Her Majesty's ambassador and the chargé d'affaires will continue to monitor the election process carefully. They will also offer whatever assistance is necessary to our official observer, Dr. David Browning.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Minister agree that a crucial factor in ensuring fair elections in Nicaragua is that the constant intimidation of that country by the United States should cease? Will he take this opportunity publicly to declare unequivocally his condemnation of the attack on the Nicaraguan embassy in Panama by the United States?

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not recognise the hon. Gentleman's reference to the intimidation of Nicaragua by the United States. He will be aware that the United States Government have apologised for the incident involving Nicaraguan property in Panama. I hope that he accepts that one of the important aspects in ensuring free and fair elections in Nicaragua is equal opportunity on the media being provided to both parties. He will be aware that the United Nations observers have said that the amount of bias towards the governing party and the attacks on its potential rivals have exceeded all reasonable bounds.

Mr. Norris: Does not my hon. Friend share with me a certain scepticism about the forthcoming electoral process in Nicaragua, based on the transparent inability of the Sandinista regime to separate itself as between government and party? That is demonstrated beyond peradventure by the way in which the Sandinistas dominate the electoral tribunal in Nicaragua and the Sandinista regime has suppressed opposition both on television and in the press in that country. Does he share with me a certain wry amusement at my experience when, having been in Nicaragua to look at the electoral process there, I then went to Panama to witness General Noriega's little election in May of last year and found that one of the few officials whom the general could find to legitimise his election process was a member of the electoral tribunal in Nicaragua?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend has considerable experience and personal knowledge of these matters. He is right to draw attention to the constitutional anomaly, that the Sandinista party continues to exercise a constitutional monopoly of power over the army and all state apparatus. I hope that the Opposition do not find that a laughing matter.

Mr. Flannery: Was not the attack on the Nicaraguan embassy in Panama quite disgraceful and did not the President of the United States apologise for it? Nicaragua is being permanently attacked by the Contras who are being given money by the United States for that purpose. Is not an attack on an entire country even more odious than an attack on that country's embassy in another country?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman seems reluctant to recognise that the situation has changed. The United States Government ceased to give military aid to the Contras a very long time ago. They have also undertaken to withdraw humanitarian aid from any Contras who are found to be involved in military action.

Eastern Europe

6. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to assist East European countries.

14. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to Poland in its efforts to restructure its economy and build up democratic institutions.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are already providing direct financial and other assistance to Poland and Hungary. On 2 January we made a grant of $100 million to the international stabilisation fund for Poland. We are looking carefully at the requirements of other East European countries, and my right hon. Friend and I will be visiting a number of them in the coming weeks. We will respond positively to these countries as they put in place political and economic reforms.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's reply. However, as Socialism and collectivism have destroyed the economies of these East European countries, surely the best thing that we could do would be to give advice to them on how to create a liberal market economy, perhaps through a programme drawn up by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) who is such an outstandingly able proponent of privatisation. Does my right hon. Friend agree that German reunification would not help to create stability in central Europe?

Mr. Waldegrave: The central part of my hon. Friend's remarks are quite correct. The Polish Government and others have made it quite clear that the last thing they want is statist and Socialist economies to advise them. They want to be told how to set up proper market economies. My hon. Friend may know friends of his and mine who can do that with a Scottish accent, and so much the better.

Mr. Maples: Does my right hon. Friend agree that private investment by western commercial companies will be an immense help to Poland and other eastern European countries in developing their economies? What help and encouragement are the Government providing in that process?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. One of the perennial demands put to us, for example by Mr. Walesa when he was here, is for private investment. We are now helping the Polish Government in particular, and also the Hungarian Government, with the liberalisation of their economies, with privatisation and the establishment of capital markets. That is what they are seeking. The Opposition see despairingly the remains of their philosophy fading away.

Mr. Madden: In responding to the undoubted wish of the vast majority of British people for the British Government to help the democratic process in eastern Europe, will the Minister give a clear assurance that no British industry, especially the textile industry, will be regarded as expendable nor will the jobs of large numbers of British textile workers be regarded as expendable by our Government turning a blind eye to flagrant dumping by eastern European textile industries?

Mr. Waldegrave: As defined under the international regulations, dumping is not permissible. However, I urge the House and the hon. Gentleman not to protect our own market. The best thing we can do for countries trying to join world trade is to open our markets for the benefit of our consumers and for their future.

Mr. Faulds: Is not a realistic assessment of the situation in eastern European countries the fact that a concerted European effort is needed along the lines of the Marshall plan? If the economies of those countries are not helped to work, democratisation will not work in those countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis but perhaps not with the analogy of the Marshall plan as in some countries all the stock and investment was physically destroyed and had to be replaced in short order. The connection that the hon. Gentleman makes between freedom, democracy and the free market is right and his analysis of this issue would make him welcome on this side of the House.

Mr. Soames: I thank my right hon. Friend for the generous increased grant in aid that his Department has given to eastern Europe. Does he agree that cultural links will be very important in the next few years? Will he assure the House that he will do what he can to encourage those links which are so vital to increased understanding on both sides?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the principal demands we are getting from all those countries is for English language teaching. It is the privilege and the luck of this country that all those countries consider English to be the language of freedom, so there is much that we can do not only in high culture, but in the practical aspect of English language teaching.

Mr. Robertson: Is the Minister aware that the Opposition join in the celebration of the movement to democracy, the rejection of Stalinist communism throughout eastern Europe, and especially the return of Romania from a particularly foul dictatorship since the House last met? Surely it is time for a more appropriately generous and comprehensive aid plan to be designed for the newly democratised countries of eastern Europe. Surely the Government could take a lead in bringing together the rich western countries to establish appropriate aid and the sizeable imaginative package which is required and which alone will safeguard and consolidate the movement to democracy where it was once crushed and repressed. What will the Government do to relieve the COCOM restrictions, the justifications for which are disappearing every day? What will happen about offers of future European Community membership to those countries that are still part of the European continent and which are now aspiring to membership in future?

Mr. Waldegrave: I note that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends welcome the steps that have been taken towards freedom. I further note from a debate in the House that even his few Trotskyite colleagues welcome the overthrowing of the Stalinist regimes—but I do not want to engage in that debate. The hon. Gentleman is a little out of date on the scale of what is being done by the West. Britain alone will contribute about £250 million to Poland this year, and in the past few days the Japanese Prime Minister has announced further measures. Britain took the lead in the European Community and in the Group of 24 to co-ordinate the measures that are now being taken on a massive scale. The hon. Gentleman asked about COCOM, but that is irrelevant. Do Poland and Hungary need to import carbon technologies? No, they need food and basic infrastructure. We should retain that basic military insurance for much longer.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: Does my right hon. Friend recall that a number of eastern European countries have been granted guest membership status of the Council of

Europe? Will he support further applications by eastern European countries, as that must be a positive step to help them on the road to democracy?

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is a clear yes, as long as the criteria are met. I agree with my hon. Friend that the criteria for membership should not be watered down, but if they are met we should welcome new members.

Mr. Charles Powell

7. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects Mr. Charles Powell to return to his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: In due course.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the Minister a question of which I have given him notice? Do Ministers believe Sir Leon Brittan when he asserts that Mr. Powell approved the leaking of legal advice to the Government? Will Ministers do anything about an article in yesterday's *Evening Standard*, which said "Leon pays Westland debts" and in which it was asserted that there was some kind of a pay-off for——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question relates to Mr. Charles Powell. Will the hon. Gentleman come to order?

Mr. Dalyell: The fundamental question is this. Is it not highly undesirable that civil servants should be involved in political lying?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his question. Despite that, I must tell him that this is not a matter for me. I have nothing to add to the numerous statements and answers to questions from the hon. Gentleman by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Soames: Will my hon. Friend join me in condemning outright this continuing and disgraceful pursuit of a loyal and devoted public servant?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend makes his point very clearly.

Iraq (Arrests)

9. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Iraqi authorities over the arrest and detention of Farzad Bazoft and Daphne Parish.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made over 40 separate ministeral and diplomatic representations to the Iraqi authorities and Iraqi Ministers on these cases. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State raised the matter with the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, on 22 December in Paris. Consular access was finally given to Mrs. Parish on 4 December. She was also seen on 22 December by her daughter, accompanied by embassy officials. The Iraqis have now agreed to Mrs. Parish receiving legal representation. We continue to press for formal notification of any charges against her.

Mr. Archer: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there are disturbing reasons for believing that the purpose of the Iraqi authorities was to prevent Mr. Bazoft, who is a journalist, from investigating the reasons for the explosion at Al Iskanderia, which the Iraqi Government wish to sweep under the table? Will the right hon. Gentleman say what sanctions the Government have in mind if these people are not released?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman that Mr. Bazoft was engaged in attempting to make a journalistic scoop which in our country would have been legitimate even if his methods were dangerous in terms of Iraq. Our duty, first to Mrs. Parish as one of our citizens and to him on humanitarian grounds, because he was travelling on British travel documents, is to see that they are given legal representation and consular access and that the processes of justice are brought to bear as soon as possible. That is the object of our efforts.

Mr. Marlow: I wonder whether it would be helpful to my right hon. Friend to put the matter in the context of 1946. If, after a long and bloody war someone connected with the enemy had been seen or was thought to have been seen spying in a sensitive area, should we have been sensitive about it? Will he also bear in mind the fact that we have important relationships and common purposes with Iraq?

Mr. Waldegrave: Our objective is to see that the two people in question are given legal representation, that charges are brought so that they can answer them and that they are given a fair trial.

I remind my hon. Friend of different traditions in this matter. In 1913 a German naval officer was discovered sketching defences at Portsmouth. He was arrested and bound over to keep the peace for a year.

Khmer Rouge

10. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom policy towards the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 8 November in which I made plain the Government's repugnance for the Khmer Rouge and set out our policy towards Cambodia.

Mr. Evans: Following the recently reported attack on the Cambodian capital Pnomh Penh by Pol Pot's forces, will the Foreign Secretary give an undertaking that he will support the Australian peace plan when he meets his Security Council colleagues in Paris next week? Will he also inform them that he is utterly opposed to the Khmer Rouge playing any part in a future Government of Cambodia?

Mr. Hurd: I have seen no report of a military attack on Pnomh Penh. I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the interest and importance of the Australian proposal, which would give the United Nations a substantial role in running Cambodja while long-term arrangements were made. I have discussed it with the Australian Foreign Minister and several of my other colleagues. When the representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council meet in Paris this week, our representative will make clear our strong interest in the proposal.

Mr. Lester: Although I accept totally my right hon. Friend's condemnation of the Khmer Rouge, what it stands for and what it did in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979, would it not be more helpful to the aim of reaching a settlement and encouraging the Australian peace initiative to recognise that the Cambodian Government, certainly within the past three or four years, have done a good job in difficult circumstances? Should we not strike a balance between condemnation of the Khmer Rouge and recognition that there is a Government in Cambodia who have worked hard in the best interests of the Cambodian people?

Mr. Hurd: I know my hon. Friend's view. He also knows that there is still widespread resentment and suspicion of the way in which Vietnam imposed that Government on Cambodia. The Vietnamese have withdrawn their Government troops from Cambodia and that has changed the position. That is why we sent a team to Cambodia recently. It had a successful mission as a result of which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced our new humanitarian projects in Cambodia. From that process and the progress made arose the Australian initiative and the meeting of the permament representatives of the Security Council in which we shall take part.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a useful role for China in the affairs of Cambodia? Might such a role have the agreeable side-effect of that country showing to the world that it is prepared to make some amends for the appalling events in Tiananmen square in June last year?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that the role of China is extremely important in this matter. Its representative will be present at the meeting in Paris and I hope that China will take note of my hon. Friend's points.

Mr. Foulkes: The Foreign Secretary is reported today as hinting at a policy shift towards Cambodia. In his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) he said that the Government are interested in the Australian proposal. Will he not come out openly today and say that Britain will abandon its support for the Khmer Rouge, which is totally indefensible? Will he also clearly say that, at the meeting in Paris on Tuesday, our representative will support the Australian proposal, the Soviet proposal for an arms moratorium and the ceasefire proposal? If the five permanent members of the Security Council are unanimous on this it will be a significant step forward in bringing peace to a country that has suffered for far too long.

Mr. Hurd: In his rhetoric, the hon. Gentleman has not noticed what is going on. I have updated our policy and I announced it to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe on 8 November. I have just repeated the changes that have been made. I believe that there can be further updating by bringing our western friends and our friends in south-east Asia forward together. I would much rather do that as I believe that moving together is the best way in which we can help, as much as outsiders can, to bring peace to Cambodia.

EC Budget

11. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's likely net contribution to the European Community budget in *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1990.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): The latest estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the EC budget in 1989, published in the statement on the 1989 Community budget last April, was £1,966 million. An outturn figure for 1989 and an estimate for 1990 will be published in the statement on the 1990 Community budget.

Mr. Marlow: I did not catch the second figure that my hon. Friend gave, but if I got it right, I believe the first figure for the full year was about £2,000 million. That is a heck of a lot of bread, if I can put it like that. As we are net receivers of excess European manufactures and net importers of excess European agricultural produce, and despite the fact that our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done a magnificent job in getting some of our money back, is it reasonable that we should be spending £2,000 million a year of our taxpayers' money to subsidise those Europeans who seem to do nothing but insult us? Can we not take further action now to get more of our money back?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend may think that there are those in the Community who insult us, but my hon. Friend is well capable of holding up our end on this, and perhaps that is valuable. My hon. Friend drew attention to the advances made because of the deal negotiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. By the end of this year there will have been an abatement of about £7·5 billion since the Fontainebleau agreement in 1984. That is a considerable achievement, and it represents a substantial reduction in the net contribution. We are by no means the largest net contributor to the Community budget and, at this stage, there are two other contributors. We must maintain our vigilance, however, to ensure that the size of the Community budget does not rise unreasonably.

Mr. Leighton: Is it not the case that many EC countries pay nothing into the budget whereas Britain, one of the poorer nations, has to pay grotesquely large sums—something like £2 billion—to subsidise richer countries? Would the Minister care to imagine what we could do with that £2 billion in the National Health Service? Even after all the rebates, when will the Government take steps to stop us acting as Lady Bountiful with British taxpayers' money?

Mr. Maude: Such criticism comes ill from the hon. Gentleman, as it was negotiation by the previous Labour Government which led to the net contribution by the United Kingdom. Only the firm stance taken by this Government in the earlier part of last decade led to that appalling legacy of incompetence being substantially reduced.

Mrs. Currie: The European Community is set to change considerably if associate status is offered to the newly democratic countries of eastern Europe. Does my hon. Friend agree that many of these are poor countries and will need a great deal of help? Has any thought yet been

given to the effect on the United Kingdom's likely net contribution during the 1990s as Europe is widened to include the newly democratic countries?

Mr. Maude: No one is suggesting that in the early part of the 1990s there is any question of the European Community being enlarged to accommodate reforming countries from eastern Europe. Co-operation agreements are being negotiated with other countries. Earlier this afternoon the House heard about some of the financial contributions that are very properly being made by the European Community to eastern European countries. I assure my hon. Friend that this country's net contribution should not increase, and because the Community's budget has remained substantially within the ceilings negotiated at the Brussels Council in 1988, the net contribution should be reduced in subsequent years.

Mr. Anderson: As democratic centralism and purges end in central and eastern Europe, is there not a danger of the same democratic centralism and purges being reasserted in the Conservative party? Has the Minister noted the recent article by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) suggesting that if Tory Members of the European Parliament do not toe the Prime Minister's little England line on the Community and the Community budget, they may have to leave the party? Does he approve of that view?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman tries hard, but to little effect. His words come a little oddly just after one of his hon. Friends expressed an ultimately little Englander view. He tries hard but he does not cut any ice. In the Conservative party we have a firm view about the sort of Europe that we want to develop—an open, liberal European Community based on co-operation between friendly states. That will remain the case.

Mr. Gow: Does my hon. Friend consider that an annual net contribution to the Community of £2 billion is too much, too little or about right? Is it not true that if the vaulting ambitions of the supra-nationalists had been restricted and the Community had devoted itself only to the free movement of people, goods and capital in the member states, this massive contribution would have been dramatically reduced?

Mr. Maude: Undoubtedly one of the principal causes of the large Community budget which has led to the United Kingdom's net contribution has been the common agricultural policy, and that is well understood. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was carrying out the negotiations which led to such a substantial and dramatic reduction in our contribution, plenty of Opposition Members were prepared to decry her efforts. I am glad that she stuck firmly to her purpose and succeeded so well.

US Secretary of State

13. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the United States Secretary of State: and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I last met the United States Secretary of State on 14 and 15 December at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation meeting in Brussels. Secretary Baker also called on me in London on 11 December, when we discussed a wide range of issues.

Mr. Winnick: Has the right hon. Gentleman had the opportunity to discuss the appalling and brutal murders of the six priests in El Salvador? They were undoubtedly carried out, as has now been confirmed, by members of the military force, some of whom were American-trained. Does President Bush intend to send in an invasion force to bring about the rule of law in El Salvador? How many detectives from Scotland Yard have gone out? What is their brief and precisely what will they report back to the British Government?

Mr. Hurd: I have not discussed that matter with the American Secretary of State. We have been glad to accede to the request for help in clearing up these atrocities. The team consists of three Metropolitan police officers who are helping the local authorities in the pursuit of justice.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the striking and attractive features of the new, more articulate and better-educated American Government is their enthusiastic commitment to Britain's full participation in the processes of developing the European Community?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I think that the renewed United States enthusiasm for development in Europe is correct, particularly as the Americans have made it clear that they are not seeking to intervene in the discussions in the Community about what sort of Community it should become, and are placing their emphasis, as we do, on completion of the single market and the achievement of a liberal and open trading system.

Mr. Mullin: Has the Foreign Secretary had the opportunity to put it to the American Secretary of State that it might be a good idea if the United States called off the Vietnam war and ended its trade and aid embargo of Vietnam, with a view perhaps to stopping the flow of refugees from that country?

Mr. Hurd: I have discussed the whole question of the boat people with Mr. Baker and I shall do so again when, as I hope, I visit Washington at about the end of the month. I very much hope that at the steering committee meeting on the boat people in Geneva, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, will be held next week, we shall find the international community—perhaps with some help from the United States—moving on from the position that it took last June. That was not in itself sufficient to deal with what I regard as the major danger—a new onrush into Hong Kong of people from Vietnam during the spring and summer.

Sir Peter Blaker: On that point, has my right hon. Friend expressed to the American Secretary of State the surprise and indignation of many Conservative right hon. and hon. Members at the United States' high moral line on the compulsory return of the Vietnamese illegal immigrants from Hong Kong, at a time when the United States is returning illegal immigrants daily to many countries, including Mexico, and to Haiti, to which it has returned 20,000 boat people within the past year with much less careful screening to determine whether they are

genuine refugees than is carried out in Hong Kong? Can my right hon. Friend hold out any hope of an improvement in American logic?

Mr. Hurd: Points similar to those made by my right hon. Friend have been put repeatedly to the United States, and I believe that the reaction in the United States to the repatriation of the planeload of 51 to Vietnam was a good deal more moderate than some of us had expected. Certainly, there is increasing understanding within the United States Administration of what we are trying to achieve and why, and of why we and Hong Kong deserve more understanding and help from the international community than has so far been received.

Eastern Europe

15. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Jacques Delors regarding the current situation in eastern Europe.

Mr. Hurd: I have had a number of such discussions recently with Mr. Delors. The subject, as the hon. Member knows, was also discussed at the Strasbourg European Council and the ministerial meeting of the Group of 24 on 13 December.

Sir Russell Johnston: I thank the Secretary of State for his reply. I am sure that he will agree that none of the changes in the East would have been possible without Gorbachev. Will he tell Mr. Delors and his colleagues in the European Council of Ministers that we must all think about helping not only the newly democratised countries in central Europe but the Soviet Union? Gorbachev is in trouble and it is in our and everyone's interests to help him.

Mr. Hurd: The credit does not go solely to Mr. Gorbachev; it must also go to the countries of the West, Europe and the United States, which stood firm at a time when the Communist dictatorships seemed impregnable. That needs to be recorded. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has often said, we certainly believe that it is in the interests of the West that Mr. Gorbachev should succeed with perestroika. But his problems cannot be solved to any major extent by financial aid from this country or from the West. His problems are essentially those of nationalities within the Soviet Union and of an economy that is drifting downhill because of its basic nature, which needs to be changed.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity of drawing to Mr. Delors' attention the work on the development of representative institutions of eastern Europe, which has been facilitated by the British Government, the Great Britain-East European Centre and the Inter-Parliamentary Union? Does he agree that that work has been recognised by all sides as immensely valuable? Will he encourage such activity within the Community?

Mr. Hurd: I certainly will. I know of my hon. Friend's interest in and leadership of such ventures. The contribution that Britain can most aptly make to those countries as they move towards free institutions is to show them, through many relevant projects and in many different ways, how to erect free institutions, free media and free elections, and how to move from a command economy to a market economy. That is why we have put such emphasis on the know-how funds that we have set up for Poland and Hungary.

Mr. Nellist: Before the Secretary of State has any further discussions with Jaques Delors, will he first talk to the Secretary of State for Defence, who yesterday, in a disgraceful outburst, donned his Captain America uniform and claimed that he alone was saving the world for peace and democracy? Will he ask him to show some regard for the millions who demonstrated in Leipzig, Bucharest, Budapest and Prague, and those who lost their lives in Romania? Will he tell the Minister of State, who is sitting next to him, that those whom he disparagingly regards as Trotskyites are those who, for the past five or six decades, have explained that there cannot be Socialism without democracy, just as one cannot be a human being without oxygen? It is as justifiable to call what happened under the dictatorship of Stalin "eastern Europe Socialism" as it would be to call what happened under the Spanish Inquisition "Christianity".

Mr. Hurd: I am having a little difficulty following the hon. Gentleman's logic, but it appears to be deeply defensive stuff. Political and economic freedom go hand-in-hand; neither survives well without the other. That is the lesson that the peoples of eastern Europe are teaching their former rulers.

European Foreign Policies

18. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will attend an informal meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Twelve in Dublin on 20 January. The Irish Presidency is convening this meeting to allow an early exchange of views on developments in eastern Europe.

Mr. Knox: Will my hon. Friend confirm that greater co-operation on foreign policy within the Community is still the major objective of the Government's foreign policy, as it was when the previous Foreign Secretary was in office?

Mr. Maude: We have said on many occasions that the European Community is central to our foreign policy. We regard the growth of a common foreign policy among the Twelve as one of the great successes of the European Community in recent years.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Although the Government expressed some reservations, I congratulate them on the unanimous adoption of a resolution during the United Nations special session on South Africa in December. What steps have the Government taken, in conjunction with their European counterparts, to end political trials and executions in South Africa? Will they call for the release of all political detainees, as was stated in the resolution that was unanimously accepted?

Mr. Maude: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Twelve made their position perfectly clear. Frequent representations are made, and it is encouraging that some notice appears to have been taken of them.

Namibia

20. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are delighted by progress towards successful completion of the United Nations plan for Namibia and look forward to close relations with an independent Namibia.

Mr. Hayward: I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply. Does the United Nations have any further plans in relation to Namibia in terms of progress through and beyond independence and democratic government?

Mr. Waldegrave: It will be for the countries that regard themselves, as we do, as friends of independent Namibia to help in the future. I am happy to say that, next week, in response to requests from Namibia, we will be sending a Ministry of Defence technical advisory team to assess the requirements for establishing and training an army for Namibia after independence. I believe that steps of that kind—by the supporters' club, as it were, of friends of Namibia—now need to be taken.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister ensure that Her Majesty's Government do everything possible to make sure that there are no efforts to destabilise the position as progress is made towards independence in Namibia? Will he also ensure that in negotiations on the outstanding debt incurred by the illegal regime, every support is given to reducing that debt?

As Britain created the problem of Walvis bay, which will be a problem for negotiation following independence, will Her Majesty's Government provide all possible support to ensure that that port ultimately goes to Namibia?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman will agree that the pessimists who thought that progress to independence would not succeed have been proved wrong. It has been a process in which South Africa and all the parties have kept their commitments, and we should welcome that. Problems remain for the future, and Walvis bay is one of them. We thought it right not to introduce that into the process at this stage, but it must be settled in the future.

Disability Benefits

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the Government's proposals for developing and improving the system of social security benefits for disabled people.

As the House is aware, at the time when major areas of social security were reviewed between 1983 and 1985, we commissioned the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to carry out the most thorough and comprehensive study ever undertaken of disability in Great Britain. The aim was to provide information on which to base a review of benefits in this field. Six reports were published between September 1988 and July 1989.

In October, when I announced a number of initial steps following the reports, I said that we would come forward in due course with a wider range of proposals to improve the balance and structure of the system. That wider response to the OPCS reports is contained in the paper, "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" which my right hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for the disabled and I are laying before the House today. In formulating it, we have taken account of the many comments and suggestions that we have received, and of the very valuable report on this subject published by the Social Security Advisory Committee in 1988.

Before outlining our proposals, I should briefly remind the House of some of the main features of the OPCS surveys. The threshold for defining disability was deliberately set low, with the result that it includes people who are well able to participate in normal daily activities and who are not dependent on disability benefits or services. They found that, in general, the gap in income between disabled and non-disabled people was much greater for those under pension age. They also found, again in general, that for those in receipt of the existing mobility and attendance allowances, the value of the benefits was greater than the average extra costs that the survey identified.

In the light of that, we see three main strategic needs. One is to improve, for those of working age and below, the coverage of help with the extra costs that disability can bring. A second is to improve the balance of benefits available to those disabled people who are unable to work, in particular to do more for those who are disabled from birth or early in life. The third is to help those disabled people who can and wish to work by making it easier for them to keep or take up jobs.

Our proposals address those objectives with a programme for action in three main phases.

First, we shall shortly take the legislative or other action necessary to implement the initial package of improvements within the existing benefit structure that I announced in October. The House will recall that those changes included increasing in real terms the disability premiums in income support and housing benefit; raising premiums for disabled children to the adult rate; extending attendance allowance to disabled babies under two and to terminally ill people without any waiting period; extending mobility allowance to people who are both deaf and blind; improving incentives to rehabilitation for employment; and introducing a £10 carers' premium into income support and housing benefit for those receiving invalid care allowance. We intend that those changes should mostly be in place by April, and all by October.

Secondly, the forthcoming Social Security Bill will contain measures to enhance the benefits of severely disabled people who were never able to work or who were disabled early in life, while at the same time ensuring a better balanced and more sustainable overall structure of income replacement benefits for incapacity, taking account of the encouraging growth of occupational provision in this field.

From the latter part of this year, we shall introduce an age-related addition to the non-contributory severe disablement allowance, at the same rates as the present additions paid with contributory invalidity benefit. This will mean up to £10 a week extra for some 250,000 severely disabled people. Also from the latter part of this year, while protecting existing entitlements, we shall end new entitlements to what are known as reduced earnings allowances in the industrial injuries scheme, thus removing an overlap with entitlement to the main invalidity benefit.

From April 1991, again while fully protecting rights and entitlements built up before that time, we shall end the accrual of new rights to the earnings-related additions to invalidity benefit. The build-up of these rights, which would otherwise go on well into the next century would, we believe, have inhibited the growth of occupational provision, constrained the Government's ability to help those most in need, and further widened the gap between those disabled people who have been able to work and those who have not.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Cuts.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: The third phase of our programme will be to bring forward further legislation at the earliest practicable opportunity to provide for two new benefits which we aim to have in place by April 1992. One will be a disability allowance with two elements, directed respectively at the care needs and at the mobility needs of disabled people of working age and below. The care element will have three rates, of which the upper two will match the rates of the present attendance allowance. The mobility element will have two rates, of which the upper one will match the existing mobility allowance. The new lower rates of each element will give extra help to about 150,000 people in each case. Attendance allowance will remain for those over retirement age.

The other new benefit will be a disability employment credit, to promote disabled people's independence by supporting those who are in work or who would like to work and could, but whose earning capacity is low. Thus it will respond to the widely perceived need for what has often been called a partial incapacity benefit. Much detailed work will be required, particularly for this third stage. In carrying it out, we will of course take account of comments made by disabled people's organisations and others.

These proposals build in a practical and constructive way on the achievements of 10 years in which the coverage of benefits for the long-term sick and disabled has massively increased and expenditure has correspondingly doubled in real terms. While ensuring a sustainable foundation for disability benefits into the next century, including the continued growth of occupational provision,

they will bring extra help to some 850,000 people in the next few years at a net cost of some £300 million in 1993. This is new money, which was agreed in the 1989 public expenditure survey. The extra provision for the first three years, beginning in 1990-91, has been included in the totals for my Department published in the Autumn Statement. These extra amounts are £84 million in 1990-91; £138 million in 1991-92; and £213 million in 1992-93.

Together with the proposals for improved community care announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health in November, and the consultative document that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will shortly publish on his review of training and employment services for disabled people, this improved structure of disability benefits reflects our firm commitment to improving the quality of life for Britain's disabled people.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that an improvement in disability benefits is desperately needed in Britain and is to be welcomed, but that, after 10 years of waiting, today's announcement falls far short of a comprehensive disability income, which is the real answer?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that seven out of eight disabled people are left completely outside his statement today, and that for the remaining one in eight who are covered, virtually all the extra money that he speaks of will be met by savings or clawbacks on other benefits, so that almost none is net new money for the social security system?

Specifically, with regard to the package of measures that the right hon. Gentleman announced in October and repeated today, will he confirm that the £100 million cost is largely accounted for by the almost equivalent £80 million cut in statutory sick pay? Will he not recognise that it is frankly not acceptable to transfer money from one group of claimants to another?

Secondly, with regard to the age-related addition to the severe disablement allowance, the right hon. Gentleman said that it meant up to £10 a week for 250,000 disabled people. Will he confirm that the cost of that is entirely covered by the loss of other benefits, income support and housing benefit, so that there is no net extra income for those very disabled people?

Thirdly, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we welcome the new disability allowance, although it largely subsumes the existing mobility and attendance allowances? But will he confirm that only one in 40 disabled people will be eligible and that, once again, one third of the cost will be clawed back by cuts in other benefits?

Fourthly, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the new disability employment credit is also extremely limited and that only one in 30 disabled people of working age will be eligible? Will he also confirm that, yet again, the whole of the cost will be covered by savings from other benefits, so that this is merely a transfer within the social security system? Will he also confirm that this will be an income-related benefit, so that it will confine disabled people to low-paid jobs?

Those are the supposed gains in the statement. It also contains two significant losses for disabled people. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his ending the build-up of new rights to the earnings-related addition to invalidity benefit is a huge retrograde step for disabled people? Is he aware that the extent of their losses is made clear by the fact that the Government, as a result of the cut that he has announced today, will save no less than £350 million by 1998?

Therefore, the significance of today's announcement is that it creates, for the first time, a two-nation approach to disablement. Two thirds of all disabled people—that is, those who are 60 and over—are to be treated as second-class citizens, and the massive cuts in invalidity pensions, amounting to £350 million a year, are a promise of poverty for the elderly disabled.

Secondly, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his ending today the reduced earnings allowance amounts to a further major cut in the industrial injuries scheme, which has already been decimated under the Government? Will he confirm that the cut will amount to no less than £40 million by 1992-93?

The Opposition welcome any genuine improvement in benefits for disabled people, but today's announcement, with its distorting mirrors of clawbacks, of savings of other benefits and of transfers between claimants within the social security system, is, regrettably, more political rhetoric and hype than real substance.

Mr. Newton: In six or seven years of facing the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) across the Floor of the House, and even with a good deal of experience of his usual reaction to my statements on such matters, I have rarely heard a less generous response to a substantial package of improvements for long-term sick and disabled people.

I hope to achieve a degree of agreement with the hon. Gentleman, but I suggest that it is common ground even with many outside this House who press for extensions additional to those that I have announced that his figures on the number of disabled who will benefit from the changes relate to the OPCS survey statistics, which constitute quite a low threshold for the starting point. In fact, the Disablement Income Group has indicated that it is too low a threshold for assessing disability. No one has seriously suggested that changes to the system could respond in the way that the hon. Gentleman implied to the needs of all the disabled covered by the survey.

Against that background, I turn to the questions asked of me by the hon. Member. I can categorically tell him that it is not the case that the extensions do not represent net new money. My statement referred to a build-up of expenditure over the next three or four years of £300 million of new money by 1993-94 in benefit improvements. As to the age-related addition to the severe disablement allowance, of course there will be some offsets—and I emphasise the word "some"—in income-related benefit, but the net increase in expenditure for about 250,000 people will, when the change takes full effect, be about £50 million.

Similarly, although it is correct to say that many of the people receiving the new disability employment credit will be less dependent on unemployment benefit, I regard that change as a net gain for everyone—including the disabled, who will be helped to be partly employed rather than be trapped and wholly dependent on unemployment benefit.

As to the earnings-related addition to invalidity benefit and the reduced earnings allowance—the second of which, we consider, considerably overlaps with the provision of ordinary invalidity benefit that the same beneficiaries receive—if left unchanged, the existing provision would build up very large entitlements in the next century, which

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would have made it far more difficult for me to announce increases now that would go on top of them in the next century. Despite the fact that the measures I have announced are balanced in such a way as to create a sustainable structure in the next century, there will be a net increase in spending beyond that previously planned in every remaining year of the present century.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement of new benefits for the disabled amounting to £300 million in three years' time will be warmly welcomed by those campaigning for a squarer deal for the disabled? The OPCS report identified two problems for the disabled: first, their incomes are less than average; secondly, because of their disability, their expenditure is higher than average. My right hon. Friend's statement will do much to fill that gap, particularly in respect of those in work and the less well off.

Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the new benefits will be easier to claim and speedily paid, using, where possible, common methods of assessment? Can he confirm also that they will be disregarded for the purposes of housing benefit, so that the disabled may enjoy those extra benefits to the full? Will my right hon. Friend consult the voluntary organisations on his new measures, and take the opportunity to abolish the age limit for mobility allowance?

Mr. Newton: I cannot, I am afraid, hold out much prospect of hope to my hon. Friend on the last issue that he raised. In answer to his earlier points as I have already said, during the longer-term third phase of our programme, on which detailed work will need to be done, we shall seek and will be ready to take account of the comments of organisations for the disabled.

My hon. Friend mentioned housing benefits. I envisage that the new disability allowance would be disregarded as he suggests. One of our aims in introducing a common waiting period and system of adjudication is to eliminate some of the present unhappy tangles between the attendance and mobility allowances, and to simplify the way that claimants make their claims.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Would it be right for voters outside the Chamber to draw the conclusion that there is almost nothing in the package for carers? If so, how does that square with the Government's policy on community care and strengthening the family? Am I right to think that the only carers who will benefit are those on invalid care allowance who also claim income support or housing benefit? Can the Minister tell us how many tens of thousands of carers, among the millions in the country, will benefit from his statement today?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is not entirely right to suggest that the needs of carers are overlooked in my statement. He referred to the proposed introduction of a carers' premium into income support, which will benefit a significant number of carers. He failed to mention that the extension of attendance allowance to disabled babies and to the terminally ill, without a waiting period, will carry an automatic extension of invalid care allowance to carers in those two fields, who would not be entitled to it at present. The number of carers who will benefit from the extensions of attendance allowance to which I have just referred is difficult to estimate because it depends whether or not somebody is staying at home to look after the person in question. Data are not sufficient for me to give him a specific figure. My recollection is that the number of people benefiting from the carers' premium is approximately 30,000.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am sure that the House will warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, because any net increase in resources for the disabled is surely something that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House should warmly welcome. However, will he accept that it is difficult for some of us to judge how many people will gain from his announcement this afternoon, because we have not had the opportunity to look in detail at the statistics, as he has done?

Will my right hon. Friend take on board the valid point that has just been made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who chairs the Select Committee on Social Services with considerable distinction, that we are concerned that those who care for the disabled should not lose in any way? We know that carers sacrifice a great deal because of the devotion they give, and it is wrong not to ensure that they have an enhanced standard of life.

Mr. Newton: Of course I recognise what my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) have said. Incidentally, I can confirm that the number of people who benefit from the carers' premium is of the order of 30,000. We have sought to recognise the needs of carers in my announcements of last October and today. It is also important to recognise that carers need a greater awareness and recognition of what they do and they need greater support from the services provided. I think that my hon. Friend will agree with me on that, and it is very much the focus of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health's paper on community care.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Is the Secretary of State aware that, although the statement is welcome as far as it goes, it seems that the emphasis is on disabled people who are in work? There is concern that the needs of those people beyond pensionable age will be ignored, and if that is the case, it is deeply to be regretted. There is widespread worry that there will not be adequate consultation. The Social Security Advisory Committee has made it clear that this is a unique opportunity to get a model for the future, and I hope that we seize that opportunity and consult properly with disabled groups. With a budget of £62 billion, an increase of £300 million over three years for 6 million disabled people and carers is a less than adequate response.

Mr. Newton: I have already commented on the numbers involved, against the background of the relatively low threshold used for the OPCS surveys, and I shall not repeat myself.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee. I should perhaps remind him that the committee also felt that, in regard to additional resources, people who had been born handicapped or disabled—or who had become so early in their lives—should be given priority, and I believe that that view is widely shared. Let me also remind him that, as I said in my statement, expenditure on the long-term sick and disabled

has already doubled in real terms since the Government came to office, and is expected to rise by a further £4 billion in real terms by the end of the century.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I welcome my right hon. Friend's excellent statement, with the news of an additional £300 million for 850,000 disabled people, and reject utterly the mean-spirited response of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I particularly welcome the disability employment credit, which will enable many people who at present cannot afford to work to do so—and to feel that they are taking a full part in the life of this world, as is their right.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said, and entirely agree with her. Let me add, however —I especially wish to say this in the presence of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment—that one of the merits of my statement is that it ties in with proposals that will shortly be presented by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, aimed at helping disabled people to find and keep work. The two sets of proposals go together.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I welcome the proposals, but I do not think that the Secretary of State should complain about a less than generous response from the Opposition, as the proposals themselves are less than generous.

The £300 million that the right hon. Gentleman has given to disabled people compares very badly with the £23 billion in tax cuts given to top earners. What we really require is a comprehensive disability income scheme that includes the 4·2 million pensioners who will not be helped by the proposals, most of whom rely on invalidity benefit. That benefit has increased by less than 1 per cent. during the decade in which the Government have been in power, while average male earnings have risen by 37·5 per cent. Where is the justice in that?

Mr. Newton: May I correct one point? Is it not the case that people over retirement age are generally dependent on invalidity benefit, although they may sometimes retain it for five years after retirement. They are normally dependent on pension provision, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not mind my reminding him that the average total net incomes of pensioners in general have risen rapidly as a result of the policies that we have pursued.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Average.

Mr. Newton: Average, yes: I have never tried to run away from that fact. I have also emphasised, however, that, with the increases in income support premiums—most recently, those paid in October—we have given significant extra help to the least well-off pensioners, including many disabled pensioners, who have not benefited from some other trend.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Will my right hon. Friend contrast the sour carping of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) with the record of the Government of whom the hon. Gentleman was a member? Is he aware of the wide welcome, in the House and elsewhere, for the extra money that will help hundreds of thousands of disabled people? We particularly welcome the help enabling those who wish to work to do so, especially in areas where employment is tight; and I personally give a particular welcome to the disregard for housing benefit. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House how the independent living fund is now working?

Mr. Newton: The independent living fund—for which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security, who has responsibility for the disabled, deserves great credit —is doing very well, and is helping many severely disabled people.

As we have said in the paper published today, in the light of proposed changes in the general arrangements for community care in 1991, it is probably appropriate to expect new cases—who might otherwise qualify for the independent living fund—to look to the arrangements announced in the White Paper on care in the community from that date onwards. We intend, however, to discuss carefully with local authorities any question of a handover or changeover of existing cases, and to discuss with the fund's trustees and with the Disablement Income Group in England and DIG Scotland the possible need for a supplementary scheme to deal with the requirements of a small number of very severely disabled people.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): What does the Minister propose to do about providing an allowance for the millions of carers who are not entitled to the invalidity care allowance but who are unable to continue with full-time jobs if they are properly to take care of their invalid spouse or relatives? Where will the money come from to fund the rehabilitation and the transfer of severely disabled people from hospitals to the community? Who will pay for the training of community carers? Will there be a national wage agreement, according to whose terms the carers will be paid?

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Lady is aware that the latter point is primarily for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. He has made it clear that he will be giving close attention to the resource implications of the proposed change in the policy structure, which is to take place in April 1991. I am sure that he will look carefully at what the hon. Lady has said. As for carers, when I replied to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), I said that the package as a whole contains important improvements for many carers. Just as important is the fact that their needs should be properly taken into account under the care in the community arrangements.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this welcome statement is further evidence of the Government's commitment to increasing expenditure on the long-term sick and disabled every year? In real terms, the average increase is 70 per cent. greater than that which was given by the Labour party when it was in power. Should not the spokesman for the Opposition, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), concentrate on helping to make the consultation period a fruitful one, so that those who are disabled and who want to work are given every encouragement to get back into work?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that we shall have the benefit of the suggestions and comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and we will take proper account of them. My hon. Friend was right when he said that the average real increase in expenditure on benefits for

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the long-term sick and disabled has been substantially greater under this Government than it was under the Labour Government.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): While we welcome any additional funds, does the Secretary of State realise that we may not necessarily accept the way that they are distributed among different groups? Will he confirm that he has still been unable to find any way of providing a mobility allowance for mentally handicapped people? Will he confirm that some people who will be eligible for the mobility element within the new disability allowance previously had the benefit of the full mobility allowance? If part of the allowance is to be at a lower rate, some people will receive a lower mobility allowance than would otherwise have been the case.

Mr. Newton: No intention is expressed in the document to bring about a change in the present mobility allowance rules in the way that the hon. Gentleman fears. However, I have already said that there is a great deal of detailed work to be done in drawing up the common adjudication and assessment mechanisms for the new disability allowance.

I do not want the hon. Gentleman to form the impression that we intend to bring about what he suggested in the latter part of his question; nor was he right to suggest that we have not yet found a way of extending mobility help to severely mentally handicapped people. We expect many of the severely mentally handicapped, about whom there has been long argument in both Houses of Parliament, to be included among the groups who benefit from the lower rate of mobility component that is included in the new disability allowance.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the Secretary of State has made significant progress in providing for the elderly and the disabled, would he be willing to make a special study and direct his enthusiasm towards the waiting time for securing benefit and the complexity of the forms that people have to fill up? Is he aware of the huge frustration that is felt by many disabled people because of the long time they have to wait before they receive benefit? Would he be willing to make a special study and direct his attention towards reducing waiting times and the complexity of form filling?

Mr. Newton: I am tempted to say that the short answer is yes, but I had better make it clear what I mean by that. We intend carefully to review the adjudication and assessment mechanisms for the mobility and care components of the new disability allowance with a view to overcoming precisely those complexities and delays which understandably cause concern to my hon. Friend's constituents and to mine. That will involve careful study and looking at the comments of the disability organisations and others. I am hopeful that we can make real progress on that front.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): How is it that the Secretary of State can give us the financial costs of package, yet he seems unable to tell us the exact numbers of people who will gain or lose benefit? Does the Secretary of State have the figures but is afraid to give them, or is he so badly briefed that he simply does not have the figures?

The Secretary of State will not be surprised to know that, as one of the ministerial team in the last Labour Government who introduced the mobility allowance, I have retained a continuing interest in it. Can he confirm that, as a result of his statement today, the mobility allowance will be frozen at its present level to bring more people into the scheme at a much lower level, or do the Government intend to increase the present level of mobility allowance?

Finally, may I take advantage of having the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box, not unfairly, I hope, to ask him to instruct his junior colleague the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, who unfortunately has left the Treasury Bench for a moment, to answer the question that was transferred to her on 7 December——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is well beyond the scope of the statement.

Mr. Newton: I will nevertheless bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman said. There is certainly no intention to cease uprating the mobility allowance in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggested. As he will no doubt be aware, the mobility allowance is among those benefits that have been increased substantially in real terms—quite apart from having been made tax free—under the present Administration. As for the numbers, regrettably I was not able to lay my hands on the exact figure that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) wanted when he asked for it, but I extracted the right figure from my mind and confirmed it in my reply to the following question.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard for the subsequent business which is an important Second Reading debate which is interrupted at 7 o'clock for opposed private business, so I shall call three hon. Members from each side, and then, I am afraid, we must move on.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Can my right hon. Friend say how many disabled people he expects will be able to work? Certainly, in my experience and I suppose that of most right hon. and hon. Members, disabled people want to lead lives as normal as possible, which includes not only looking after themselves but making a contribution to society. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that his announcement will be quite as welcome as the abolition of the dreaded earnings rule for pensioners.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We must all remember that a great many disabled people already work happily and successfully. The problem is that those who may be able to work only part time may fear the consequences if they work at all of losing, for example, the whole of their invalidity benefit. That is the problem that we are seeking to address. Our present estimate—although, for a variety of reasons, estimates are difficult to make—is that, initially at last, about 50,000 people will benefit from the disability employment credit.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State has repeatedly emphasised the fact that he seeks to simplify adjudication and assessment procedures for those who apply for mobility and carers' allowances. Can he tell us what time limit he is placing on those discussions and how he will ensure that all interested parties are involved? Is he prepared to draw up a diary of negotiations to

publish in the *Official Report* or to place in the Library, so that we all know exactly the background against which we are operating?

Mr. Newton: I am hesitant—indeed, I am not quite willing—to offer negotiation, partly because I am extremely anxious to make rapid progress. I indicate in the paper that we hope to introduce the disability allowance, which would entail sorting out the adjudication and assessment procedures, from April 1992. That will entail primary legislation, which I have said, in words traditional in the House, will be introduced at the earliest practicable moment. That is probably the best clue that I can give the hon. Lady at present.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my right hon. Friend agree that disabled people, on whose behalf we speak, will welcome the new measures, the new money, and the renewed commitment to putting them high on our list of public spending priorities? Will he accept that, while they particularly welcome the employment measures that he is introducing, they will look for training along with them? Will he talk to our right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Employment to ensure that organisations such as the Share Community can look forward and plan ahead each year with confidence, knowing for certain how many disabled people they will be able to train?

Mr. Newton: I thank my hon. Friend for his earlier remarks. I have a messenger ready to hand for the latter part of his remarks, which will certainly fall on receptive ears. The consultative paper that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will publish shortly will be concerned not only with employment services in the narrow sense for disabled people, but with improving the training opportunities available to them.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Secretary of State accept that it would be helpful if hon. Members knew the gross figures from which he arrived at the net figure of £300 million, so that we do not bandy figures? Two figures must be available to enable us to judge on the one hand how much extra money is available and on the other what is being taken away to arrive at the figure of £300 million.

May I ask one question about the mobility allowance, about which I am not clear? Has the right hon. Gentleman changed the age limits for applying for mobility allowance?

Mr. Newton *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rooker: If that is not the case, will we still be left with two classes of pensioners—those who can obtain mobility allowance before retirement, who can therefore keep it, and those who become immobile after retirement, who suffer exactly the same immobility but have no chance of receiving the allowance? If the right hon. Gentleman has not done that, why has he not taken the opportunity to increase mobility allowance or the opportunity for our elderly citizens to receive it?

Mr. Newton: There is no proposal at present to extend new entitlements to mobility allowance—which, technically, in some circumstances, would be at 66—but we have said that we intend to extend the provisions that enable people who receive it before they retire to keep it. The reason why I did not feel it right to do so—especially against the background of the expressed preference of the Social Security Advisory Committee for giving priority to people who are disabled early in life or from birth—is simply that the costs would be very high indeed and it would make it much more difficult to do some of the other things that need to be done.

On the hon Gentleman's initial question, the pattern of the figures—there is a different build-up on the different proposals that I have outlined—makes it difficult to give one figure. In so far as I can help the hon. Gentleman, for the net figure of £300 million that I quoted for 1993-94, the gross figure would probably be about £500 million.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): May I press my right hon. Friend most strongly to keep a careful eye on the independent living fund, which has already been mentioned and which has been a most successful innovation? All those, including the Disablement Income Group particularly, who have found it very supportive indeed would be wary of moves to change it, unless we were positive that the change would be better than the fund, which is working now.

Mr. Newton: I referred to this in an earlier answer and there is a paragraph on it, to which we gave careful consideration, in the "Way Ahead" document which has been published today. I acknowledge what my hon. Friend has said, but within the new community care arrangements it would look odd to be trying to run two parallel systems of meeting the needs of this group of people. There may be a small group for whom supplementary provision over and above the community care arrangements will be required, and that is one of the matters that we shall consider.

Mr. Meacher: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm —he did not mention this in his statement, but it confirms my point about its limited coverage—that the number of carers who will receive the carers' premium is on average about 50 per constituency, which is minuscule and pathetic? Will he confirm, as against the £300 million figure that he keeps mentioning, that there has been a cut of £80 million in statutory sick pay; that there has been a cut of £175 million through the freezing of child benefit; and that there will be a cut of £350 million from the ending of the earnings-related addition to invalidity benefit? Therefore, will the right hon. Gentleman now accept that, for those reasons, the statement represents almost no net extra money put into the social security system for disabled people?

Mr. Newton: I sought to respond to the hon. Gentleman at the outset. I can only repeat plainly what I said. The net result of the measure announced in the statement in respect of long-term sick and disabled people is a net increase in expenditure, in 1993-94, of £300 million, over and above present plans and for every remaining year of this century. I should have thought that he would have the grace to welcome that.

Points of Order

4.15 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have noticed in recent weeks that it has become more difficult to hear Back Benchers when they speak in the House. I wonder whether the story that I have heard is correct. Is it the case that, because of the sound that television cameras need, there has been some damping down of the microphones? If so, I should like you to know that I, for one, should like them to be turned up a little. I can hear Ministers, but I cannot hear questions from Back Benchers.

Mr. Speaker: I am aware that the microphones are of a certain age. If the House decides to make permanent the televising of our proceedings, we may have new microphones. I note what the hon. Member said, and I shall look into it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is unrelated to what happened yesterday.

Have you had an application for a statement on the same subject as that of today's from a Treasury Minister? I have a letter from a Treasury Minister which says:

"We believe there is a case for bringing invalidity benefit into tax."

We understood that there was to be some announcement today about the taxation of invalidity benefits, but none has been made.

Mr. Speaker: I have had no indication that there is to be a statement on that matter.

European Community documents.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): Not moved.

Mr. Speaker: Statutory instruments.

Mr. Dorrell: Not moved.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On the statutory instrument relating to the Official Secrets Act 1989, would it be in order not to bring it before the House until public guarantees are made that the staff of the National Audit Office will not be prohibited from doing their job on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee?

Mr. Speaker: That is entirely a matter for the Leader of the House, if and when the matter is brought before the House, but not today.

Aviation and Maritime Security Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this business will be interrupted at 7 o'clock by opposed private business. Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate, so I hope that they will bear in mind the basic time limit when they make their speeches.

4.17 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

One of the hallmarks of this Government has been their determination to stand firm against the terrorist. We have never shied away from taking the measures necessary to crush the threat of terrorism—be it on the international stage or at home. This Bill will be another valuable weapon in the battle. It will help to combat international terrorism in the sky and at sea.

The Lockerbie disaster was further evidence of the depths to which these cowardly people will sink. It was an appalling manifestation of the growing scourge of international terrorism against aviation and increased the terrible toll of sabotage attacks causing the total destruction of aircraft. In the four years before Lockerbie there were three bombing incidents on international flights. Since Lockerbie a UTA aircraft and an internal flight in Colombia have been destroyed by bombs.

Passenger ships have suffered, too. In both the Achille Lauro and the City of Poros incidents we saw terrorists murder passengers in cold blood.

Conventions to deal with attacks on civil aviation have been in place for many years. The International Civil Aviation Organisation has now established standards for aviation security. More recently, through the International Maritime Organisation, the Rome convention now deals with the prevention of terrorist attacks on ports and shipping.

It is the responsibility of individual states to put those international agreements into effect. The Aviation Security Act 1982 consolidated previous legislation that has provided the framework for aviation security in this country. The time has come to review and to enlarge its provisions, and to extend them to maritime operations.

We have been determined to learn all that we can from the Lockerbie disaster. As my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate said recently, remarkable progress has been made by the international investigation team which is seeking to identify the perpetrators of this appalling terrorist outrage and to bring them to justice. The chief constable of Dumfries and Galloway and his predecessor have made impressive progress, with the help of outstanding forensic work and unprecedented international co-operation. The police have taken more than 14,000 statements and recorded about 16,000 items of property. More than 35,000 photographs have been taken. Vehicles used by the police in the investigation have travelled more than 1·5 million miles. The cost so far has exceeded £7 million.

The air accident investigation branch has reconstructed a large part of the aircraft and the baggage container in which the explosion took place. As a result of its outstanding work, it has pin-pointed the precise place where the bomb blew up.

The meticulous work of those investigations continues. In addition, my noble and learned Friend recently announced that he has concluded that a fatal accident inquiry should be held into the circumstances of the deaths in the Lockerbie disaster. There are obvious difficulties in holding such an inquiry while the criminal investigation is still being actively pursued, but he will now set in hand preliminary preparations. The scope of the inquiry would be a matter for the sheriff or sheriff principal who would have regard not only to the cause of death but to the reasonable precautions by which the disaster might have been avoided. He will have the power to mount a far-ranging inquiry.

In the year since Lockerbie much has been achieved. There has been a major review of aviation security by my Department, as well as a constructive inquiry by the Transport Select Committee. I am pleased to say that the Government have been able to respond positively to the overwhelming majority of the Committee's 28 main recommendations.

My predecessor took important initiatives in the International Civil Aviation Organisation, and had full discussions on aviation security with the United States Secretary of Transportation, Mr. Samuel Skinner, in Montreal in February 1989 and in London in April 1989. I shall be meeting Mr. Skinner in Washington tomorrow to continue those discussions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Who?

Mr. Parkinson: A different Mr. Skinner.

The British Government have pursued aviation security matters vigorously with our partners in Europe and in the Group of Seven. More importantly, we have persuaded the International Civil Aviation Organisation to adopt Britain's eight-point action plan for international work on aviation security.

At home, action has been taken to reduce further the risk of terrorist attack.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before the Secretary of State leaves the international aspects of this matter, will he consider whether there is any merit in this country, along with other high-technology countries, providing sophisticated equipment to those countries whose airports do not have such equipment? If such nations had that equipment it might benefit the rest of the world.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting and constructive point. One of the difficulties of putting sophisticated equipment in developing countries is that sophisticated equipment often needs sophisticated operators. Interlining baggage that is fed into the system can cause major accidents, but that is an interesting point which is worth considering.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while the movement is to step up personal security and inspect hand baggage and so on when passengers travel on airlines, the luggage that goes into the hold is still not searched? Therefore, while the individual is being searched more and more, and checks are made on electric razors to ensure that they do not contain bombs so that the system grinds to a halt, none of the luggage which goes into holds at British airports is screened. That is a serious indictment.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend's assertion is incorrect. All hold baggage to be carried by American airlines to America from our airports is checked 100 per cent. A proportion of all hold baggage is checked. Aircraft are selected on a random basis and a proportion of the hold baggage on the aircraft is examined. Later, I shall talk about our proposals for extending the examination of hold baggage because I agree with my hon. Friend that our objective must be a 100 per cent. search of hold baggage. However, that is much more easily said than done.

I shall give a few examples of the action that has been taken at home since the Lockerbie disaster. Immediately after Lockerbie we tightened security for United States' airlines operating from this country; in this we worked closely with the Federal Aviation Administration. We brought in new security procedures dealing with electrical equipment carried by passengers.

More than 80,000 employees, as well as thousands of vehicles, have necessary access to the restricted areas of our four major airports. We have tightened up the whole pass system: there are tighter checks for the issue of passes, the control of vehicles, the searching of staff and vehicles, and the control of passes at the gate. By next April, there will be electronic checking of all passes at our airports.

The Department's aviation security inspectorate has been doubled. We have introduced new requirements for recruiting and training security staff; there has been a substantial increase in the number of security staff. We have doubled the money for research and development into equipment and techniques.

These steps have already been taken. But we must go further. As I have mentioned, we are working towards the screening of all hold baggage on all international flights from our airports, the physical separation airside of inbound and outbound passengers and tighter security requirements for cargo, mail and courier consignments.

Despite all that, we need to strengthen and augment the powers in the Aviation Security Act 1982. I am already able to issue directions to operators of airports and airlines. Directions under the 1982 Act have been in force for many years. Improvements in security last year were made using these powers. But further powers are needed, first, to give the aviation security inspectors more flexible and effective means to enforce directions so that deficiencies in security can be remedied on the spot, if necessary stopping operations until that has been done; secondly, to enable directions to be made to businesses other than airports and airlines which have access to aircraft; and, thirdly, to make it an offence for individuals to do certain things which are prejudicial to security. Passengers and staff must observe security requirements.

Because the proposed legislation builds on the 1982 Act, the aviation security provisions of this Bill are framed as amendments and additions to that Act. The 1982 Act and the measures to improve aviation security in part I need to be read together and to be taken as a whole.

Clause 1 deals with what are essentially terrorist acts at airports. It enables the Government to ratify the International Civil Aviation Organisation's Montreal protocol of 1988, which we signed in October that year. The protocol commits us to making it an offence under our law to carry out armed attacks at international airports and to cause damage or disruption at such airports. The protocol provides for severe penalties for these offences. In relevant cases offenders can also be extradited.

[Mr. Parkinson]

Part I widens the category of persons to whom I can give directions. In future, as well as giving directions to airport and aircraft operators, I will be able to give directions to other businesses which go on to airports. In practice, that means that catering suppliers, cleaning firms, aircraft maintenance and servicing firms and suppliers of aircraft stores will all be brought within the scope of the Act. It will be possible under clause 2 to direct all those undertakings to carry out searches of persons or property entering the land under their control; and, under clause 3, to direct them to take other aviation security measures.

Clause 4 gives powers to the aviation security inspectors to issue enforcement notices when there is a failure to comply with a direction. The person served with an enforcement notice will be required to carry out remedial action. The notice could result in certain operations having to be stopped until that action has been taken.

There have been suggestions that these notices should be published. I believe that it would be a gift to the criminal to highlight weaknesses at a time when they have been spotted but before they can be remedied. I am much in sympathy with the need to report to Parliament and, subject to the overriding priority of security, I intend to call on the inspectorate for an annual report on directions and enforcement notices which I shall lay before the House. Security must be the top priority, but I believe equally that Parliament has the right to know how the laws that it has passed are being enforced.

Clause 5 creates new offences relating to security at aerodromes. It brings individuals within the scope of aviation security legislation so that certain acts prejudicial to aviation security become offences. It will, for instance, be an offence for a person to give false information in answer to questions relating to baggage, cargo or stores, because airports and airlines must be able to establish, among other things, whether a dupe may be unwittingly carrying a bomb planted by someone else. It will be an offence to give false information in relation to an application for or the holding of an identity document. It will an offence to be in a restricted zone or to go on board an aircraft without proper authority, or to refuse to leave a restricted zone or aircraft when requested to do so.

It was suggested in some parts of the press that this section was aimed at them; that is not so. We are determined to ensure that those who work on our airports have properly authorised passes, properly obtained, and it would be quite impossible to enforce what I am sure the House will agree is a sensible law if it excluded the press. If a press man, like any other person, lied to obtain a pass so that he could get access to an airport, he must face the consequences of the law. It would be absurd for us to claim that this is a serious law while authorising the press to ignore it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I recognise some of the right hon. Gentleman's arguments and obviously any measure that will help in the fight against terrorism will be most welcome. Obviously the Opposition will not vote against this measure. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that in certain cases newspapers—I am not the first to defend their record—have done a public service when their reporters have gone to airports and discovered that security is lax? They are letting the public and the authorities know, and that is to be welcomed. If the Bill undermines the role of the press in alerting the authorities to measures that need to be taken to strengthen security at airports, it is to be deplored.

Mr. Parkinson: I do not think that that is the case. It is important to remember that 50,000 people work at Heathrow every day. We are instituting a system that will mean that everyone who works there will have been investigated and will have been issued with a pass that has been properly obtained. We must be sure that only authorised people have access to airports. How are we to make a law that distinguishes between the villain who gives false information with ill intent to obtain a pass and the reporter who is just seeking to obtain a story? We cannot.

I accept what the hon. Gentleman said about reporters playing a valuable part, but it was they who made it clear that we must enforce tighter security at our airports. That is what we are doing. The Bill is in no way aimed against reporters and we are indebted to them for some of the revelations that they have made.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Parkinson: No, we are short of time and the debate began late.

This part of the Bill, together with schedule 1, provides for revised information-gathering powers under section 11 of the Aviation Security Act 1982 and for daily penalties to be imposed for continued refusal or failure to comply with a direction after being convicted of the offence. The procedure to be followed for designating the restricted zone of an aerodrome is set out in the schedule.

The Bill makes no provision to revive the aviation security fund, which was wound up in 1983 because it was bureaucratic, costly and unnecessary. Nor does it seek to create a new organisational structure. There is no doubt in my mind that responsibility for security cannot be offloaded by the Government on to some supposedly free-standing body.

Part II enables the Government to give effect to the International Maritime Organisation's convention on terrorism at sea and its linked protocol on fixed platforms. The Bill makes it an offence to hijack any ship or unlawfully to seize or exercise control of a fixed platform.

Part III, although the longest part of the Bill, simply extends to maritime activities powers comparable with those available under the Aviation Security Act 1982 or proposed for aviation security in part I.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): An undertaking was given to the shipping industry that the legislation would go no further than the International Maritime Organisation's convention. However, part III does go further.

Mr. Parkinson: I know that parts of the industry believe that the legislation is unnecessary. I have no doubt that many of our best companies are already complying voluntarily with the convention, but it is being observed in a patchy fashion and some companies do not observe it. The Bill gives the Government reserve powers to enforce what everyone recognises are necessary measures. It does not go any further than it needs to, but it is necessary for it to go as far as it does.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Parkinson: No, we are very short of time.

We are seeking those powers because there is no legal framework for ensuring that adequate security precautions are taken to counter terrorism on ships and in ports.

The terrorist threat to shipping is not as high profile as that to aviation, but it exists and the level of risk can escalate at any time. The Achille Lauro and the City of Poros incidents are only two of over 50 terrorist attacks on shipping in the 1980s alone. So we are discussing not a small but a very serious problem.

At present, as I said, the problems are being tackled by voluntary co-operation with the industry, and I hope that that will continue. But we also need a framework for setting out and enforcing standards for the protection of the travelling public, the crews of ships and others engaged in the maritime industries. The provisions of part III are intended to provide that framework. They will aim to achieve a level of security appropriate to the threat to shipping.

Mr. Wilson: Many people regard one of the great acts of treachery against this country by the Government to have been the virtual destruction of the British merchant navy, so we are cautious of anything that further discriminates against British-registered ships. In the light of that, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to explain why clause 19(2), which gives the Secretary of State the right to

"give a direction in writing to the owner, charterer or manager of a . . . ship",

is restricted to British-registered ships and, unlike clause 19(1), does not cover foreign-owned or foreign-flagged ships in British ports?

Mr. Parkinson: Because we want to make it clear that the Bill applies to British ships whether they are here or operating abroad; it applies to them wherever they are. A wider duty is imposed on them as a result of the Bill. We do not accept the hon. Gentleman's description of this Government's attitude to merchant shipping. Indeed, the Government who did the real damage to shipping were the Government who keeled over on every occasion to the trade unions and destroyed the economy. That did the damage to the British maritime fleet.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. Friend comment on the fears that have been expressed —for example, by the Milford Haven port authority, which is responsible for Milford Haven and Pembroke dock, and by the Dyfed-Powys police, who have the special branch responsibility for Fishguard and Pembroke dock and therefore for two lots of Irish ferry traffic—that the costs of part III will be horrendous? Will my right hon. Friend discuss the matter with the Home Secretary to see whether some arrangement can be made between the two Departments to enable port and police authorities which will be concerned with the implementation of part III to receive additional resources and assistance?

Mr. Parkinson: As I have pointed out, these are reserve powers which the Government will invoke if voluntary co-operation does not develop. But I shall look into the matter because my hon. Friend makes an important point.

Part IV contains miscellaneous and general provisions. In particular, the Civil Aviation Authority will be enabled to inspect any document relating to suspected or declared dangerous goods. It will also be able to examine and send for analysis the contents of any package or baggage which it believes contains dangerous goods.

I have explained what has been and is being done. The House should not underestimate the scale of the task in hand. In the peak last year, Heathrow alone handled over 1,000 aircraft movements a day. More than 142,000 passengers a day pass through the airport's terminals. The airport typically handles over 160,000 items of baggage every day of the week. Manchester airport already handles more than 50,000 passengers on a peak day with perhaps 65,000 items of baggage, and the figures are growing every year. The port of Dover handles over 100,000 passengers and 10,000 vehicles a day.

We are committed already to levels of security which are appropriate to the perceived threat. We must distinguish between a real threat and spurious warnings. The House may be interested to know that last year alone over 460 hoax warnings were made in relation to United Kingdom airports and airlines. It is a sad reflection on some sick minds that the number has increased substantially since Lockerbie.

We never can be complacent about security, but I am confident that the measures in the Bill will improve aviation and maritime security still further. With the backing of the industry and the police, the Bill will be an effective weapon in our armoury against the terrorist. I urge the House to give this vital measure a Second Reading.

4.44 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Forces in the House will be aware of an agreement that there would be no ministerial statement before this debate, in view of the limited time available for it. I regret, at the outset of my remarks, that I must record that the agreement has been broken. The result is that some hon. Members will not have an opportunity to take part in the debate.

Occupants of the Front Benches were asked to co-operate, and perhaps I should make my point absolutely clear by stating that the Lord President, who was involved in the deal, apparently forgot about it. If that represents the performance of the present Lord President, particularly in view of what happened yesterday—remembering that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is the deputy Prime Minister—he must be Britain's answer to Dan Quayle.

Mr. Steen: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May we have some guidance from the Chair? I understand that this debate can continue after 10 o'clock, and hence the point that is being made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is not correct.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Perhaps I can assist the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). If the debate does not finish by 7 o'clock, it will be interrupted by private business and will then resume after 10 o'clock or when private business has been concluded.

Mr. Prescott: I am sure that the normal channels were aware of that bit of basic information. It being the Second Reading of a Bill, it was agreed to abide by the normal practice and not have a ministerial statement. Normally, such statements are not made prior to a Second Reading debate which is likely to be interrupted at 7 o'clock for private business.

The House will welcome the Bill, which attempts to improve security for shipping and aviation and to make it

[Mr. Prescott]

more difficult for cowardly acts of terrorism to occur or for bombs to be planted on aircraft and planes—devices like those which have already killed hundreds of innocent passengers. For that reason, my hon. Friends and I welcome the legislation, particularly as it is based on international conventions for international transport.

I have read the reports of previous debates on such conventions and legislation that have taken place since the early 1970s. At no stage, whether a Labour or Conservative Government have been in power, has the House divided on such measures. That is a precedent which my hon. Friends and I do not intend to break, so we shall support the Bill tonight.

But I have some serious criticisms to make about the measure, and I would not want to disappoint Conservative Members about our attitude towards safety. It is often agreed between both sides of the House that safety issues must be put at the top of the list. The question is how safety is achieved, and the way in which the policy is implemented is the point that I shall address in particular.

The major flaw in the Government argument on this issue, and the way in which they approach it, lies in the fact that the conventions on the subject refer to the responsibility of "the competent authority". I accept the importance of having conventions, but they must be correctly implemented and the competent authority must be sure that the policy agreed in an international convention is carried out.

Unfortunately for us, the competent authority is defined as the Department of Transport. That Department has a lamentable history of failing to carry out its safety responsibilities in nearly all forms of transport in Britain. That is not only the view of workers and others involved in the industries concerned. It is the view of consumer bodies and groups representing travellers, and it applies to every mode of transport, be it the railways, shipping, aviation or the roads.

I call in aid more fundamental support for my contention that the Department has been totally inadequate in carrying out its responsibilities for safety. I cite the reports that have been commissioned by the Department following the terrible tragedies that have occurred in the last few years. Consider, for example, the awful shipping tragedy in the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise. In that case, the Sheen report identified a conflict of interest in the Department, a laxity that failed to check a sloppy shipping management that undoubtedly ignored all the warnings and contributed to that terrible tragedy.

Both the Fennell and Hidden reports on the terrible tragedies at King's Cross and Clapham again exposed the Department's inept handling of safety matters. They said that the independent railway inspectorate, which is the kind of inspectorate that the Bill envisages, failed in its responsibilities, was not a satisfactory body, was under-resourced and failed to use its existing powers. How else could one explain the inspectorate's refusal to accept the reports from fire departments about the many thousands of fires that were occurring on the Underground? The reason is simply that the inspectorate was undermanned and decided that it did not want to accept the reports. All that is documented in the reports and is an indictment of the Department's handling of safety in shipping and on the railways.

In terms of aviation, I am afraid that we have to rely on the reports of the Select Committee. Anybody who has read those reports will recognise that the Committee is to be congratulated on its depth of analysis and on its approach to safety. It can honestly claim to have looked ahead at the problem and to have made recommendations that were pertinent to the problem of aviation security. Unfortunately, those recommendations were ignored. I shall deal with that later. I am sure that many hon. Members join me in congratulating that Committee on its excellent work.

I am sure that when we consider aviation we shall all have strongly in mind the terrible tragedy at Lockerbie which occurred a little more than 12 months ago. I should like to be identified with the Secretary of State's remarks about the police authority investigation and the work of the forensic science departments. They showed tremendous ability and one cannot but be impressed by their detailed and painstaking work. I am sure that we are all sorry that that has not led to a conviction, but that is no fault of the police or the forensic science departments.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I should like to be associated with the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and those of the hon. Gentleman. The people of Lockerbie are extremely proud of the local police force, its chief constable and the inspector in Lockerbie, both of whom were honoured in the new year. They have carried out a wonderful job and we all hope that it produces results in the not too distant future.

Mr. Prescott: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, who has a close and active association with the matter.

There is a great danger that by passing the legislation we will assume that we have vastly improved aviation safety. That depends heavily upon the abilities of the Department of Transport, which is the competent authority. If it does not carry out its work effectively and ensures that we do exactly what is agreed in the conventions, the legislation will be meaningless. At the heart of the argument is just how competent the Department of Transport is to implement any convention.

The charge that I wish to substantiate is that the Department of Transport is inadequate and does not have the resources, the commitment or the will to deal with the kind of problem that it faces. I admit that I am a long-time critic of the Department, and my criticism goes back to Labour Governments, as former Labour Secretaries of State will confirm. The evidence of the coastguard inquiries points to a completely incompetent Department that was constantly criticised. I could continue ad nauseam about the Department.

The Bill is complicated and deals with shipping, oil rigs and aviation. I should like to deal briefly with its maritime provisions. Everyone accepts that we have witnessed a massive decline in the Merchant Navy. Select Committees have made clear that the very defence of the country is now threatened because we do not have a Merchant Navy of an adequate size. That was not contested until we heard the Secretary of State making ideological remarks that are completely divorced from the facts. He is becoming famous for that.

The convention advocates the authorising of people to integrate, arrest and search. Those people are not members of the police, and that causes me some concern. I hope that in the winding-up speech we will be told who these people will be. They will clearly not be police, but they will have the powers that we normally associate with the police and that is alarming.

Secondly, in their maritime provisions the Government are going further than the convention. I have always advocated standards higher than those set out in the convention if necessary, and I am always prepared to consider such steps. The Department of Transport and the Secretary of State tell us that the stability standards for our ferries go farther than international standards. After the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise, the Department is advocating voluntary standards that will not be imposed by law. The Minister of State probably knows that that is true. Why are the Government not prepared to be ahead of the convention and implement by legislation stability standards? The Government use the excuse that the standards cannot be agreed internationally and that they are not prepared to do that. However, in the case of powers for inspection on ships in our harbour areas they are prepared to go beyond international standards, although that applies only to British vessels. That is discriminatory and is causing some concern in the industry. I hope that in his winding-up speech the Minister will give us some information on that.

We are concerned about attack by terrorists, but many merchant seamen lose their lives because of inadequate safety standards on vessels. The Government do not appear to be greatly concerned about that. A constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) was in a vessel that was lost on 12 December. The vessel was hiring crews registered in the Bahamas and people who had never been to sea. The 16-year-old youth from Jarrow, who had no sea-going experience and was expected to do watch-keeping duties, was picked up at a job centre and offered a job at £70 per week. Those are the sort of safety problems faced by the maritime industry, and such matters are as important as the terrorist aspects of safety.

Mr. Barry Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No, because I am pressed for time. The major is used to addressing squaddies in such language, but the hon. Gentleman must accept that I am not prepared to give way.

I shall now concentrate on aviation. In the 1970s the convention and legislation were largely concerned with the problem of hijacking. They sought to harmonise matters to make sure that hijacking was a serious offence and they established funding for security machinery. We see such machinery at airports and it is expensive and requires proper funding. We also introduced better police control. Those things helped to reduce the problems, and we entered the 1980s with threats not from hijacking but from explosives in the luggage, which is the real problem now.

The Aviation Security Act 1982 dismantled the fund set up to pay for the machinery that was brought in in 1978. It removed the police controls and advocated the bringing in of what we are now witnessing—the privatisation of security. Not long after that we had the terrible tragedy of Pan Am flight 103 on 21 December with the loss of 270 people. The Select Committee on Transport was concerned before that tragedy and feared such an incident after we witnessed the loss of the Air India aircraft that was blown out of the sky in 1985. The Committee had the foresight to say that we should look at air security in Britain and asked whether we were doing enough to prevent explosives being placed in the luggage.

The Committee produced its fourth report in 1985 and the conclusions were very alarming. The Select Committee took the view that not enough was being done about airport security. It said:

"Airport security has made an art of passing the buck."

Anyone reading that report in the light of recent events will know that that applies today.

The Select Committee then made the point that something should be done about luggage in the hold. It recommended a banding of luggage. The Government's response was, first, that that is expensive; secondly, that there is not much space; and, thirdly, that there are not many power points to allow that to be done. That was not an adequate response to the problem of explosives in luggage.

The Select Committee recommended that the aviation fund should be re-established. It believed that not only were funds necessary to provide machinery, but that it was important for security that all the links of the chain should be equally strong. Therefore, small airports that could not afford the necessary machinery could finance such spending through cross-subsidisation, with the bulk of the money coming from the major airports. It is important that baggage should undergo the same security checks whether it comes in through Humberside airport, Heathrow or Gatwick. That was the object of the fund.

The Secretary of State was asked what would be done about countries that had neither the means nor the people to carry out such checks, and said that that was a useful point that we most bear in mind. But the same applies to Humberside and Leeds airports, or any small airport with connections with international flights. They do not have the money to fund such expenditure, so the aviation security fund is essential. However, the Government rejected that.

The Select Committee recommended an independent aviation security inspectorate. The Government, not wanting to appear to reject that, took the good old Civil Service approach and set up a working party. That sat for about three years, was lost in the Home Office and was revived in the face of the embarrassment of the Lockerbie disaster. Up to that time, no report had been published.

After the Lockerbie disaster, the previous Secretary of State assured us from the Dispatch Box that the greater majority of the Select Committee's recommendations had been implemented by the Government. That was wrong. What he really meant to say, as the Select Committee pointed out, was that the majority of recommendations were accepted by the Government. That is quite different from implementing them. Anybody who doubts that need only look at the Select Committee's third report on airport security in which it considered how effective the Government had been. I was going around saying that the Government had not implemented eight of the 20-odd recommendations, and, not unusually, there was a dispute between me and the previous Secretary of State.

I rest my case on the Select Committee's conclusion. In its third report, published on 18 July 1989, it says:

"Accepting recommendations is one thing, implementing them another."

[Mr. Prescott]

Paragraph 3 goes on to say:

"The call for new powers has tended to obscure the fact that existing ones were poorly used; there was laxity in approach to security which gives us severe doubts as to whether our recommendations were fully implemented."

That proves the point that I was trying to make at the time. The previous Secretary of State has moved on to other things, so we cannot call him to account now. However, the Select Committee's report is undoubtedly another indictment of the Department of Transport's handling of security.

It is interesting to look at the Select Committee's recommendations. Recommendation 11 was that all hold luggage on international flights should be screened and that there should be a clear policy on that. The Secretary of State said that he wants to see that and to work towards it. As usual, the Government's response is, "Yes, something more should be done but consultations will take years, things cannot be done immediately and it all depends on whether space is available."

Airport authorities are already advertising space for the sale of goods. Money is available to sell goods to make a profit but not for machinery which only ensures security. That is a good example of the conflict between commercial priorities and the need to provide safety at our airports.

The Department of Transport says that such things take a long time, but does anybody doubt that if safety became a priority it could be achieved quickly? It cannot be done overnight, but the Government are still using the kind of language that they used to respond to the Select Committee's first report a few years ago. No doubt we will get the same response again and nothing will be achieved.

The American Federal Aviation Administration has always required the examination of hold luggage on American aircraft. It knows the limitations of machinery, but it demands that, if necessary, examinations be carried out in some other way. Britain has had to apply for exemption from the FAA ruling, so American airlines coming into Britain will no longer have to conform with what they believe to be the safest form of luggage examination. That is one heck of a comment on our ability to provide adequate safety checks

It could be argued that the public have a right to know which airlines are inspecting luggage. Why is that not put on the board? Let it be clearly said that all the luggage going in the hold is inspected so that people who think that those airlines will be safer can use them. The public are increasingly demanding such information. As soon as airlines have to start putting such information on the board, they will find all sorts of reasons to inspect all the luggage going into the hold. We know how it goes. But the people who are putting the lid on that are the airport authorities which do not want to spend money on providing extra space over a short period of time. It always comes down to money. Hon. Members constantly have to argue that safety must have a high priority because we know that, when there is a conflict between commerce and safety, often the commercial priorities prevail.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): The hon. Gentleman is expounding utter nonsense when he says that commercialism gets in the way of safety. If he disbelieves me, I advise him to look at what happened to Pan Am's ticket sales in the light of a lapse of security. Commercialism demands the highest safety standards.

Mr. Prescott: People need to know what a company is doing and how. That is the basic point I am trying to make. The hon. Gentleman often appears on television as the Government's apologist when they find themselves in difficulty. He is well known for that. My argument is that airlines should say whether they inspect the luggage in the hold. That basic piece of information should be readily and easily available.

The Select Committee's recommendation 15 was that an aviation security fund should be established, paid for by a levy on passengers. There is a dispute between the Opposition and the Government about whether there should be an overall fund to achieve strong security in all our airports. Again, the Government's response is that that is bureaucratic and complicated. Yet at the same time they say that we should not worry because there will be no problems in funding safety. If that is the case, how will the money be provided? It will be highly expensive. Will it simply be left to the British Airports Authority to look after its own and for Humberside and Leeds to look after their own? If so, an acceptable expenditure at Heathrow will be an extraordinary expenditure elsewhere. That is the reality. I know that cross-subsidisation sticks in the craw of many Conservative Members, whether it be in relation to buses, railways or airports, but it is the best means of providing adequate machinery and the specialists required to maintain high safety levels.

Mr. Barry Field *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Prescott: No, leave the major alone.

I wondered about the history of the matter and I checked to see whether the House had ever divided on the matter of the aviation security fund. I was curious to know the reaction of the then Conservative Opposition to those Labour Government proposals. Their Front Bench spokesman, the then hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South—now the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson)—commented that the financing of security measures

"must be put on a more permanent and sensible basis.

It is our considered view that there are even stronger arguments in favour of transferring the cost—some £19 million—from the taxpayers generally to those who benefit from the service provided, namely, those who travel by air . . . there is no such thing as a free lunch . . . .

There are many precedents for making the charge on those who use the service."—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1978; Vol. 942, c. 78-79.]

I fully endorse those observations of the now Secretary of State for Transport. He supported the fund, did not vote against it, and even had a difference of opinion with the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), who intervened in his speech. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State once supported the position taken by the Labour party. That may have changed, but what has not changed is the fact that a great deal of money is still needed to fund a high level of security, which must be achieved by cross-subsidisation.

Mr. Barry Field: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene now?

Mr. Prescott: Yes, I shall allow the major to speak.

Mr. Field: I was a squaddie once, and I only won promotion by listening to people.

What is Labour party policy on the maintenance of frontier and interstate inspections at borders, given that the Government want to maintain them within the EEC in order to prevent terrorism?

Mr. Prescott: We have great sympathy with that objective and believe that there is a special argument for maintaining those inspections, which are required in respect not only of terrorist activities but for the weighing of lorries at ports. The present proposals will mean that the port state issue will be weakened. Fewer inspections will not only increase the risk of terrorism but reduce safety. It will be interesting to see what action the Government take. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should address his remarks to the Secretary of State, and I join him in asking the right hon. Gentleman to bear that point in mind.

Recommendations V, VI and VIII of the Select Committee's third report make it clear that the Secretary of State had reached the view that there should not be an independent police authority. That is in line with the Home Office report and the change of mind among chief police officers who said that they were willing to go along with an aviation security inspectorate. The Select Committee commented that if the Government intended to adopt that proposal, the inspectorate should be given the correct status and independence and should not become lost within the Department but be allowed to speak freely in the name of safety. The Select Committee recommended that the head of the inspectorate should be appointed at the level of a chief constable and be given independent access to the Secretary of State for Transport and powers similar to the Health and Safety Executive to report independently.

The Government's response was to deny independent access to the Secretary of State. Instead, the head of the inspectorate will be appointed at grade 6. It is interesting that someone appointed at grade 4—a higher post—is the chief inspector of air accidents, who does have direct access to the Secretary of State because of the special nature of such investigations and the desirability of maintaining his independence. If that chief inspector has any concerns, he can approach the Secretary of State directly.

Why should a person in charge of aviation security be so different? Why should the aviation inspector be required to report first to an assistant secretary, who reports the matter to an independent intermediate, who reports to an under-secretary, who reports to the deputy secretary, who finally reports to the permanent secretary —presumably Sir Humphrey, who might then tell the Secretary of State what is going on?

What if the inspectors, who will serve as a kind of SAS in making assaults on the system to establish whether it is secure, find that it is inadequate? Will they follow the example set by journalists in exposing that inadequacy in the press, which would probably have more effect on the Department, or will they merely produce an internal memo? If they do the latter, that memo will be smothered by the Department, and no one will know what is going on. Yet again, the Department has won.

I understand that the Department made some changes in the aviation security division, which will no longer be directly involved in policy. Nevertheless, it will still be locked into the Department's policy requirements. In that respect, it will find itself in the same situation as the railway inspectorate. Policy requirements relating to cutbacks in resources affect safety, but if any complaint concerning safety is made it will be lost within the Department's bureaucracy. That illustrates more than anything the motive behind the Government's action in prosecuting a few journalists who did a good job of exposing certain security inadequacies—or, more to the point, the then Secretary of State's inadequate response to demands for improved safety. All kinds of assurances were given to this House, but they were not honoured, as we know from the journalists' exposé.

The Secretary of State remarked that one cannot differentiate between journalists and those who may be attempting to perpetrate a serious offence. The courts take into account serious intent—but leaving that aside, why did the Department ban air-side journalists after the former Secretary of State for Transport was photographed walking down the steps from an aircraft before making his way to the private exit carrying his bag of duty-free goods after returning from Mustique? Why did the Department perform that act of petty vengeance, which did not serve to improve security but was merely indicative of its desire to deflect public attention from its inability to deal properly with security?

Mr. Parkinson: I will put a simple question to the hon. Gentleman, and I would like him to give a straight answer. Does he agree that it is important that when people are questioned and, on the basis of the answers they provide, are issued with passes they should be prosecuted when it transpires that they told lies? Would he be in favour of exempting journalists from prosecution? I think not.

Mr. Prescott: No, I do not think that one should exempt journalists. One cannot draw such a distinction, which illustrates the importance of proper vetting procedures. Nevertheless, the Department took action against journalists who exposed inadequacies that existed despite the many assurances that had been given to the House. Why was action taken against the air-side journalists who only took photographs—who were subject to security vetting and cleared, who do not represent a threat to the nation's security, and who are traceable? That action by the Department was just another example of hiding the loopholes exposed by press attention. All that suggests that the Department is not competent to deal with such matters.

The Select Committee concerned itself also with the question of threats and warnings, particularly in relation to the Lockerbie disaster. There has been no investigation into the way in which the Department handled that particular incident. It received a warning about the possible loss of an American aircraft that included the information that it would probably be a Pan Am flight, the route, approximate time, and that a radiocassette bomb was the likely device. The Department circulated that warning on 19 December, which was two days before the disaster. That warning was lost in the Christmas post and most interested parties did not receive it until after the tragedy had occurred. The same Department issued the advice that airlines should watch for a radiocassette bomb, and that any item of which they were unsure should be put in the hold of the aircraft. How can one trust such a Department to be in charge of aviation security?

There is documentary evidence of the way in which the Department dealt with that most serious matter, which is why the relatives of those who died in the Lockerbie

[Mr. Prescott]

disaster have demanded an independent inquiry. I believe that the Secretary of State was of a mind to commission one. He has shown in his letter that it is Government policy. I think he argued the case, but the Government do not want an inquiry into Lockerbie. We are told that that is because there is a criminal inquiry under way, but in America a criminal investigation has not stopped them having a presidential inquiry, and they have fined the company involved.

When the Secretary of State rushed out all those things just before the anniversary of the Lockerbie tragedy; when he forgot that there would be a fatal accident inquiry; when he announced that there would be a fatal accident inquiry, or perhaps I should say that the Crown Office for Scotland made that announcement—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State is looking shocked, but he talked to the relatives about the inquiry before it was announced, so he must have been a party to the understanding.

Mr. Parkinson: This is a matter entirely for the Lord Advocate, in his capacity as the chief law officer in Scotland. He knew that I was meeting the relatives. I told him. He knew what I was going to say to them. He authorised me to say that he was seriously considering holding a fatal accident inquiry. That decision was entirely independent of me. He announced the inquiry 10 days later and it was his decision as a law officer—and not mine —as part of the Government.

Mr. Prescott: I fully accept what the Secretary of State has said. I did not doubt that it was not his decision. I said that he was aware that that offer was going to be made to the relatives. That is fine, but there is one difficulty. As he told me in his letter, the fatal accident inquiry can look at

"the defects, if any, in any system of working which contributed to the deaths"

or to the accident.

One would assume that the way that the Department of Transport handled the information and the warning is pertinent to the matter, and the Select Committee talked about that. The Committee said that it believed and hoped that the Department had a more sophisticated way of dealing with it. In reality, we do not know, because we do not know what the mistakes were, as that kind of inquiry is prevented. The fatal accident inquiry cannot investigate those pertinent matters. I have evidence from the law officers that makes it clear that the inquiry cannot sit in secret. Therefore, it cannot deal with confidential information, or information on security. Also, it cannot receive evidence outside the United Kingdom, although America and Germany are involved. The evidence also states that:

"In any court proceedings, public interest immunity may be claimed by a Government Minister in respect of production of documents or articles or the giving of any evidence where it is considered by that Minister that it is not in the public interest to make the evidence available."

The Department of Transport could make the case to the inquiry that it would not provide it with the kind of information that would be pertinent to the argument—for example, whether it had the information in time, or whether it passed it on properly.

Will the Secretary of State say now that he will co-operate with that inquiry by giving details about every kind of action that took place? Will he give all the information that is available, so that the fatal accident inquiry can make some assessment of whether the Department of Transport was competent in its handling of the threatening information that was so correct about the Lockerbie tragedy? Will the Secretary of State say now whether his Department will give its full co-operation in that inquiry?

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot anticipate what the sheriff principal will want to ask, or whether I will be able to answer it. The fatal accident inquiry is being set up, and we shall have to see how the sheriff principal conducts his inquiry.

Mr. Prescott: I am afraid that is the kind of language that we have learned to live with from the Department of Transport. It will not hold an inquiry into the way that it has handled matters that are pertinent to this issue.

Our case is that, while we welcome the legislation, we have no confidence in the Department of Transport to carry out its responsibilities under it. We shall try to change the Bill in Committee, but we want to make it clear now that safety is our top priority. We mean it. We make recommendations for change, and we pursue them. The Government's stance is just rhetoric, and that has been particularly exposed in this legislation.

5.23 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on bringing forward the Bill, as any improvement in security is to be welcomed, particularly when it concerns aviation.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was not on the Select Committee on Transport, so he is not aware of the Contribution made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's predecessor, who was so honest about the Lockerbie incident. He came to the Select Committee and was honest and open with his information, and I have no reason to disbelieve anything that he said. I am certain that he did not hide anything from us. The handling of procedure by the Chairman of the Committee was exceptional, and tribute must be paid to him for the way that we got to grips with the situation.

I should also like to praise the British Airports Authority, although I know that that is unusual for me, and the airlines. They have all made some efforts to improve security at Heathrow, in particular.

The Secretary of State has had power of direction since 1982, and he is now going to extend it. Will he assure the House that he will use those directions to ensure that airline operators will make space available for those airlines which want to do more comprehensive baggage searches? The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East touched on that issue.

We know that there have been instances at Heathrow and elsewhere when the facilities that airlines have requested have not been granted for various reasons. My right hon. Friend should consider that. It is not fair for the operators to say, "I am sorry, we haven't got the space", when, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East pointed out, there is plenty of space available for shopping in the terminals. The BAA is now advertising and saying, "Come and shop in our terminals even if you're not flying out of there". There is enough congestion at Heathrow airport now, without encouraging people to shop there. I

hope that my right hon. Friend will use his powers, if they are applicable, to ensure that, if an airline wants to do a more intensive baggage search, it will be able to.

My right hon. Friend should also consider the fact that customs and immigration officers are not subject to full security checks at Heathrow. Perhaps they feel that they are too important and that they are above the normal security checks—I do not know. In the past, they have been excluded from the full security checks in directives. I do not believe that a customs or immigration official should be excused security checks for covert operations or for any other activities. Some of them strut around Heathrow as if they own the place, but they are there to serve the travelling public.

Mr. Wilshire *rose*——

Mr. Dicks: I will not give way, as it would not be fair, but I apologise to my hon. Friend.

There are still instances at Heathrow when passengers boarding planes come into contact with passengers who have just arrived. That must be a major security risk. Although that probably requires a long-term change in the structure of the terminals, we must not forget the importance of the issue, and the ease with which something could be passed from a passenger getting off a plane to someone boarding one. It is quite frightening.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East also mentioned media passes at Heathrow. To some extent, I must take the blame for the reduction in the number of such passes.

Last summer, I got off an aeroplane just behind a famous film star—Gregory Peck. As he walked out of the door of the aeroplane, he was surrounded by seven or eight cameramen, and about 20 reporters. Later, I made some inquiries but I could not understand why he had to be interviewed airside rather than landside. I asked the BAA how many media passes it had issued. It took half a day to answer, and told me the number was more than 300 and less than 400. Two days later it told me that there were 347.

I hope that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East will agree that there is no justification for the media having 347 airside passes, some of which are never used for long periods, while others are used only to take photographs of travelling passengers. There is no need for the media to go airside, and there is no need for Ministers or Prime Ministers to be interviewed airside when there are widespread opportunities for interviews elsewhere.

The BAA is to be congratulated on drastically reducing the number of passes, and I think that the travelling public will be happy about that.

I share the concern of the hon. Member about the effectiveness of the Department of Transport, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not be too upset about that. We all know of instances of problems there. When officers came before us, and I questioned them about how many inspectors at airports had had experience of working in airports, I was told that one had trained for a time as an air traffic controller. None of the other inspectors had ever worked at an airport before, or been involved with airport security. I hope that there are now more inspectors with detailed knowledge of airports and how they operate.

I think that I was the only member of the Select Committee to stress that, at Heathrow in particular, if there is a security scare a meeting has to be called to decide how to handle it. The meeting will be attended by representatives of the BAA, the airline and the police. I still maintain that the police should have overall responsibility for airport security. In 1985 or 1986, the police said that they wanted such responsibility, but when the Association of Chief Constables came before us recently it had changed its tune.

The police should not be allowed to pick and choose their areas of responsibility. One person should clearly be at the top of the chain of command at each airport, responsible for security at that airport. I find it ludicrous that a meeting of three, four, five, six, seven or eight people should have to be called to discuss how to cope with an immediate security problem. The sooner the police start operating at airports again and some of the private security firms cease to do so, the better, and the man at the top should certainly be from the police.

I welcome the Bill. As I have said, we must all welcome any measure that will make the life of the terrorist more difficult and will tighten airport security. Despite the sometimes antagonistic approach of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, I am glad to say that I accept much of what he said, and I share his concern about the effectiveness of the Department in dealing with the problem.

5.31 pm

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Thank you for allowing me to take part in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am especially interested in the subject, for two reasons—first, because, sadly, one of my constituents died in the Lockerbie crash, and, secondly, because I have received some disquieting correspondence from an airline pilot who, although he operates out of Aberdeen, lives in my constituency.

My constituent who died did not have an opportunity, as did the staff of the American embassy in Moscow, to receive a warning, and had no chance of withdrawing from the flight. He was a very young man, and his widow and 18-month-old son are left grieving. The widow went immediately to Lockerbie to find out whether her husband's body had been traced, but was not treated very sympathetically; she complains not about the behaviour of the local police, but about that of a number of other agencies. She was sent away, and 12 days passed before she was informed that her husband's body had been found. It turned out later that—according to reliable information—the body had not been mutilated, and that her husband's face was recognisable. His pocket contained an identity card with a photograph and a thumbprint. I inquired into the matter, but have received no explanations that satisfy me or the family of my late constituent.

I shall not pursue the subject of Lockerbie further, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has taken it up a number of times. Let me instead deal with the questions raised by the airline pilot.

First, the pilot complains that several of the security arrangements that have been made so far are purely cosmetic. He says that he and his colleagues understand the need for some cosmetic arrangements: the public must see that the Government are concerned and are doing something. Nevertheless, he complains that security staff are spending most of their energies checking on the wrong people. He points out that Members and staff of the House of Commons who are well known enter the building

[Ms. Mildred Gordon]

without security checks, but that visitors are all carefully checked: hon. Members are not treated as potential terrorists. The plane that he flies is small, he says; it carries only 48 bags, only three of which are checked—and they are the three belonging to the crew. He also complains about the pavement searches of the crew's belongings, which are conducted outside the perimeter fence, in full public view. He finds that harassing and offensive.

A letter sent to me by this constituent from the chief pilot, Highlands division, Glasgow airport, demonstrates that those complaints are justified. The letter mentions that work is to be done,

"hopefully this weekend, on the floor of the portacabin. It was the vibration in the floor which was causing every single person to trigger the warning on the security arch."

It goes on to say:

"They are providing screens for the girls to be searched behind and I have also requested that the security ladies are given more training in body searching and make their searches less intimate and brusque."

It seems that crew and staff are not being treated respectfully. I do not think that a pilot should have to write to a Member of Parliament to ask for a curtain to be provided behind which intimate body searches can be conducted, yet that pilot has had to do so. He also complains that it has taken the Department of Transport nine months to answer his letters of complaint.

I think that everyone will agree that perhaps the greatest danger at airports is caused by baggage being left surreptitiously in passenger terminals, or baggage in aircraft freight holds that is not reconciled with passengers who have checked in. It seems to me that the airline staff, particularly check-in staff, are in the best position to spot unusual behaviour on the part of passengers, and to note the time that elapses before bookings, the method of payment—whether the ticket was bought with cash or a credit card, for instance—and people whose nationalities are unusual on a particular airline. All these measures can help to identify a bona fide passenger.

It is plainly important for the expertise of staff to be used and respected, but my informant says that

"the measures that the Secretary of State has introduced"

have

"demoralised them"—

that is, airline staff—

"to the extent that they have become very apathetic towards security."

I hope that that is not true, but I feel that the Secretary of State should look into it.

The pilot suggests a number of measures that I think are worth considering. He would, he says,

"like to see a review of the whole issue of Airport Security with proper consultation with all Trade Unions in the industry."

I feel that I must give that proposal my wholehearted support, for I believe that full consultation with those at the sharp end of any industry—those who actually work in it—would greatly benefit society in general and that the knowledge, talent and experience of such people should be used and respected.

The pilot would also

"like to see resources directed towards training of airline personnel, and especially check-in staff to identify potential terrorists."

This should be funded by the Government.

The pilot wants all staff to be issued with valid identity cards; that has been discussed today. He also raises the question of fraud. On 11 December, an ITN news broadcast revealed that a bag had been left for 25 minutes. The pilot feels that fraud, especially on the part of the press, should be "dealt with severely." I am not wholeheartedly with him on that, however, because I feel that television did a service by demonstrating the dangerous lack of security that still exists—although I feel that frivolous interventions for the sake of publicity or entertainment should certainly be dealt with severely.

The pilot wants

"far greater resources directed towards making sure that, once baggage has been checked in, it is loaded along with its owner".

It strikes me as dangerous that someone should be able to check in baggage, show a ticket to ride and perhaps never get on the plane. According to my informant, there are

"new baggage tags which are generated by a baggage tag printer along with a number and its equivalent bar code."

He feels that that may solve the problem. I have not enough technical knowledge to know whether that is true, but I hope that the Secretary of State will look into it.

Finally, he asks for more stringent checks on vehicles entering the restricted area. He also says that he would like security personnel to be gainfully employed in surveillance activities inside the passenger terminal areas of airports. Those are all useful suggestions. I hope that the Secretary of State and the Committee that is to consider the Bill will take them on board.

5.39 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I had been hoping for some time to be called to speak in the debate, especially after flying up to my Hexham constituency to visit the site of a mid-air collison between two RAF jets. The sight of the wreckage and the damage done was horrific. It taught me something that I shall never forget. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport for introducing the Bill at this time. The sooner that it is passed, the better.

In the limited time available to me, I shall concentrate on the aviation aspect of the debate. I warmly welcome the Bill and the increased security proposals announced this afternoon by my right hon. Friend. Although the extra security arrangements announced after the Lockerbie disaster answered a number of the security questions that were asked, widespread concern about the lack of screening at airports remains.

The Sunday Times claimed in an article on 9 July 1989, six months after the Lockerbie disaster, that

"packages that have not been searched or screened for explosives are being sent aboard passenger aircraft by commerical courier firms."

The newspaper sent a package, which could easily have contained explosives, from London to New York via Brussels, apparently one of the most secure air routes. The contents were not checked, either by hand or X-ray. When the package arrived in New York it had been neither opened nor screened. Although the airline responsible said afterwards that this type of incident should not happen, the fact is that it did. The worrying question is how many more times it has happened since.

I am aware of only one airline, El Al, that tests the security of its airline anonymously. In its third report on aircraft security, published in July last year, the Select Committee on Transport suggested that the best method

of testing the effectiveness of security methods was for inspectors to check the system in the same way as some journalists managed to do with ease and success last year. Reference was made to that point earlier this afternoon. I have no doubt that unannounced security checks of this nature would test security measures to a far greater degree than happens at present. It would certainly help to keep security staff alert.

The Select Committee recommended that inspectors should test the system by means of spot checks and by posing as would-be terrorists with inert devices. Any airline that wishes to provide its own additional security should be allowed to do so within a framework that is co-ordinated by the Secretary of State to ensure the best possible use of resources in terms of manpower and space at increasingly congested airports.

Following Lockerbie, aviation security advisers were reconstituted as an inspectorate, a move that I very much welcome. As the security research and development budget is being doubled, a move that I also very much welcome, my right hon. Friend may wish to consider the realistic assessment of airport security systems while the Bill is before the House. Proper and adequate screening is vital in any security system. However, if it is to be an effective means of countering terrorism, there has to be far greater co-operation between the British Airports Authority, the Civil Aviation Authority, the airlines and any other bodies that may be involved.

I have travelled extensively throughout the United States and many other countries, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would recommend you to do so because it is very rewarding and most enjoyable. However, I have never experienced the same discomfort as I regularly suffer at terminal 1 at Heathrow any day of the week. In every airport that I have used in America, security controls have been well manned and well staffed. They have more than enough machines to cope with large influxes of passengers. The management at Heathrow would do well to consider ways of reducing the widening differences in standards of security management. Having regularly experienced the assault course that security control has become at Heathrow's terminal 1, I can only be pessimistic. We shall not attain better standards until the management work towards long-term goals rather than short-term realities.

Mr. Wilshire: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Amos: I should like to give way to my hon. Friend, but as time is limited I feel that I must continue my speech. I apologise to him.

I raised the issue with the general manager of terminal 1, Mr. Michael Bell. I congratulate him on admitting honestly in his letter to me concerning attempts to overcome inconvenience, crowding and delays at the security checks that

"clearly we failed to overcome those problems."

He also agreed that

"1989 has not been a year we can be proud of in terms of the service we have delivered to passengers waiting for security checks."

That was a very honest admission. I hope that it will be of some use to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Amos: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for not giving way; I really must get on with my speech. A number of hon. Members want to contribute to the debate.

We are constantly being promised more machines, more staff and better facilities at our airports. We have heard it all before. Will my hon. Friend the Minister give us some idea of when he hopes there will be more staff and more machines? Terrorists thrive on promises. We must have machines and men in place on time. The art of good management must be to plan ahead to prevent difficulties rather than just to react to crises.

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr Patrick McLoughlin): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Amos: I must give way to my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. McLoughlin: I should like to put on record the huge increase in the number of security staff that have been deployed at airports since 1988. At the major airports the number of security staff has increased from 2,384 to 3,599 —an increase of over 51 per cent. That is commendable. Under our direction, airports have increased the number of their security staff to meet the requirements that we have imposed upon them.

Mr. Amos: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information, and I am happy to be the first to accept it. I have had discussions with the British Airports Authority. I know that it is doing a good job and that it is trying to get more staff, but it is not good enough. Matters must be improved. I ask BAA to reconsider its recruitment procedures. Exactly the same problem arose with London Underground. I was told that the problems there were caused by staff shortages. London Underground has now looked into its recruitment and retention procedures and says that it can now attract staff far more easily than was the case previously. There is room for improvement, but I acknowledge and accept what my hon. Friend says.

Time after time at Heathrow, inadequate numbers of security staff have to deal with increasing numbers of passengers. It is time that we had enough machines to cope with the demand and with the technical difficulties associated with detecting present-day terrorists, who are sophisticated and well organised. Although the machines at Heathrow are used extensively, large numbers of hand searches are still carried out. In my opinion, that is inefficient and slow and poses its own security threat as queues build up. There is no doubt that terrorism is helped by chaos and disruption.

Mr. Wilshire: My hon. Friend appears to be suggesting that machines are better than the hand searching of luggage and people, but the technology does not exist. Hand searching is still by far the best way to detect certain items.

Mr. Amos: I agree. But if hand searches are carried out on only a certain number of people, there is still a risk. The majority get through without being hand-searched.

Airports must introduce up-to-date, state-of-the-art technology to enable all baggage to be screened effectively. That would end the current haphazard, hit-or-miss system. We must act to prevent a repetition of the ridiculous situation that occurred in November 1988. It was reported in the national press that

"the six American carriers flying from Gatwick asked for permission to install state-of-the-art colour x-ray machines,

[Mr. Amos]

capable of detecting plastic explosives such as Semtex. It took seven months to get permission for a trial, but the airlines were told that if they caused too much congestion they would have to withdraw them."

Cargo handling is also a major potential area of terrorist activity, where the opportunities are perhaps even greater for the planting of devices. Again I welcome the extension of the powers to be given to my right hon. Friend to help to deal with threats to secure areas. By giving more powers to the Secretary of State, we shall more easily be able to co-ordinate and direct the efforts of the very large number of agencies involved in airport security. However, I suggest to him one or two areas that he should carefully consider. It was claimed in a national newspaper that "last year"—1988—

"nearly two-thirds of Britain's 1·2m tonnes of air freight went from Heathrow, but handling firms at the airport said the bulk of this was loaded on to planes with no checks at all."

The Select Committee was also concerned about that problem. It must be resolved.

I readily acknowledge that it would be extremely difficult to screen all hold baggage and cargo, but we must work towards that objective. I welcomed the announcement by the former Secretary of State for Transport on 24 April last year that he had set the security objective of screening all hold baggage on flights at higher risk, and I urge my right hon. Friend to consider extending that screening process to all hold baggage on all international flights. The list of higher-risk flights and airlines seems to be growing every month.

In conclusion, I fully support the provision in clause 1 to introduce life sentences for terrorists. I hope that a life sentence will mean life imprisonment and that the sentences will not be discretionary but mandatory. It is essential to increase co-operation among countries on the extradition of terrorists. The system of extradition must be made quicker and easier so that terrorists will be left in no doubt about the punishment that they can expect. Those countries which refuse to co-operate, thus putting at risk the lives of every air traveller, should be prohibited and prevented from being allowed to participate in international air travel and cargo handling.

5.50 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I welcome the measures contained in the Bill as far as they give effect to the Montreal protocol, the Rome convention and the fixed platforms protocol. Of course, in an ideal world none of these measures would be necessary, but we do not live in an ideal world, so certain precautions must be taken to maintain the safety of the travelling public. The safety of persons travelling within and to our country, whether they are passengers or crew, and the safety of the public at large must be one of our major concerns and in the forefront of our minds. Yet I am extremely worried by some of the provisions of the Bill. They give the Government of the day through the Secretary of State far-reaching powers which many years ago would not have been granted except in times of war or national emergency.

Many of the powers in the Bill are an extension of those already available through the Aviation Security Act 1982. However, the vast expansion of ground to be covered, the massive increase in the numbers of persons affected—including those authorised to carry out the powers and those on the receiving end of them—and the huge amount of property involved cause me to stop, think and scrutinise.

Britain has always prided itself on the freedom and democracy that its people enjoy. It is one of those strange anomalies that to protect the freedom of our people—in this case, the freedom of movement—we give the Government and other designated people the very powers that in different circumstances could be used to take freedom away.

In the past 10 years, there has been a significant erosion of our civil liberties, much of it without cause. Although I call for an increase in security at our airports and harbours, it is imperative that before we pass the Bill we are sure that we know the full consequences of the actions contained in it and that we ensure that there are satisfactory methods for monitoring security and built-in safeguards against the possible abuse of any of the powers contained in the Bill.

I intend carefully to scrutinise all the clauses in Committee, but I hope that today the Minister will be able to put my mind at rest on one or two issues that cause me most concern.

Clause 21(3) states:

"persons who may be specified in a direction . . . as the persons by whom any searches are to be carried out include members of any body of constables which the harbour authority has power to maintain in the harbour area, but not any other constables."

I understand that private security forces are included in the authorised body of constables that harbour authorities have the power to maintain. If the authorities are to fulfil their duties under the Bill, the number of private security personnel they employ will increase dramatically.

Mr. Shersby: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the issue that he has just raised is extremely serious? Is he aware that those constables are sworn by two justices under a Victorian Act of Parliament, the Harbours, Docks, and Piers Clauses Act 1847, and that in effect a private police force is operating in those harbours which is not accountable to the public in the same way as the regular forces?

Mr. Fearn: I was not fully aware of that, but I am now.

Clause 23(4) states:

"In so far as a direction under any of the preceding provisions of this Part of this Act requires searches to be carried out, or other measures to be taken, by constables, the direction may require the person to whom it is given to use his best endeavours to secure that constables will be duly authorised to carry, and will carry, firearms when carrying out the searches or taking the measures in question."

Can the Minister assure me that the two clauses I have mentioned will not mean that private security forces will carry arms or be authorised to use arms, particularly when our own metropolitan and county police forces do not carry firearms and are still restricted in the authorisation of their use? It is worth noting that the Port of London authority police do not carry arms and have given up their firearms certificates.

To enable them to carry out duties under the Bill, constables would have to apply for and be issued with firearms certificates. I think that they will be reluctant to do that. Whatever reply the Minister cares to give, will he also give his assurance that the two clauses will be reconsidered and that clause 23 will at least be drafted more tightly so that there is no room for loose interpretation?

It is clear that more security personnel, private or otherwise, will be employed and more people will be searched as a result of the Bill. It is worth mentioning that the measures and directives in the Bill extend to the owners of any business that may be sited or conducted in a restricted zone. Our harbours do not have sophisticated technical equipment such as that at Tilbury which allows for the easy and efficient search of cruise passengers and their luggage. It is unlikely that money will be made available for extensive provision of such equipment, so many of the searches will be superficial or will involve body contact.

I understand that the current requirement at airports is that one in three persons must undergo a body contact search and that those searches are carried out by private security personnel. Given that the numbers of people undergoing searches will vastly increase as a result of the measures in the Bill, will the Minister say what rules and regulations he intends to make, other than those given in the directions, to cover the conduct of those searches to ensure that there is no abuse of power, and whether there will be any directions as to the number of female constables to be employed?

I have already taken up more time than I intended, but before I leave other matters of concern to be considered in Committee, I shall make one final request of the Minister. If my reading of the Bill is correct and its implementation will result in increased use of private security personnel, will he consider introducing legislation to regulate and control such forces and will he ensure that the Bill makes it quite obvious where the lines of responsibility lie in respect of security personnel? At the moment it is far from clear who has the every-day responsibility.

Taking those matters into consideration, and in good faith, I give my and my party's qualified support to the Bill in the interest of preventing further disasters such as Lockerbie and the Italian cruise ship hijack.

5.58 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): As the House knows, I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation and wish to declare that interest. I welcome the Bill and its provisions for securing more effective implementation of aviation security measures.

My constituents live close to Heathrow airport, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), and strongly support the measures to improve airport security. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on introducing the legislation promptly. We in Uxbridge believe that it is vital to suppress unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation.

It is certainly time that Britain gave effect to the Montreal protocol. It must be right that the maximum penalty of life imprisonment should be available to punish offenders who intentionally, by means of any device, substance or weapon, commit an act of violence at aerodromes serving civil international aviation. Lockerbie demonstrated the need for that; the Government responded commendably to the challenge that it presented, and for that reason I welcome those parts of the Bill dealing with civil aviation.

However, I express the concern of the police about some of the powers to be conferred by part III, which deals with ships and harbour areas. In particular, I seek clarification of the powers in clauses 20 to 23, which empower the Secretary of State to give harbour authorities directions requiring searches to be carried out by constables or other specified persons. The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fern) referred to those clauses in his perceptive speech, and I am delighted to be able to follow him in seeking clarification of them.

It appears that those clauses will enable the Secretary of State to ensure increased security at ports, but they will allow persons other than constables to enforce the provisions of the Bill relating to the protection of ships and the security of harbours.

Clause 21 contains powers to require other persons to promote searches in harbours. The hon. Member for Southport rightly asked what subsection (3) means. I can only assume that it means that harbour undertakers can rely on special constables who are sworn under the provisions of the Harbours, Docks, and Piers Clauses Act 1847. A few days earlier, those constables could easily have been employees of a private security firm, but suddenly they would become a harbours, docks and piers police force. They could operate inside the harbour or dock or one mile outside it, but they would not be accountable to the House or the public in the same way as the regular police force. I have been corresponding with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his predecessor about that for the past six months.

I draw the House's attention to the powers contained in that Victorian Act of Parliament, which are being used by major harbours, docks and piers operators, most recently at Parkeston quay, I believe that the House should turn its attention to that, because it is unsatisfactory for powers conferred by Parliament in 1847 to be exercised in that way. It is wrong in the light of current police practice. I did some research and discovered that that Act was passed by the House without debate, but it is high time that it was debated again.

The Bill sets out a series of new offences, but the new powers granted to my right hon. Friend and his successors must be examined in detail in Commitee. I shall comment briefly on a few of those powers. Clause 21 grants the Secretary of State power to require a harbour authority or operator of a ship to allow searches of persons or property of ships before taking on board the persons or property concerned or putting to sea. Clause 22 allows the Secretary of State a more general power to require a harbour authority to use its best endeavours to conduct searches of the harbour area or any ship, property or persons in the harbour.

Clause 23 allows the Secretary of State another general power to give directions to a harbour authority or operator of a ship and sets out in general terms the Secretary of State's requirements for ensuring the safety of the harbour area and ships.

The searches that may be required pursuant to clauses 21 and 22 may be conducted by constables or anyone specified in the Secretary of State's directions. What does that mean? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell me when he replies to the debate, because those powers are supplemented by clause 24, which allows the Secretary of State to specify the qualifications of a person carrying out a search and, in particular, states that the Secretary of State may require such a person to have specified training and experience. Will my hon. Friend say what sort of training and experience will be required by those persons, who apparently will not be members of the regular police force?

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

Two matters are reserved to police constables. First, in clause 16, a ship's master is empowered to arrest a person whom he believes has committed an offence under the Act, but he must then deliver that person to a police constable or an immigration officer. Secondly, the effect of clauses 25 and 24(4) taken together is that only police constables may bear arms. That point was made by the hon. Member for Southport.

Additional powers are given to the persons designated to conduct a search. I draw the House's attention to clause 22(5), which makes it an offence to obstruct such a person exercising his powers under the Bill. Someone doing so will be subject to arrest under the present so-called citizen's power of arrest. Clause 25(4) entitles a designated person to use reasonable force in exercising his powers under the Bill, and clause 33 makes it an offence to give deceptive or misleading statements to any employee of the harbour authority or the operator of a ship.

Further powers are granted by clause 32 to a person authorised by the Secretary of State to conduct an inspection of any ship or harbour with a view to deciding whether the Secretary of State needs to exercise his other powers under the Bill.

The powers granted to the Secretary of State by the clauses to which I referred briefly allow him to lay down a complete code for the policing and security arrangements at any harbour in the country. I hope that when the Committee considers those clauses it will ask penetrating questions about the codes of practice for policing that can be laid down by the Secretary of State. The Bill does not specify how the Secretary of State must use those powers, and, in particular, does not specify whether the powers of search referred to in clauses 21 and 22 must be exercised by a constable or some other person designated by him. In this country, we are used to such powers being exercised by properly trained and responsible police officers, who are accountable to their county police forces and ultimately to elected representatives on local authorities and in the House. Before we contemplate moving away from that long-established procedure, those powers should be more carefully investigated.

The directions that the Secretary of State may give in accordance with clause 23 are, so far as I can see, open-ended. He could give directions requiring the harbour in question to be policed by police constables appointed under the Police Act 1964. Alternatively, he may permit the harbour authority to entrust the harbour's security arrangements to a private security company and then make further directions for the organisation of the private security firm, including, if he thinks fit, directions regarding the qualifications, experience and training of the security guards in question. Those are substantial powers, and I am sure that when considering the drafting of the Bill my right hon. Friend felt it necessary to take them.

The Bill does not cast in stone the arrangements that must be made for policing harbours. Everything will turn on the directions given by the Secretary of State for a particular harbour or for all harbours in the country. However, if the Secretary of State intended to entrust the policing of all the harbours to the regular police service there would be no necessity for the additional powers in the Bill.

If a private security firm is to be used, the Bill will give the Secretary of State the power to lay down the requirements which it must follow. That power will supplement and replace the requirements of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 to which I have referred and of similar legislation which merely requires two magistrates to appoint any constable and to be satisfied as to his fitness.

The real question raised by this part of the Bill is the content of the Secretary of State's directions. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will reassure me and the police service that the provisions have not been included to expand the provision of private police forces or security guards at harbours and docks in the United Kingdom.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to participate in the debate. I hope that the important points that I have made will be investigated carefully in Committee.

6.10 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): The debate so far has focused mainly on airport security. That is inevitable, given the dreadful Lockerbie disaster. However, I shall concentrate on offshore installations, which are covered in part II, and particularly the provisions of clause 8. I shall do so not simply because I am a lawyer and lawyers are inevitably pedantic. It strikes me that clause 8, with its subsequent interpretation clauses, raises a serious issue. I have no quibble with the fact that oil platforms and offshore installations have been included in this measure. Clearly, they are isolated and vulnerable and the sort of target that could be the object of terrorist activity. It is important that such installations are included in the Bill.

I am worried about the apparently wide powers which the Secretary of State has included in the Bill. Clause 8 provides:

"A person who unlawfully, by the use of force or"—

these are the important words—

"by threats of any kind, seizes a fixed platform and exercises control of it, commits an offence".

The clause goes on to say that that offence is punishable by possible imprisonment for life.

Offshore installations are not like ships or airlines. They tend to be fixed and they are the ordinary workplace of some 25,000 offshore workers. Like every other workplace, they have been and inevitably will be the subject of industrial action. I am worried about the implications of the clause for future industrial action. An industrial dispute about a year ago involved a sit-in. In such circumstances, it is difficult to see that the Bill would apply.

Unfortunately, offences occasionally occur in industrial disputes. The definition of "unlawfully" in clause 8 is the commission of an act in the United Kingdom which constitutes an offence under the law, in whatever part of the United Kingdom. The clause makes no attempt to define the gravity or the nature of that offence. The serious consequences of clause 8 could come into force simply by the commission of a breach of the peace or from disorderly conduct on an oil platform as a direct consequence of industrial action. That worries me.

I said in my defence earlier that I did not wish to be seen as a pedantic lawyer. The Minister smiles—I shall not repeat that phrase. I do not pluck my interpretation of clause 8 out of the air. In two incidents in the North sea

recently, the work force were threatened with criminal action during industrial action. The first incident involved two full-time trade union officials. I cannot go into the detail of this case, because a report has been made to the procurator fiscal. I shall not name the officials involved. They were officers of the International Transport Workers Federation entitled under International Labour Organisation conventions to board vessels to inspect the quality of vessels. They boarded a ship in my constituency. They were invited on board by the crew because of industrial action about the conditions on the vessel. The response of the master of the vessel was immediately to call the police. Despite their office and the powers given to them under the convention, the officers were arrested and charged. The matter is now before the procurator fiscal.

Another more serious case involved the vessel the MSV Stadive. It is an emergency response vessel covering the red sector of the North sea, which is the Shetland basin. The crew had been employed for some eight years by Seaforth Maritime. The operating company, Shell, decided to change the contract. It gave it to a new company, Deitsmann. All the officers and employees on that ship were involved in every action which the ship undertook.

In particular, the crew had the distasteful task of collecting the bodies after the Chinook disaster. They were also the crew that responded to the Ocean Odyssey tragedy. Despite the danger, the vessel was placed over the well drilled by the Ocean Odyssey, which had blown. It was there for three weeks while the well was capped. The crew are dedicated and highly experienced. Its whole future was placed in jeopardy because the oil company decided to change the contract, for whatever reason.

The previous employers said that no redundancy payments would be made because it was transferring its undertaking and the new employers refused to take on the obligations. Industrial action followed. The immediate consequence was that every member of the crew involved in the industrial action was threatened with criminal proceedings. They were threatened by the owners of the vessel that unless they gave up their industrial action they would be subject to prosecution under the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 and liable to a maximum penalty of a £2,000 fine.

I do not raise the interpretation of clause 8 lightly. The problems that I envisage already occur in the North sea. I have given two specific examples of how the law is used to threaten and intimidate the work force.

I welcome the legislation, and I believe that it should apply to offshore installations. It has a serious purpose, which we all support. However, in achieving that serious purpose, it is important that we do not create other difficulties. The potential difficulties that I have identified would have a serious and damaging effect on industrial relations law. I have highlighted the effect in the North sea.

If operated in an oppressive way, the legislation could bring the law into disrepute. That is something that we all want to avoid. I look forward to a clear and unequivocal statement from the Minister confirming that that is not the intention of the legislation. If it is not, and the Government's intention is to fulfil the aims of the convention and deal with the serious problems of terrorism, I look forward to their supporting a suitable amendment to rectify the potential difficulties that I have outlined.

6.18 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I have listened intently today, because I hoped that the views of the many port directors in the United Kingdom would be more adequately expressed. The Bill ratifies the International Maritime Organisation convention for the suppression of unlawful acts, but the Government's drafting of the Bill seems to be overkill.

To take an average port in the United Kingdom such as Southampton, how on earth can 100 per cent. security of operation be achieved in a port which not only stretches for several miles but has been rebuilt with marinas, yuppie housing, several factories and even ancillary industrial units? That category of building is increasing all the time.

I am aware that perhaps a mistake was made some years ago when the British Transport docks police were disbanded. Associated British Ports no longer wanted that force, and it took on security officers. If the Bill goes through, I am sure that that will be the practice in the future. I cannot imagine that the police force could possibly recruit the numbers necessary to supervise the security of the 19 ports owned by Associated British Ports, let alone the security of the many other ports besides those.

Mr. Shersby: On what does my hon. Friend base that statement? I am certain that the police could be made available, and surely it would be better to recruit regular officers than a private security force.

Mr. Hill: The problem is that the police are always desperate for further manpower, and one must not forget that they have their normal duties to undertake. I believe that the recruiting programme for the police force is geared to a budget from the Home Office. I do not believe that the Home Office would increase that budget to ensure that every port in the United Kingdom was covered by the police.

No one has mentioned the recruitment of people with great expertise. I should have thought that many officers of the Special Air Services could be recruited to become what I would describe as the "el supremo" of security. I was horrified earlier when someone said that, when an emergency arises at a major airport, three or four different organisations are involved in dealing with it. I am sure that the same thing would happen should an emergency arise at a major port. If highly trained people were employed at the top, it might mean better training of the security staff. When going through Heathrow or Gatwick, I have never had a great deal of faith in the ability of the security staff to meet a real emergency should it arise.

The main source of danger has never been tackled. I have often thought of the Nigerian aircraft that was carrying a Nigerian ex-Minister in a box. I am sure that the Secretary of State remembers that incident. Naturally, that could not happen in this country, although we would not necessarily want such Ministers back. Diplomatic cargo and diplomatic bags have never been scrutinised to any degree. Perhaps some scrutiny is undertaken, and good luck to those who do it, but the lack of proper scrutiny of such cargo and bags represents one of the big weaknesses of our security operations. Any small country with 20 or 30 diplomats can invariably get its baggage on to an aircraft and in or out of the country without scrutiny.

The expense of providing massive security at a port such as Southampton can be paid for only by those who use that port. Such a cost could be a great inconvenience

[Mr. Hill]

to the people who work in that port and, at the end of the day, those extra charges will be reflected in the cost of goods throughout the country. As a word of caution, my right hon. Friend should go softly, softly on the maritime side, but he deserves a 100 per cent. mark for all his efforts on aviation.

6.24 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): There is, unhappily, a constant freemasonry of terror. There are nations that, when they feel that they are losing the political argument, will not hesitate to use other nations' civilians as bargaining pawns. The nation that decides to blow 500 people out of the air is not particularly committed to democratic ideals or interested in the general security of the travelling public. For that reason, the Bill is tremendously important.

The Secretary of State will know that the Select Committee on Transport was careful in the evidence it took not to highlight certain areas. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of all sorts of questions that I do not believe it would be politic or sensible to discuss in the House. I must stress to the right hon. Gentleman, however, that I am not convinced that the present security arrangements at the most used airports in this country, or even at the smaller ones, are even beginning to be adequate. At one of the busiest airports, Heathrow, I saw to my considerable horror that things have reached the point where at least one major airline interprets the need to question travelling passengers about security as acceptably dealt with by having those questions pinned to the check-in desk.

El Al is one of the few international airlines that is capable of offering safe transport to its passengers. The Secretary of State knows that it was able to find and to identify the girl, the dupe, carrying the Semtex because of its profiling techniques and its highly trained employees. Those employees were not only on the ball, but found out immediately about the problem. They did so by taking the time to question and because that airline had put security at the top of its list, not at the bottom.

All airlines, particularly the large international ones, make the constant plea that they will never have sufficient time to undertake the profiling techniques necessary because their passengers demand constant and rapid movement from the airport into the aircraft. Those of us who constantly travel on airlines realise that the speed of transmission from the land to the air is becoming slower and slower—often for acceptable reasons. What is not evident, however, is that a high level of security checking is carried out by airlines. A lot of luggage is never checked and a great deal of cargo should be subjected to much tighter security procedures.

The travelling public need better and stronger security measures. If there are no machines capable of identifying Semtex, only hand searching and profiling will do. If security machines are used to screen baggage, the people using them must be trained. It is not good enough to have someone sitting in front of the screen for 25 minutes looking at moving lines of luggage with no idea what he is identifying and no ability to do anything effective about the speed of his work. Machines must be properly calibrated and the staff must be properly paid and trained.

Above all, airlines must stop saying that passengers are not prepared to pay for safety and are not prepared for time to be taken to check their luggage properly. All sensible travellers want to get to the other end in one piece —that should not be too much to ask. When I get on a plane with my family, I want to get off with all of them with me, having been safely carried to our destination. That means that proper cargo space must be provided and that proper screening machines should be used by all the major airlines.

The Secretary of State must allow his new inspectorates direct access to him. That is the only way in which the inspectors can communicate their point of view. They could then tell him that they have checked an airport, that it will not do and that something must be done immediately. That point has been made time and time again to Secretaries of State for Transport by the Select Commitee on Transport and by others.

It can take an hour to get a perfectly ordinary bag into or out of an airport. On Monday, the absolutely unimaginable was achieved at terminal 2 and it took an hour and three quarters to unload the baggage because three major planes arrived at the same time. That shows that passengers spend time in airports. However, time is not usefully deployed by those who should have passenger safety at the top of their list.

6.29 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Before I come to my main points, so much nonsense has been spoken this afternoon by hon. Members who have not researched their facts that I should like, first, to refer to that. The point made by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) cast a slur on a fair number of my constituents who watch the X-ray screens and check the baggage at airports. They are highly trained and skilled. At Heathrow airport alone last year, about 250,000 items were detected by such skilled people, and to suggest otherwise is grossly unfair and something that I cannot accept.

I hope that all hon. Members share my enthusiasm for the principle of better security. I also hope that all Conservative Members share my contempt for some of the cheap, party political point scoring that has been going on since Lockerbie among the Opposition.

In the few minutes left in this debate, I wish to look beyond those principles and the search for scapegoats or apportioning blame. If we are to take full advantage of the opportunity provided by the Bill to make still more progress, we must look ahead. If we are to make progress and ensure that we do so, we need to establish some tests to use to determine whether the Bill and its principles will achieve what we seek.

There are three tests. First, will the Bill lead to practical proposals? Secondly, will the proposals that come from the Bill look to the future rather than the past? Thirdly, will the Bill's proposals involve everybody and everything, rather than, as suggested earlier, lead to another bout of buck-passing and attempts to pass the responsibility on to someone else?

Clearly, first and foremost we must ensure that the proposals are practical. Raising expectations which lead nowhere is no way to treat the travelling public. Announcing—as the Federal Aviation Administration in Washington did after the Lockerbie tragedy—a six-point action plan that was incapable of practical implementation

is inexcusable. Calling for more and better equipment for checking people and luggage when technology cannot cope is irresponsible. Pretending that such equipment exists elsewhere is even worse. The new American TNA detection machine is huge, heavy and slow, its safety has yet to be proved, and there are only two in operation in the world. The American Government and the public have not yet determined whether the gamma radiation emitted by such machines is safe.

With all this in mind, it is important to understand that a Bill that simply gives powers to the Secretary of State is no guarantee for effective action. For the Bill to pass the first test, the Government need to spell out how they will use the enabling powers. When the Government come to use those powers, they must state what steps must be taken to comply with their directions. It simply will not be good enough to fall back on saying that it is for the person to do it and for the courts to interpret what that direction means.

We must also ensure that there is a sensible and flexible balance between effective security and convenient travel. Security of 100 per cent. will always be impossible unless we ground all aircraft and close all airports. Applying ultra-stringent security rules to all airports is not practical, because the travelling public will not tolerate it. Therefore, it is important to remember that, whatever changes the Bill might produce, risk assessment will remain a vital part of the future of aviation security.

The second test is whether the Bill's proposals look forward rather than backward. An all too common and unfortunate British habit is that, when faced with a tragedy, we search for a scapegoat and, with hindsight say, "If only this, that or the other had been done, the tragedy would never have happened." Opposition Members have absolute mastery of such skills. No fact is too obvious, no bereavement too tragic, for somebody to go in for a bout of finger pointing and point scoring.

Unlike the Opposition and their attempts to score cheap points, terrorists look forward, not backward, and ask what new methods they can use because everyone seems to be trying to close the loopholes that previously existed. If the Bill simply focuses on the past and on ensuring that another Lockerbie does not happen, terrorists will come up with a novel way to carry out their particularly nasty activities in the sky.

The hue and cry that has come out of Lockerbie smacks of looking back rather than forward. Of course we must guard against tragedies such as Lockerbie, but we must try to think like the terrorist and ask ourselves, "What next, where next and how next can we do something differently?".

In this context, I join other Members in drawing the Government's attention to the potential loopholes that exist in the cargo operation. There is an urgent need to re-examine that activity. Looking to the future also means trying to best-guess the technology that the terrorist will use in future. There is little to be gained from finally deciding how to discover Semtex, just as the terrorist moves on to another type of explosive.

The third test is simply to ask whether the proposals involve everyone and everything. In a global activity such as aviation, unilateral action can never be wholly effective. The Bill cannot hope to provide a total cure; only international co-operation can do that. What is the use of a super-secure Heathrow when Athens airport still holds about as much water as a colander? To ensure that the proposals involve everyone, the Bill must also have a domestic dimension. To deserve support, it must ensure that it catches everyone in its net and requires the participation of everybody in the industry and the travelling public.

Therefore, I share the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) about the control authorities being exempt. They must be caught in the checking requirements, for no other reason than that they are open to blackmail to take items airside.

If we are to involve everybody, we must include the Government on a long-term basis. They must avoid the trap of regarding the Bill as the way to discharge their duty to help improve aviation security, and of believing that, having done so, they need only revert to directing and testing. However many Bills the House passes, and however many new measures are introduced at the airports, terrorism will never be eliminated while the causes that motivate the bomber still exist in the world. I am sure that the Government need little persuasion to play their part in ensuring that terrorism is made unnecessary by curing international problems.

There must be tests to ensure that the Bill is right and leads to practical proposals. Will it ensure that its proposals look forward rather than backward? Will it ensure that the proposals involve everyone and everything? If it will, it deserves the support of us all.

6.39 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): First, I pay tribute to the young policemen among my constituents from Whitburn, Livingston and elsewhere who, day after day, went to Lockerbie and had the gruesome task of trying to clear up the mess. What those young people went through was formidable.

Secondly, to save time, will the Department look at my speech on the Consolidated Fund just before Christmas, in which I outlined in detail at 5.30 am various International Air Transport Association problems in relation to the importation of birds and other livestock into this country? Everything that I want to say is in that speech and I hope that the Department will reflect on those matters.

Thirdly, some of us believe that the laws—difficult though they are—on the immunity of diplomatic bags must be changed because, as the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) said, abuse is going on.

Fourthly, I interrupted the Secretary of State earlier to refer to an answer of 14 December on airport security. I am not wholly convinced. Of course there are difficulties about providing sophisticated equipment for developing countries if there are not enough people to operate it, but the matter should be reconsidered because it is relatively easy to put lethal baggage on at some rather remote airport, and once it is in the system it is much more difficult to identify it when it is transferred from aircraft to aircraft.

I undertook to sit down at 6.40 pm.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Snape.

Mr. Steen: Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting all day to speak——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called the Front-Bench spokesman.

6.40 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): It is a sad and frequent occurrence on these occasions that hon. Members from both sides who want to participate in debates do not, for various reasons, have the opportunity to do so. I and the Minister agreed to take the minimum possible time and I can only apologise to hon. Members who have had to truncate their speeches or who have not been called.

The Bill will strengthen security at Britain's air and sea ports. The Opposition will support it, as we would support any Bill with such good intentions. We welcome the Bill, but as we have made clear in the debate we believe that it has a number of fundamental defects that must be remedied. I give notice to the Under-Secretary of State that we shall seek to deal with those defects and flaws in Committee.

The Bill does not go far enough in its attempt to curtail the threat of activities likely to endanger aircraft, ships, their crews and the travelling public. Our main objection to the Bill has to do with funding. There is no significant increase in funding and no proper provision for the security that we would like at our airfields and sea ports.

Whenever the Opposition suggest that the Government are not doing enough, Conservatives ask, "Who will pay?" They always ask where the money will come from. We have made it plain, as did the Select Committee, that the restoration of an aviation security fund would go a long way towards providing the necessary money properly to protect passengers and crew.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, the Select Committee agreed with us. In paragraph 30 of its third report it pointed out:

"The levy did provide a means whereby airlines and the travelling public could see how much they were paying for security and make a judgment as to whether that represented value for money"—

a key phrase that should appeal to Conservatives, who always talk about value for money. This Select Committee, with a Conservative majority, emphasised that point and made a recommendation that we wholeheartedly support.

The Select Committee also made a number of criticisms about inadequacies that it perceived in aviation security, and went on to point out in paragraph 31:

"The whole ethos of financing security appears to be reactive: to provide funds to tighten up loopholes after terrorists have demonstrated their existence."

It is the custom for those who wind up debates to refer to speeches that have been made during them—a custom that I have always supported and tried to follow. With only six minutes left I am in some difficulty about doing so today, but I want to draw the attention of the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who made the last and worst speech from the Conservative Benches, to the Select Committee's recommendations.

Mr. Wilshire: I take that as a compliment.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman would; that illustrates his mental capacities. Pomposity in one so young is not a particularly attractive trait, but added to self-delusion it gives me even more cause to worry about what I hope will be the hon. Gentleman's short career in the House.

The problems and inadequacies in security that we have pointed out, especially since Lockerbie, have needed to be pointed out to the Government—we make no bones about that. It is the purpose of the Opposition to point out perceived inadequacies of the Government, and we shall go on pointing out shortcomings in aviation and maritime security and suggesting alternatives and how they might be funded.

The Government are not willing to commit extra funding to the relevant security services and the other authorities that will need it. For instance, the Bill does not mention extra resources for Customs and Excise, whose officers will presumably have some part to play in administering the extra security that we want. I hope that when the Committee of Selection decides the membership of the Standing Committee to consider this Bill it will examine some of the contributions from Members today and select accordingly. I hope, for example, that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), to whom I always refer as representing the intellectual wing of the Conservative party, will be a member of the Standing Committee, because his Select Committee has made a valuable contribution and we should value his expertise during the passage of the legislation.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington pointed out that when Mr. Gregory Peck left an aircraft at Heathrow he was met by a great number of journalists, which must have caused him enormous concern. I hope that he managed to break the habit of a lifetime and toss them the odd crumb of news as he made his way down the gangway. But the serious point about the Government's attitude during the past year, as the Select Committee said, is that the Government's proposals to tighten security at Heathrow are aimed at least as much at journalists as at terrorists. Some Conservative Members did not like it, but my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East rightly said that the first people to have punitive action taken against them and to have airside passes removed were those guilty of taking photographs of a previous Secretary of State leaving an aeroplane. That is no way in which to instil confidence that the Government's intentions are honourable.

The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) rightly reminded us that some clauses refer to maritime safety and the ports. He and the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) pointed out the problems that arise now, and are likely to arise in the future, in the recruitment of security staff with some of the duties of constables but with none of their responsibilities. Both hon. Gentlemen know the reasons behind such recruitment. Security staff working 70 hours a week for £1·75 per hour are cheaper than police constables whose pay is nationally agreed and whose conditions of service are laid down. When Conservative Members point out the deficiencies, I wish that occasionally they would point out to their Front Bench spokesmen that public sector expenditure is not necessarily a bad thing. Reducing public sector expenditure by cutting the number of police constables employed at Britain's ports in no way demonstrates the Government's concern about the safety and future security of such installations.

The Bill does not go far enough, and in Committee we shall attempt to persuade the Government of that. I hope that when the Minister is in an environment where a little more time is available, he will be better prepared to listen than has been the Secretary of State or the previous Secretary of State. If he is prepared to listen, improved security at our airports and sea ports can be achieved. That is the desire of both sides of the House.

6.52 pm

The Minister of Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I am pleased to note that basically all hon. Members have given a warm welcome to the legislation. It is important that as much as is possible we have total unity in our attempt to ensure that the security at our airports and ports is as good as is expected.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was, yet again, clutching at straws. There have been a number of changes during the past 12 months. The amount of money now spent by airports on security has vastly increased and the number of people they employ in carrying out security checks has also increased. The British Airports Authority employed 2,000 people in December 1988; the number increased to 2,981 by January of this year. That significant improvement is because of the directions issued by the Department of Transport. The authority realises that security is vital not only to the House but to the industry and to the travelling public. It is in the interests of both the airlines and the airports to ensure that they are used as safely as possible.

Neither I nor the Government accept the idea that there must be a central collected fund to ensure that those improvements are administered. The best way to ensure that security is implemented by the airports is by direction. If they fail to carry out our directions, we shall take the action that will be available to us under the legislation. If airports fail to carry out our directions, they can expect to be prosecuted. I assure the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) that the Government will prosecute where it is necessary.

Of the Select Committee's 28 recommendations last year, the Government accepted 21, and we hope that they will be implemented as soon as possible. However, they cannot be implemented overnight, and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East accepted that.

A number of interesting points were raised during the debate but I cannot answer all of them as we have only a short time. I shall write to those hon. Members that I have not answered. We will have a number of opportunities during Committee to discuss the Bill in greater detail and to consider some of the arguments. I hope that we can also deal with some of the fears expressed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) expressed his concern that the searching of customs and immigration officers should not be excluded. I assure him that we gave careful consideration to that point, and only those with warrant cards will be exempt. If there is still a difficulty, a senior officer can be called. That was one of the recommendations of the Transport Select Committee, but apparently not when those members were responding to emergency calls. A better clarification of our system would be to have a policy wholly about warrant officers and people carrying warrant cards.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) made some strange comments at the beginning of his speech. He suggested that the Bill would give us too many powers. I am not sure how we can have too many powers when we are trying to defeat terrorists. In some cases those powers are reserve powers. On the marine aspect we are merely setting up a body similar to that which already exists for aviation. That does not mean that we can mirror-image everything that we do on aviation, but we shall consider individual ports, and to have the power of direction at some ports is welcome.

I hope that that goes some way to answer the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill). Some ports have already taken many of the precautions that we desire. An article in this morning's *Lloyd's List* welcomed us having those powers if the need arose. It would be irresponsible if the legislation were passed without introducing those powers.

I understand the comments and concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and in Committee we shall carefully consider his points. Concern was expressed that private security firms could carry firearms. That will not be the position. We are in discussion with the Home Office on the future of the docks police force. I hope that I can arrange for my hon. Friend to receive a good answer to his outstanding correspondence, and that we can erase some of his fears during Committee.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) expressed some fears about whether clause 8 could be used in an industrial dispute. Although I accept that the powers are widely drawn, it is because of the background of terrorism. Anything that we do under those powers would need the permission of the Attorney-General or the procurator fiscal in Scotland. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman need not be too worried about the use of those powers.

The speeches of hon. Members on both sides have clearly supported the Government's determination to continue to develop and improve our security against international terrorists. The legislation will enable the Government and the aviation and maritime industries, as partners in a common cause of protecting the passengers and crew of aircrafts and ships, to develop and improve the security measures at our airports and seaports.

The new legislation, taken together with the Aviation Security Act 1982, will provide the vital regulatory framework for security. However, to have effective security, we must look to the security staff at our airports and seaports, to the airline and shipping operators, who are in the front line. It is also vital that all who work at airports should be aware of the constant need for security, and should co-operate in playing their part in the security procedures. Security also requires the co-operation, patience and forbearance of the passengers. The year since Lockerbie has shown the readiness of passengers to help with the security procedures. I hope that the Bill receives the support of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

AVIATION AND MARITIME SECURITY BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Aviation and Maritime Security Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses of the Secretary of State under that Act, and

(b) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other Act.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be for the convenience of the House if we suspended the proceedings for one minute. I suggest that there would be no point in proceeding with the draft Co-operative Development Agency (Winding-up and Dissolution) Order 1989, since private business comes on at 7 o'clock.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Anxious as ever to be helpful, perhaps I might make a brief comment. One would have thought that a Government Whip would have done the job that I am now performing. As we have dealt with the money resolution, perhaps I may seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, about the composition of the Standing Committee.

It is custom and practice for the Committee of Selection to consider carefully those who have made contributions to the Second Reading debate when deciding the membership of the Standing Committee. I am aware of a few Conservative Members who have the proper expertise in the subject but who were not able to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and speak during the debate. I hope that I shall not make myself any more unpopular with them when I suggest that they might be able to make their contributions during the Committee stage, when at least their remarks would be appreciated by Opposition Members, if not by Conservative Members.

Mr. Speaker: I respond to that point of order in the spirit in which it was made, because it is always pleasant to deal with a point made by an hon. Member who has had some experience of the management of the business of the House. I am sure that what he said will have been carefully noted by the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, whose responsibility it is.

Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill

Order for Third Reading read.

7.1 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House will recall that there have been a number of opportunities in the previous two years and three months to consider the merits of the Bill. We debated the measure at considerable length on Second Reading and we had the opportunity of considering it in the Private Bill Committee. The special report which that Committee produced has been available to the House, and several hon. Members on both sides have referred to it.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On various occasions when the Bill has been discussed, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has either not spoken or has spoken so quickly that we have not been able to understand him. The fact that our debates are now being televised should not make any difference to our proceedings. In other words, should he not proceed as he has proceeded before, and speak so quickly that nobody can understand him?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown: I shall speak at a pace which I hope will enable the House in general and the hon. Gentleman in particular to understand what I am saying. As the comment was once made that I owed it to the House to give an outline of the purposes and benefits of the Bill, I shall do that briefly, bearing in mind the fact that Opposition Members will want time in which to contribute to the debate.

I was honoured and proud to have the opportunity to bring the Bill before the House on behalf of the promoters. As the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, I am proud to represent the port of Immingham, which is operated by Associated British Ports, a company that was brought into the private sector by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) when he was Secretary of State for Transport. I served on my first Standing Committee in the 1980-81 Session, when my right hon. Friend privatised that company, with the result that it is now so successful that it can raise funds from the private sector. For the development that is proposed under the powers in the Bill, it has raised £30 million to develop the port of Immingham.

Associated British Ports is seeking these powers simply to bring the port of Immingham into the 21st century. The port is at present limited in the size of vessels that it can take because of the lock gates. The Bill would enable Associated British Ports to build a jetty into the River Humber so that the largest vessels in the world—which are currently unable to come to United Kingdom ports and instead go to ports such as Rotterdam, thereby depriving Britain's ports of vital revenues—could come here.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Would the hon. Gentleman care to tell the House on how many occasions he has visited South Africa and at whose invitation he went there?

Mr. Brown: I would be happy to do that, although I fear that Mr. Deputy Speaker would rule me out order were I to go into that subject in the context in which the hon. Gentleman raised it. The entries in the Register of Members' Interests are available to the hon. Gentleman. All the information that he requires is there. I last visited South Africa in January 1989 at my own expense. I paid for my aeroplane ticket and hotel accommodation.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When we previously debated this measure, my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) raised a point of order concerning an hon. Member who, he said, was sleeping on the Bench below the Gangway. Although we have only just started to debate the Bill, I note that already a Member is asleep on the Bench beyond the Bar.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House takes no account of what happens beyond the Bar.

Mr. Brown: The Bill applies not only to the port of Immingham. New port facilities are also proposed for King's Lynn which I know are welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), and for the Port Talbot Associated British Ports facility.

There has been some controversy during the passage of the Bill, and some Opposition Members have been concerned about the implications for the coal industry were the Bill to become law. I reassert, as I have done on many occasions, that the Bill is not concerned with coal imports. It is for the electricity and coal industries to work out between themselves whether more coal should be imported.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I will gladly give way to one of the several Opposition Members who are endeavouring to interrupt me when I have completed the matter I am now raising.

Coal contracts have been negotiated successfully between British Coal and the new private electricity companies that will shortly come into being. The whole House, and certainly hon. Members who represent coal mining constituencies, will join British Coal in expressing satisfaction at the successful negotiations that were completed towards the end of 1989. So there need be no doubt that the Bill will in any way damage the British coal industry, to the success of which we look forward in the years to come.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Gentleman is now discussing coal. I tried to intervene earlier to make a point about transport. He said that the Bill would represent a £30 million investment at Immingham port. May we have an assurance that that port will not bring grievous disadvantage to people living in the areas through which the lorries will pour as a result of that unnecessary port development?

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that when the House considered the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill it was pointed out that a reputable survey had been carried out —I am sure that the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) will confirm this—which showed that we did not need vast expenditure on additional port capacity in the United Kingdom because we had quite enough already?

Mr. Brown: The great advantage of Associated British Ports being in the private sector is that it can decide what market opportunities are available to it. It is for ABP, in considering market circumstances, to make the decisions, Thankfully, now that we no longer have the old British transport docks board, it is not for this House to make such decisions. I remind the hon. Gentleman that I would be the most likely Member of the House to receive the most representations if the Bill were to be detrimental to my constituents. I have received no representations from any other constituency about the transport implications.

Immingham docks are now linked to the M180. That road project was delayed by the previous Labour Government. The first parliamentary question that I put to the Secretary of State for Transport when I was elected was whether he would extend the M180 to the ports of Immingham and Grimsby. Thanks to investment in the road infrastructure in and around south Humberside, we now have superb road transport facilities. That means that no heavy goods vehicles need cause any trouble or inconvenience to people in the small villages in south Humberside and south Yorkshire.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I have been generous in giving way and shall give way to the hon. Gentleman with whom I had the honour to serve until recently on the Select Committee on Energy. However, we must make progress because many hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Lofthouse: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that during a recent meeting of the Select Committee Malcolm Edwards, the marketing director of British Coal, made clear in answer to a question from me that the only real reason for the extension of the ports was the importation of coal? If the Bill will have no effect on our coal industry, why did not the hon. Gentleman and the promoters of the Bill accept British Coal's amendments?

Mr. Brown: That is not my interpretation of what happened in the Select Committee. British Coal has successfully negotiated future contracts with the electricity industry. The Bill's primary purpose is to ensure that the port industry can compete on equal terms with the best in the rest of Europe and the world. We are discussing a Bill that will facilitate exports and imports. Many companies in my constituency, such as Norsk Hydro and SCM Chemicals, which have to import dried bulk cargo, will be better able to import their raw materials and enabled to go about their manufacturing business at cheaper cost.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: It is always a privilege to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but this is the last time that I shall give way.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman has moved the Third Reading of a private Bill. Both he and his colleagues have made great play of the fact that the Bill has nothing to do with the Government or the Conservative party. He told the House that the infrastructure in the area had been improved through Government action. He also said that there have been discussions and negotiations between two nationalised industries and one that is now privatised to ensure coal arrangements. That is another political decision.

[Mr. Skinner]

The hon. Gentleman, as the surrogate Member for Johannesburg, has the cheek to tell us that he is putting forward a private Bill. The argument that we have sustained for a long time is that the Bill is part of the same political argument that he makes in relation to the infrastructure in his constituency. For that reason the Bill should not be a private measure. It should be brought forward by the Government as a political measure, because its net result will be that more coal will be imported. We already have a balance of payments deficit of £20 billion, and coal imports will add to that.

Mr. Brown: Associated British Ports is a major company in my constituency. It came to me and indicated its intentions and the tremendous benefits in terms of jobs, not only in the ports but in construction, that would accrue to my constituents. I volunteered to assist in piloting the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

7.14 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I shall be brief. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, to all intents and purposes this is a Government Bill. It has Government support and is whipped by the Government—*[Interruption.]* One does not need three lines on a piece of paper to be able to say that a Bill is being whipped. We know very well that the Government have thrown their full weight behind the measure. The vote will show the number of Ministers and Cabinet Ministers who pass through the Division Lobby.

Since the Bill started its progress through the House, there have been some dramatic changes not only in the coal industry but in the electricity industry. We have also seen dramatic changes to our imports and our balance of payments, and all those changes have dramatically altered the balance of argument about the Bill.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said that the Bill has nothing to do with the import of cheap coal, but that is nonsense. The investment in improving port facilities will result in an increase in imported coal. That will have an adverse effect because it will lead to job losses in the United Kingdom coal industry, increased coal prices, which will affect electricity prices, inflation, and an aggravation of the balance of payments deficit, both as a whole and in the fuel balance of trading. Coal will be imported from south America, Poland and South Africa. Initially, that coal will be cheaper than British coal but that will not last. Prior and McCloskey have carried out some work on this issue and their figures show that by 1995 imported coal will be dearer than British coal. By that time we will have got rid of about another 40,000 miners and it will not be possible to reverse the trend in indigenous coal.

We are in an exceedingly serious position. This nation has the gift of coal that will last for 200 or 300 years and it can be used particularly by the electricity industry. The areas hardest hit will be the north-east and not least Nottinghamshire. The Nottinghamshire field has some rich seams, and many pits there will be closed and miners thrown out of work. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes should listen to the arguments. He might see the matter as funny but we are discussing thousands of mining jobs.

We believe in the future of British industry, not least in mining. In the light of the increase in oil prices, the price of imported coal will go up and our coal will not be mined because of redundancies. On the "Today" programme this morning it was calculated that within the next few years 40,000 miners will go from an already depleted industry.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I regret that my right hon. Friend's comments appear to be falling on stony ground. Conservative Members, except perhaps for two, do not care what happens to the Nottinghamshire coalfield. They simply go through the motions in the Chamber in an attempt to ensure that they will be representing their constituencies after the next election. Will my right hon. Friend stress the serious effect that the Bill will have not only on mining but on the nation? It will also exploit the use of slave labour in the production of cheap coal in South Africa and Colombia.

Mr. Orme: I agree with every word my hon. Friend says. Although the coal to be imported is cheap at the moment, the rise in world prices and the increased price of oil mean that it will not be cheap in years to come. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover referred to the balance of payments deficit. For the first 11 months of 1989, it stands at £19·3 billion, and will probably reach £20 billion when the December figure is known. Moreover, for the first time in our history there is a fuel trade deficit. That stands at an all-time high, and for 1989 is projected to be 18·5 million tonnes. Britain used to be self-sufficient in coal, but both deficits will increase if coal imports grow, putting further pressure on the economy.

We are talking about the future of mining, which is a crucial part of the United Kingdom's manufacturing output. The Bill spells the end of the industry as we know it.

Mr. Michael Welsh: Is it not a fact that if the Bill is enacted coal imports will increase to such an extent that our supplies will give us no security? We cannot decide subsequently to produce more coal because once a pit is closed it cannot be reopened. Coal production cannot operate simply according to supply and demand; there must be planned production. That is the difference between coal mining and other industries. Opposition Members will vote against the Bill tonight and I ask Conservative Members to think seriously on behalf of the nation before they vote tonight. If the Bill is enacted, we shall be at the mercy of the world market with coal being divided up among business men, and we may find that our industries cannot afford it.

Mr. Orme: I agree with my hon. Friend. Even with drift mines we are talking of between eight and 10 years for a new mine to be developed. That is the sort of planning that is necessary. Pits in the Nottinghamshire and south Yorkshire areas are classic examples. There are profitable pits with plenty of coal, but even in the short term they will face closure because imports will knock them out. Then, when import prices rise, we will not be able to replace them. We shall be at the mercy of imports and import prices.

Mr. Hood: I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that the high-production pits in Nottinghamshire produce 80 per cent. of steam coal—coal that can be burned only in power stations. My right hon. Friend will be aware, although few, if any, Conservative Members are, that the

consequences for the Nottinghamshire pits have been very much understated. They will be far greater than has been suggested.

Mr. Orme: I agree with my hon. Friend, who has personal knowledge of Nottinghamshire.

Our opposition to the Bill tonight is not a narrow, negative opposition; it is about the future of the industry and of our economy. We believe that the Bill is bad and should be defeated.

7.25 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I have so far abstained on the Bill, but I intend to support it tonight. I recognise that the Bill has given cause for concern in the coal industry, and those who support it, particularly those who have changed their stance, as I have, should be prepared to meet those arguments head on.

The coal industry has been a protected industry for a long time. It has had no competition whatever from overseas and it has had precious little competition from the private sector. I now find that I have rather more coal being mined in my constituency through opencast mining than through deep mining, and I am interested to see just how efficient the private sector is and how competently it deals with the environmental problems—often far more competently these days than deep mining used to in constituencies such as mine. Opencast mining is still bitterly opposed by deep mining interests. I understand that that is because of competition, but they are wrong to do so.

The protection that we will still be giving the coal industry if Bills such as this are defeated is not in the interests of the industry. I am sure that it is not in the interests of consumers, particularly consumers of electricity, nor is it in the interests of Britain; or at least, not for much longer.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Does the hon. Lady understand that, in order to compete with coal coming in from South Africa or Colombia, we would have to reduce wages and all the other conditions in our mines to the same level as in those countries, and it is that that we are anxious to avoid?

Mrs. Currie: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall come to potential coal imports in a moment, but many of the arguments against coal imports are misplaced.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: No, not yet.

Let me explain why I have changed my mind. I have not done so under any pressure but because I have given some thought to the arguments. My first reason for changing my mind is that, as of 31 March this year, the Government have been immensely generous in writing off the coal industry's debts. The total bill for the British taxpayer will be about £5 billion, the biggest write-off that such an industry has ever seen. It wipes the slate clean.

Mr. Redmond: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: No, not yet.

On 1 April this year, the industry will start with a completely clean slate. Not many corporations in Britain can say that. That puts British Coal at a slight advantage when compared with many businesses, certainly with many privately funded businesses in my constituency.

Secondly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) mentioned, British Coal has signed long-term contracts with the successors to the CEGB. Those substantial contracts will tide British Coal over any period of difficulty. They have been concluded in the interests of the coal industry.

Mr. Illsley: The hon. Lady referred to the writing off of the coal industry's debt, but the Coal Industry Bill does not say exactly how much of that debt will be wiped off. As far as I am aware, throughout the Bill's Committee stage, there has been no reference to how much debt will be wiped off. Therefore, for the hon. Lady to say that, as from 1 April, British Coal will be starting with a clean slate is wrong. That will not be the case.

The hon. Lady should also bear in mind that, since 1980, British Coal has given £1·2 billion of that debt to the CEGB in the run-up to privatisation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Right hon. and hon. Members should confine their remarks to the Bill that is before the House and not to one that is in Committee upstairs.

Mrs. Currie: I endorse your point entirely, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As someone who has an interest in the Bill, I want to know its real purpose. My understanding is that the Bill's promoter gave a firm indication that the ports required the legislation to assist their development, not the importation of foreign coal. However, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) made it clear that the Bill will facilitate coal imports. Her remarks cannot be interpreted in any other way. I seek clarification from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to the real purpose of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not denying the relevance of debate about the future development of the coal mining industry, but I stress that right hon. and hon. Members should not involve themselves too much in the detail of the Bill directly relating to the coal industry that is already in Committee.

Mr. Redmond: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On previous occasions you have ruled that the measure before the House is not a hybrid Bill. However, the remarks made by the Bill's promoter and by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) imply that the Government have an interest in it and that the Bill has national implications. Even at this late stage, I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to rule that the measure is a hybrid Bill and should be withdrawn from consideration by the House this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman repeats a point that he has made several times before. I reiterate that the Examiners have studied the Bill carefully and are satisfied that no hybridity is involved.

Mrs. Currie: In reply to the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central, (Mr. Illsley), some of my briefing comes from Conservative Central Office. The hon. Gentleman might find it helpful to be aware that the figure of £5 billion was

[Mrs. Currie]

just hinted at. That was clearly the figure some Ministers thought that the Government would have to fork out to settle British Coal's debts.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have just ruled that there is no hybridity involved in the Bill, because the Government have no interest in it. However, if the remark by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South that part of her brief came from Conservative Central Office is not a sign of Government involvement, I do not know what is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have nothing to add to my earlier ruling.

Mrs. Currie: If the Bill is passed, as I hope it will be, the ports will be a tremendous asset to the north-east. They may be used to import some coal, which is why Opposition Members oppose the measure.

I changed my mind about the Bill because the Government have already dealt very generously with the industry, which also has substantial long-term contracts in the provision of electricity. Its future is secure. British Coal's board has undertaken a major reconstruction of the industry over the past four years or so, and it is to be congratulated on having done so in the teeth of opposition from Labour and the National Union of Mineworkers. Any industry or business that can halve its work force in four and a half years and at the same time double its productivity should be capable of coping with any minor changes and challenges that a tiny amount of coal brought in through one port might produce.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): What I have heard so far from my hon. Friend has appalled me. Given that she was a lady of courage and stood beside the working miners during the difficult period of 1984-85, does she not feel remorse or even a pang of conscience at sticking a knife into their back tonight?

Mrs. Currie: Clearly my hon. Friend has not kept up with developments in my constituency. In the first place, there are no longer any miners there. Secondly, we are about to welcome Europe's biggest inward investment with Toyota. Thirdly, the bulk of British Coal employees in my area now work for bodies involved in mining research, which will continue to serve the whole country so long as such research is needed.

Others serve in workshops, which will also continue to provide a service to the whole country. As and when the industry is privatised, as I firmly hope that it will be, those workshops will be able to provide a service to the engineering industry of the midlands, including the developing car industry there. That is what the workshops should do—not be tied to a limited, non-competitive pattern of contracts from one particular industry.

In reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), we should not worry too much about coal imports. Even if the port does handle coal, it will not be able to introduce so much into the country that it will damage our own industry. That apart, many countries that are currently exporting their coal will need it for their own purposes in future. Poland must be a prime example of that. As the economies of eastern Europe grow and they develop a capitalist approach to life, they will need to keep their coal to meet their own energy requirements.

The same is true of the developing economies of the far east, which will find themselves competing with us both for imports and exports. If Opposition Members will read the brief available in the Library, they will learn that there is not a huge collection of foreign countries waiting to send their coal to Britain. Most of them have their own markets, including their domestic markets.

Mr. Michael Welsh: If in the short term we allow more coal imports, as the Bill will do, and close our own pits, where shall we turn when those countries now exporting their coal to us decide that they need it for their own purposes? It does not take a great intellect to appreciate that, in those circumstances, we shall have to pay whatever price is demanded. In a country that has no energy of its own, it is very hard to get off your knees——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not keep dragging me into his argument.

Mrs. Currie: I have already explained that the "short term" of which the hon. Gentleman speaks cannot begin for several years. The coal industry's contracts with the electricity generating industry have already been signed and will be adhered to.

Mr. Welsh: But they cover only a three-year period.

Mrs. Currie: In my constituency, three years is a very long time. By then, I hope that my majority will have increased again.

If there were no proposals to write off the coal industry's debt to leave it struggling, because although the pits were profitable, the industry could not make money because of interest charges if no long-term contracts were already in existence with the electricity generating industry, and if there was no recent history of strong, solid management in the coal industry, then I would not support the Bill.

Mr. Michael Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Has she considered this issue in the time frame of the next two or three years? Because of the hard work that she did to secure the Toyota factory, which I hope will be operating by that time, her constituency will contribute considerably to Britain's manufacturing export effort. Has my hon. Friend considered that we will need additional port facilities to export the products that her constituents will be at the forefront of making in the years to come?

Mrs. Currie: I could not have put it better myself. That is absolutely right.

My hon. Friend may also be aware that Toyota has also just signed a £50 million contract with PowerGen. That is a competitive contract and Toyota would not have signed it if it did not think there was the potential for coal in Britain to stay closer to world prices. That has to be a good thing for my constituents.

In my view, there are advantages to some competition —not much, just a modicum. More of my constituents, and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), would benefit if we had a competitive price for British coal.

The Bill will benefit my constituents in two ways, and that is why I am prepared to vote for it. I think that we are likely to have cheaper electricity in the long run and, as Britain has high prices for fuel, it seems wise to aim to do our bit for inflation by getting down fuel prices, if possible.

I have two major coal-fired power stations in my constituency, and I hope they will continue to operate. They take coal from the Nottinghamshire coalfield. If coal is sold at a slightly lower price, the future of those power stations is more likely to be guaranteed, and they will be more able to compete. If the coal is high-priced, the electricity generators would want to take power from gas and oil, and that is already beginning to happen. I feel confident that coal will continue to come into the power stations down the merry-go-round from Nottinghamshire and the other coalfields.

One change that convinces me of the merits of the Bill is that I was involved in negotiating the second largest set of contracts that the British Coal Board has ever had—those with the National Health Service. Only when there was a hint that the Yorkshire health authority might consider importing coal if it did not get a decent price for coal did British Coal seem interested in settling a contract. The NHS got a better deal than it would have done if there had been no competition.

I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), but I am convinced that a vote for the Bill tonight will be in the interests of their constituents and mine.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. A large number of hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, which is short. I hope that speeches will be brief.

7.43 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): One of the most significant events in this debate is the speech that we have just heard—not that it was such a distinguished speech, but it shows a break in the ranks of Conservative Members representing constituencies in Nottinghamshire. That will cause a great deal of embarrassment to the parliamentary colleagues of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South says that she has been converted. I have already taken part in many debates on the Bill, as the sponsor of the Bill has mentioned. My hon. Friends and I have never deviated from our view of the Bill. One of my hon. Friends described it as a hybrid Bill, but I call it a bastard Bill.

Many things have happened since the Bill was introduced. The energy situation now is unrecognisable compared with that when the Bill was introduced. Hon. Members are entitled to speak as they believe in the House and I have no objection to that, but when the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) introduced his contribution to the Third Reading debate, he said that the Bill had been before a private Bill Committee. I do not object to retelling its history, but I object to rewriting it, as the hon. Member did when he told us how the Bill came before that Committee.

As the hon. Gentleman knows well, no amendments were tabled in Committee. The significant fact that emerged was that the private Bill Committee did something that no other Committee has done. It said that it was concerned about the energy implications of the Bill, and—contrary to what the hon. Gentleman told the House—it identified that there would be coal imports. The private Bill Committee report said that the promoters were not arguing that there would be no coal imports, as they gave in evidence a figure of 2·5 million tonnes by 1993. The Committee went on to challenge that figure, and said that the level of imports,

"if the Bill receives Royal Assent, will be determined by a range of commercial factors at present unknowable. We conclude that it is not possible at this stage to predict with any degree of assurance the amount of foreign coal that may be imported, although we concede that this may be considerably more than the promoters of the bill were prepared to accept in giving evidence."

I think that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes should have been more candid and should have told the House what the Committee, on which he served, decided in relation to this issue.

Mr. Michael Brown: This is a private Bill, and I was debarred from serving on the private Bill Committee. The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) served on the Committee. I sat in the Gallery for most of its proceedings, and I can advise the hon. Member for Midlothian that I heard many amendments tabled by the National Union of Mineworkers, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the British Coal board. I believe that he, the hon. Member for Bradford, North and the three other hon. Members had many amendments to consider, but the Bill was reported to the House by that Committee without amendment.

Mr. Eadie: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman, and I recall that he was not allowed to serve on the Committee. However, that does not minimise the thrust of my argument—that when the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes introduced the Bill, he said that it would involve no coal imports. The hon. Gentleman says that he sat in the Committee Room while the Bill was being considered. If so, he should have at least done the House the courtesy of reading the deliberations of the Committee.

I am not quoting my view. I am quoting the opinions of the Committee. I could go on, but I do not want to because this subject was covered in the debate.

During the debate the figure for coal imports was put much higher—between 10 and 15 million tonnes. It is dishonest for the sponsors of the Bill to suggest that no coal imports are involved and, to some extent, they are deceiving the House. I hope that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes will accept that.

Mr. Redmond: I understood that there would be coal imports. If there were to be no coal imports, Associated British Ports could have accepted what the coal board was saying about its amendment to the Bill. But it refused to accept that amendment, which clearly shows that one of the major functions of the Bill is the importation of coal.

Mr. Eadie: I understand what my hon. Friend is saying, but I should like now to deal with the second significant aspect. It was the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes who introduced the subject of the private Bill Committee. I see that its Chairman is present; no doubt he will confirm what I am saying. I do not know whether he intends to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I do not think that he will dispute my claim, as it is already on the record. The Committee was concerned about the energy implications of the Bill, and took a significant step: it reported, in a special subsection or subparagraph, that the Government should consider those implications. I am

[Mr. Eadie]

speaking, as it were, in shorthand, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not quote me verbatim, but I think that I am conveying the sense adequately.

The implications of the Bill are, of course, something that the whole House should consider. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said earlier that, if the Bill contained everything that its sponsor claimed, it should have been introduced by the Government. The miners' parliamentary group—I make no apology for the fact that I am its secretary—tried its best to establish the Government's view. We had a meeting with the then Secretary of State for Energy and the then Leader of the House—who, incidentally, is now Secretary of State for Energy—and asked for written details of the Bill's implications for the coal industry and the nation's energy.

We received our reply in July, by which time it was out of date. Momentous changes had taken place in the industry. A leaked private document showed that—Coal Industry Bill or no Coal Industry Bill—the industry was due for a chop, at a cost of 30,000 jobs. Even more significant, the Government had decided to abandon the thermo-nuclear power programme, or at least cut it, perhaps building just one more pressurised water reactor. That represented a dramatic change in energy policy.

There was a third factor. I hope that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South is listening. Members of the energy studies group had the privilege of listening to the chief executive of British Gas, telling them that within 10 years he hoped that there would be between 3 and 10 GW of electricity per station. As a GW represents 1,000 MW, they mean five new power stations.

Mrs. Currie: With respect, I think that the hon. Gentleman is making my point for me. High-priced coal generates competition from other fuels, and I would like a competitive British coal industry. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one way to ensure competitive coal prices is to allow not enormous levels of imports, but enough to generate competitive pricing?

Mr. Eadie: Let me say, in all kindness to the hon. Lady—who is talking about a subject that she neither understands nor has studied—that it is always a great mistake for hon. Members to come into the Chamber and discuss matters about which they know nothing. I do not think that the hon. Lady listened to my remarks about the significance of the contraction in the thermo-nuclear power industry. Is she aware that the coal industry at present subsidises the nuclear industry? In cost terms, nuclear power was a fraud, as it is much more expensive than coal. In view of the millions of pounds that are spent on nuclear power, let us not hear any lectures about the cost of coal.

There is also an environmental aspect—we are always hearing how environmentally conscious the hon. Lady is. It is well known that foreign coal has a very high sulphur content; the sulphur content of British coal is much smaller, and my part of the world probably has the lowest levels of all. The coal that we import will pollute the environment.

The more that the Bill has been debated in the House, the more inconsistencies have been revealed. We are meeting the chairman of British Coal on Tuesday, and we know that a further contraction of the industry will be announced, involving some pits in the Nottinghamshire area. The coal industry is under threat. When a nation is confronted with a balance-of-payments problem such as ours, it is sheer lunacy to start talking about importing foreign coal. The Bill, however, is designed to import coal, and it will harm not only the coal industry but the nation. The House should vote it down tonight.

7.55 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I see that many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak, and I do not wish to detain the House for more than a few moments. Hon. Members always find it helpful to know the Government's attitude, however, and I have pleasure in being able to tell them what it is. Members have had the opportunity to give their views in debates on earlier stages, but tonight we are deciding whether to give the Bill its Third Reading.

Having considered the contents of this private Bill, the Government have no objections in principle to its proposals—the Departments of Energy and Transport do not consider that there are any outstanding problems to be resolved. The Department of Transport's basic policy is that Associated British Ports, or any other port authority, should be free to compete on price and service, and our view is that if ABP thinks that it can make a commercial success of its proposed new facilities at Kings Lynn and South Killingholme, there can be no Government policy objection. It is obviously for ABP to persuade Parliament that the powers that it seeks are justified.

Mr. Redmond: I find it strange that the Minister should say that the Government have no policy view on the Bill, as we were told, in a room in this building, that they intended to ensure that it was passed. If that is not their intention, why should a Minister say what this Minister has said?

Mr. Portillo: I am describing the Government's present attitude, which is that this is a private Bill on which we are neutral. In my closing remarks I shall explain that, in the circumstances, we believe that it should be allowed to proceed—the circumstances being that it has passed through its various stages and has been considered by the private Bill Committee which has decided that it should be allowed to proceed unamended. The Committee, however, made that subject to a binding undertaking from the promoters, which they have given.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Surely the Minister is not talking about the reality when he talks of "allowing the Bill to proceed". He knows as well as anyone here that the Government support the Bill. Why does he not say so?

Mr. Portillo: No. The Government's attitude is that a private Bill on which they stand neutral should be allowed to proceed for further consideration in the House. The Bill must then move to another place, where it will be entirely for their Lordships to decide whether it should be amended or should not be allowed to proceed further. All that the Government are saying is that, as the Bill has emerged from the private Bill Committee unamended, it is proposed that we allow it to end its parliamentary progress in another place.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): My hon. Friend mentioned that, having imposed two conditions, the private Bill Committee voted that the Bill should proceed to its next stage. He referred to one binding condition—that the promoters should publicise by placing in the House of Commons Library the amount of coal imported quarterly through the facility, if and when it is constructed. Will my hon. Friend refer to the other condition—the special report that brought to the Government's attention the fact that if coal were to be imported in the massive quantities suggested by some petitioners it could have a seriously adverse effect on the British coal industry? The Committee decided, with my casting vote, that it was important to have this port facility for other reasons—for grain, iron ore, finished iron products and motor car exports—but that the Government ought to take note of the special report and should be aware of the dangers of massive coal imports. Will my hon. Friend please tell us whether note has been taken of the special report? The Committee has received no notification from the Government as to whether it has been received or read.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend makes two points. First, ports have many uses. They can be used for both imports and exports. It is not clear what effect the Bill would have on any aspect of Government policy. My hon. Friend also referred to the special report that he wishes the Government to consider. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will wish to bear it closely in mind.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) was the Chairman of the private Bill Committee. He is also Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy. The hon. Gentleman referred to the fact that the Committee imposed two conditions. The Minister now tells us that the Government have given no assurances whatsoever about those conditions. The Bill should not, therefore, be given a Third Reading. The Committee does not wish it to proceed.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that the Committee sought a binding undertaking from the promoters and that that binding undertaking was forthcoming. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said that the Committee also wished the Government to take account of its special report. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will certainly take account of it.

Mr. Hardy: The House considers legislation, not edicts and special reports. We should have been able to secure amendments to the Bill on Report. We were denied that opportunity, on account of the rules and practices of the House. I make no complaint about that. However, on Report we could have sought to embody in the Bill the very conditions that the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) has properly drawn to our attention. It is no good the Government saying that they can be neutral on the Bill. By being neutral, an imperfect measure will leave this Chamber because our rules and practices deny us the opportunity to inject that degree of common sense of which the Government now appear to approve.

Mr. Portillo: It is not for the hon. Gentleman, or for me, to change the rules of Parliament. However, it is in the hands of Parliament to change the rules. If Parliament in its wisdom wishes to have Report stages for private Bills even when there have been no amendments, that would be a matter for the appropriate Committee to consider. The Labour party's policy is to abolish the House of Lords. However, it is extraordinary that the Opposition are ignoring the fact that the Bill now passes to another place for further consideration. There are two opportunities to amend the Bill—during the Committee stage of the Bill in each of the two Houses. No amendment was made by the private Bill Committee in the House of Commons. For that reason, the Government believe that the Bill ought to be allowed to go to the other place, without any objection but without our active support. The House of Lords will have the opportunity to take into account that point and any other point that it may think is appropriate.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Will the Minister clarify the Government's position? There has been one formal intervention, and also a sedentary comment, that this is de facto Government business and that it is whipped. My hon. Friend has sat in on all the debates. Will he confirm, from his knowledge, that five Parliamentary Private Secretaries have opposed the Bill consistently from the beginning and that four of them certainly intend to do so tonight? That would surely give the lie to Opposition comments that this is a Government-sponsored Bill.

Mr. Portillo: How right my hon. Friend is! This is not a Government-sponsored Bill. Of course there has been no whipping and there have been no disciplinary proceedings against any of my hon. Friends who voted against the Bill at any stage. Moreover, there will be no disciplinary proceedings. Conservative Members of Parliament will vote in different ways tonight, I have no doubt, and they will be perfectly free to do so.

Mr. Skinner: When he responded to his hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) the Minister accepted that some unpaid Parliamentary Private Secretaries, not Government Ministers, had voted against the Bill. Is the hon. Gentleman able to name any Ministers of the Crown who have gone into the Lobby against the Bill? There have been several Divisions on the Bill during the last two years. It is inconceivable that this should be regarded as a free vote if, on every occasion, no paid Minister of the Crown joined a few of his hon. Friends in voting against the Bill. The truth is that, without fail, Ministers of the Crown have either supported the Bill or abstained. Not one of them has joined the Opposition in voting against the Bill.

Mr. Portillo: I do not accept for a moment the hon. Gentleman's premise. If it is the case—I do not know whether it is—that Ministers have voted only in one way, that says nothing about whipping. There has been no whipping on the Bill. It may suggest that there are very few Ministers of the Crown from Nottinghamshire. I hope that that defect will be put right in due course.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend recall that on Second Reading only 51 Opposition Members bothered to vote? All the rest went home.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend makes the point in her own way, but she is leading me astray. As a Government Minister, I am giving the Government's view on this private Bill.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I may be able to help the Minister about what has been said by Conservative

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

Members about the Government's attitude to the Bill. I tabled a question for written answer on 30 October 1989. I asked the Secretary of State for Energy

"what steps the Government are taking to protect the indigenous coal mining industry; and if he will make a statement on the special report".

In the last paragraph of his reply the Minister said:

"It is not for Government to make a formal response to the special report but for the House to take it into account on Third Reading."—[*Official Report*, 30 October 1989; Vol. 159, c. *21*.]

If the Chairman of the private Bill Committee or any other Conservative Member is concerned about the contents of the special report, would it not be best to vote against the Bill being given a Third Reading?

Mr. Portillo: If my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford, who is Chairman of that Committee, is concerned about the matter, he may wish to say so during the debate and he may wish to ask hon. Members to bear that in mind. My hon. Friend asked me whether the Government would consider the special report. I am able to tell him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has considered the report and will bear it in mind. The fact that he has not made a response is neither here nor there.

In the circumstances, I hope that the Bill will be allowed to proceed.

8.8 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Throughout the debates on the Bill a number of distinguished arguments have been advanced by Opposition Members. None of them has, in my view, been adequately answered by the promoters and sponsors. We would not have expected them to do so. We have raised important strategic and economic issues. At stake are major questions concerning the balance of payments, the trade and not least the energy industry of this country.

I remind the House that the private Bill Committee that considered the Bill concluded:

"The decisions on energy and trade policy we have been invited to take are, in our opinion, national decisions which are the ultimate responsibility of the national Government."

That Government are represented here tonight. Despite the voting record of Ministers and of the Conservative party, the Government continue to maintain that they have no view on the Bill and that they are not organising support for it. They may say that they have no view, but clearly they have a considerable responsibility.

The proposal to build a dry dock terminal on the Humber cannot be examined as a local constituency issue as the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) seems to suggest. He told us tonight that the powers are sought simply to bring the port of Immingham into the 21st century and to provide vital revenues to port authorities. I wonder whether he agrees that the port authority would not contemplate such investment without calculating potential markets. He denied that coal imports were being sought and referred to the new contracts between the electricity generating industry and British Coal, but he knows that those contracts are of only three years' duration. Does he deny that if the measures in the Bill were to go ahead, in five years' time planned capacity would reach 10 million tonnes? If that were transmitted into the displacement of British coal it would mean the closure of 13 collieries or necessitate the rundown of more than 20 pits.

Mr. Michael Brown: May I answer the hon. Lady's charge on behalf of the promoters of the Bill? If, as Opposition Members have suggested, the world price of coal tonight or tomorrow should exceed the price of British coal and not one single piece of coal were imported through the Immingham terminal when it is built, that terminal would still go ahead because the promoters have calculated that there is sufficient demand from a variety of other products. If not one piece of coal came through that terminal, it would still go ahead. The promoters have made that investment and that commitment.

Ms. Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but I and my hon. Friends maintain that calculations will have been made based on potential markets for the import of coal at current foreseeable prices for the near future. We have already conceded that there may be an increase in world prices of coal for the future, but that in itself is an extremely damaging prospect.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): My hon. Friend is quite correct in that assumption. Will she take into account, in addition to the arguments by Opposition Members, the comments of the World Export Coal Organisation, which clearly stated that the amount of coal likely to be imported through Immingham will not affect world coal prices but that the collieries that will close because of those imports will no longer exist when they are needed in the 1990s?

Ms. Ruddock: I could not agree more and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reiterating that point.

It is not for me to take up much of the debate as it is a private measure. However, I wish simply to put on record the view of the Opposition from the Front Bench. We have not been satisfied by the arguments of the sponsors and the supporters of the Bill and we maintain that it is the Government's responsibility. Had there been any honour among Ministers, they would have accepted that the national interest is at stake. As my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) said, the Bill will have a fundamental impact on our energy policy and on the balance of payments, which we all know are at an all-time and disastrous high. Most damaging of all, it will destroy the potential production of coal in Britain—coal that will be required in the 21st century and beyond. Any Government who are prepared to stand by and allow that industry to be placed in jeopardy—which they have already encouraged—are in my view not fit to be in government.

The security of our energy base for the next century and beyond is at stake tonight, and that is why I shall join my hon. Friends in the Lobby and vote against the Bill.

8.15 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I join my hon. Friend the Minister in confirming that this is not a Goverment Bill. It is not a whipped Bill and I intend to vote against it, as I have done throughout. I have not been pressured by the Whips or leaned on by anyone in authority, not even by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who has been aware of my feelings on the subject, or my hon. Friends

representing Nottinghamshire constituencies, who have consistently voted against the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) said in an intervention, he is a Parliamentary Private Secretary and has been subject to no sanctions whatsoever for voting against it. Had it been a Government Bill with all the intensity behind it that Opposition Members assume, sanctions would have followed, certainly for Parliamentary Private Secretaries, but that was not the case.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend mentioned the possibility of sanctions against Parliamentary Private Secretaries if they do the wrong thing. Will he confirm that one of the five Parliamentary Private Secretaries who voted against Second Reading was promptly promoted to Under-Secretary of State for Transport?

Mr. Alexander: My hon. Friend tempts me, and I shall yield to that temptation by hoping that he will join us in the Lobby this evening. However, I know of no pressure upon him one way or the other.

Mr. Illsley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alexander: No, I must move on to the main part of my speech.

Hon. Members are aware that there has been tremendous reorganisation in the mining industry. I shall not weary the House by repeating the statistics, as they are well known. If we were to pass the Bill, all the courage, heartache and sheer hard grind involved in turning around a very difficult industry would be put totally at risk, because it would encourage cheap imports. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is aware of that.

If cheap coal were to be imported, the power stations most affected would be West Burton, Cottam, Thorpe Marsh and High Marnham, one of which is in my constituency. They are nearest, so it would be cheapest for them to receive imported coal with which to carry on their generating activities. Those stations are taking 16 million tonnes of British coal, 11 million tonnes from Nottinghamshire and the midlands and 5 million tonnes from Yorkshire. Last year, 40 per cent. of all Nottinghamshire's coal sales went to those four power stations. The dependence of the Nottinghamshire pits on those markets cannot be exaggerated.

British Coal has estimated that 10 million tonnes of imported coal would cause substantial further closures of pits in Britain. Those would not be worn-out or near-marginal pits: productive pits would be closed because their market had gone. Their closure would also mean that the orderly restructuring of the mining industry, which I described earlier, would have to be abandoned. It would dangerously harm the ability to guarantee further long-term contracts for the electricity supply industry and would bring likely but unpredictable and high price hikes in electricity.

If we, by Act of Parliament, decide to cripple our coal industry, it will surely follow that we shall be at the mercy of overseas suppliers, who will be able to increase the price of their coal to this country. They alone will be this country's suppliers. Those overseas supplies are already extremely volatile. The electricity supply industry would hesitate if it believed that it would have to rely on them.

Dr. Michael Clark: Will my hon. Friend concede that he is making a strong argument against the importation of foreign coal rather than against the provision of additional port facilities for this country?

Mr. Alexander: I am certainly saying that to rely on foreign coal would be short-sighted.

The coal industry in the United States has been hit by a long-running miners' strike. Australia has a good market for its coal in Pacific countries, but it is experiencing labour disputes. As South Africa comes out of isolation, it will surely sell to less-developed African countries. That leaves China, Russia and Poland. China will probably be a net importer of coal, and as Russia and Poland develop, they will have less and less to export. Yet, in the short term, the Bill will destroy our productive pits, and in the long term it will make us dependent on countries whose unreliability I have just enunciated.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) said that, once a pit closes, it stays closed. A coal mine cannot be mothballed and be expected to be of any use within a few years if the international supply position changes.

I say to my hon. Friends who are thinking of voting for the Bill that it is not a protectionist measure. British Coal will have completed its restructuring by 1995. In view of the trauma which it, miners and their families have gone through to enable it to be able to achieve its aims by 1995, we should not have these port facilities until that time. By then, more long-term contracts for the electricity supply industry will have been settled, international prices and supplies will have settled to long-term levels and we will be well aware of the international position.

If the Bill were asking us to close a port to protect an industry, I would have nothing to do with it—this answers my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) —yet arbitrarily and deliberately to create facilities that will strike at the heart of one of our indigenous industries would be a wicked thing to do. We owe a great debt to the coal miner in this country, particularly over the past 10 years, but we owe an even greater debt to the coal miner in Nottinghamshire. For those reasons, I shall continue strongly to oppose the Bill.

8.25 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I was brought up in nonconformity. We always rejoiced when sinners repented. I am therefore delighted to follow the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander). The nonconformist welcomed the reformed sinner and said, "Do not sin again," but unfortunately the hon. Member for Newark and his hon. Friends, who happily will join us in the Lobby tonight, will in future vote with the Government, whose position logically they perceive as completely inappropriate to the British economy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) spelt out the economic realities. We are building a dependence on imported energy at a time when our balance of payments is in an appalling position. Conservative Members cannot dispute that we have the highest balance of payments in the civilised world. However, we are seeing a determined attempt to compound that difficulty. Economically, the Bill represents a profound danger, which was perceived in the opinions which the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

Clark) offered the House. As I said to the Minister, the House deals in legislation and not in opinion or documents.

I am glad that some Conservative Members will vote with us tonight, but I am sad that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is not in her place, because she did my constituency a profound disservice a little while ago. When British Coal decided to reduce its scientific laboratories from two to one, it decided that the laboratory at Wath upon Dearne in my constituency, which has enormous unemployment, should close and move to Bretby in the constituency of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South where there are no pits at all.

I assumed that that step was taken by British Coal—it is noted for taking decisions that are not always intelligent—to ensure that the hon. Lady remained one of the few Conservatives who supported the industry. I thought that it was providing a sweetener for her because her eggs had turned sour. Obviously, the moment that British Coal decided to locate the laboratory there, she decided that she would not remain one of the pro-coal minority on the Conservative Benches. She can now be attacking, offensive and damaging to the industry. She was most ungracious in her speech, with her new attitude to the coal industry. Hon. Members who have spoken in coal debates over a long time know that before she got egg on her face she was a consistent supporter of the industry that she now spurns.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) spoke about £30 million of investment in the new port, but how many scores of millions, if not billions, of pounds of investment in coal mines over the past 20 years under successive Administrations since the "Plan for Coal" will simply be wiped out by the Bill? Pits will close on which millions of pounds have been spent in the past 20 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) and I were talking yesterday about huge investment by British Coal in a plant at the side of the M1 motorway at Woolley, which every hon. Member will have seen. Some £40 million or £50 million has been invested—more than the cost of the port—yet as a result of the Bill that will almost certainly become what my hon. Friend described as a white elephant. The Bill will wipe out recent and substantial investment which dwarfs the investment proposed for the port.

Every hon. Member perceives the inevitable contraction of the industry, no matter what camouflage they attempt. The Bill will destroy a large part of the remaining home base of our important engineering and technological industry. The whole mining engineering industry will be affected. *[Interruption.]* I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) for drawing my attention to another piece of evidence of the Government's interest in the Bill.

The Government have been telling us for months that they are not in the slightest interested in it. Now in comes no other than the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), to consult the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, the sponsor of the Bill. No doubt the right hon. Lady will want to know the score and will be worried about the powerful arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Newark and others who share our detestation of the measure. I hope that when the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale leaves the Chamber he will tell his mistress, "Don't be on the losing side tonight. Stay in No. 10; then we shall not be associated with defeat." Defeat should certainly be the fate of this measure.

My final point—I do not think that my voice will hold out much longer—is this. On Monday I was with a group of people visiting Wath upon Dearne in my constituency to consider a serious problem that we face. I pointed to the east, where as far as I could see there was dereliction. I pointed to the west, and as far as we could see there was dereliction. There were hundreds of acres of land with closed marshalling yards, coking plants and science laboratories, and pit after pit had been closed in the past three or four years. Those hundreds of acres of dereliction and despoliation present my community and this country with enormous problems.

It is difficult to secure investment in such areas when the interest rate in the marketplace is 16 or 17 per cent. That is one of the problems that we face in Britain. It is not certain that we should have the industrial muscle to take advantage of the port facilities proposed in the Bill, because of the effect of current economic policies on investment.

As far as I could see to the east and to the west and in the middle of the Dearne valley, there was dereliction, despoliation and need. For a Government or a party—we had better say party in this context—deliberately to support a Bill which will cause those intense and extensive difficulties to be repeated on a wider scale in other areas would be a criminal act.

I am glad that there are a few repentant sinners on the Conservative Benches. I only hope that there will be enough of us in the Lobby with common sense to make sure that the Bill is defeated.

8.32 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Before I begin the main part of my speech, may I refer to a comment made by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) at the beginning of his speech. He almost flippantly suggested that coal imports have nothing to do with the Bill. It is clear to me that the purpose of the Bill is to provide a facility to allow large ships to come into Immingham, where now only small ships can enter, with coal from Rotterdam. It is obvious from the proceedings of the private Bill Committee that the main issue discussed there was the effect on the coal industry. Almost everything else seemed to be put to one side.

Like many other hon. Members, I decided to re-examine all the documentation and records available to me for the debate this evening. Since the Bill was first presented in the House two years and two months ago—that is a historic length of time—until tonight's debate, it has had a stormy passage. Originally, the Bill seemed to be marginally contentious, but it has caused justifiable interest and opposition.

The delays in processing the Bill have in many ways been fortunate. If it had received its Third Reading in May 1989, as originally intended, world events in the past six months would not have influenced opinion. I believe that world events should influence opinion on this issue.

I congratulate the Committee on its deliberations. It is evident from its wish to produce a special report and present it to the House that the proposal to use the port

facility for coal imports was of the greatest concern to it. It brought the attention of the House and of the Government to what it believed would be the potential disastrous effects of large-scale coal imports. That is precisely the reason why Associated British Ports brought the Bill before the House.

I found some aspects of the Committee's report particularly interesting, especially the reference in paragraph 20 to the petitioners' assessment of the amount of coal likely to be imported. That assessment could be correct, depending on the state of the international market. I also agree with the Committee's view that 15 collieries and 15,000 jobs will probably be lost.

I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) is not here. She said that her constituency has workshops on an experimental base only. I should like to tell her that, if the jobs in the mining industry go, so will the workshops. I have experience of that in my constituency, and it has happened in many other mining areas.

Vast areas of coal will be permanently sterilised. That will have an effect on local communities. The report suggests that the knock-on effect will be felt only in Nottinghamshire, south Yorkshire and Derbyshire. My view is slightly different. I believe that the effect will be far more widespread. If British Coal considers closing more pits in the face of competition from imported coal, it is probable that the least economic pits—despite their potential and coal reserves—will be the first to go. That may mean that collieries in other parts of Britain—the north-east and Wales—will close. The issue is of concern to all hon. Members with coal mining interests in their constituencies.

The Committee also commented—it is printed in heavy type in its report:

"In our view, it is the Government's duty to take whatever steps are necessary, in the overall national interest, to protect the indigenous coal mining industry."

We should all agree with that view. I commend the Committee for its wisdom in making that observation. It foresaw—deliberately, or by accident—that world events in the period after it produced the report would change the whole perspective of energy production and export. Many of the major countries which export coal to Britain are going through traumatic political and economic changes which could seriously affect their ability to supply coal to Britain. The potential loss of domestic production, which is difficult if not impossible to recover, could significantly influence our economy.

International sources of coal imports, such as China, Russia, Poland and South Africa, are suspect in terms both of heavily subsidised coal production and of reliability. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Newark remark on that. I had the opportunity to visit China in May and June last year during the student demonstrations. I was there as a member of the Western European Union defence committee. We witnessed some of the activities in Peking, Shanghai and Canton—demonstrations and other activities—and the deteriorating relationship between the Chinese Government and the demonstrators. In the end, the Government used violent and horrific means to quell further demonstrations.

I saw something there which I am sure will continue well into the future. Some time in the near future, the issue of democracy in China will be raised again and a long period of instability will ensue. China is a source of imported coal to Britain, and in my view it will be a very unreliable supplier.

We are all aware of the welcome changes taking place in Russia, but recent events point to domestic problems, one of which involves Russian miners. That instability will affect that country's ability to provide reliable supplies. Russia is another country with the potential to export coal which will not be in a position to do so for many years to come.

Poland has also moved on politically. Polish miners have been in the forefront of change. They seek a better quality of life. The price of that could be higher coal prices as well as unstable exports. Although I was pleased to learn that the Government are offering assistance to the new Polish regime, I hope that that will not take the form of support for Polish coal subsidies.

Perhaps I am an optimist for suggesting that significant changes are in the offing in South Africa—I hope without much more blood being spilt. Perhaps the hidden subsidies of low pay and low safety levels will be removed from South African mines. If there is no real attempt to reform apartheid, however, stronger sanctions should be imposed, especially on coal imports. I expect that the next Labour Government will apply those sanctions as soon as they come to office.

I shall not support the Bill, because I believe that we need a strong indigenous coal industry, which should be expanded. With positive marketing attitudes we could tonight be discussing coal exports rather than coal imports.

8.40 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): It is important to draw attention to our balance of payments and its effect on energy source imports. Many hon. Members will be familiar with the circumstances of the past 20 years. They will recall the 1970s when the cost of oil, imported into this country for electricity generation, increased.

In the 1970s, however, we began to see a gradual improvement in our energy needs deficit as North sea oil came on stream. In 1981 we moved into surplus for the first time in many years. That surplus peaked in 1983 at some 29·3 million tonnes of energy. In 1988, however, the surplus stood at just 9 million tonnes. Last year my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) produced figures for the first 10 months of 1989 which showed that the fuel trade deficit was some 15·4 million tonnes and gave a projected deficit for the year of about 18·5 million tonnes. That deficit is incredible when one considers our natural energy assets—we have many riches in terms of coal, oil and gas. The fact that we have moved into a deficit in our energy supplies in such a short time, given the expansion of those fuel industries, is a sign of a badly run Government energy policy.

At 1985 prices, the value of our surplus in 1986 was £6·4 billion. That was a great benefit to the British economy, but in the first 10 months of 1989 the sum had been reduced to just £76 million. We should also remember that, at the same time, it cost us £222 million to buy French electricity. In money terms, we are approaching a deficit in our energy supplies, yet we are such an energy-rich country.

After many years of argument we shall shortly vote on the Bill which, if passed, will take a major tranche from

[Mr. Kevin Barron]

our energy industries. The country will head towards a larger energy supply deficit despite our natural resources. Many countries would love to possess just a small percentage of our energy reserves.

It is obvious that the Bill has been driven through the House and through Committee with scant regard for our national interest. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) once again said that the Bill was not necessarily about coal imports. He also spoke of the new contract that has been settled between British Coal and the new electricity generators. Every hon. Member should know that that contract is an interim one for the next three years only and that it includes the 10 million tonne loss that British Coal incurred on the market last year. That contract is ideal as it will nicely bridge the gap between now and the building of the port terminal. The contract that will follow will no doubt mark a further major reduction in the demand for British coal.

Mr. Redmond: If the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said that he accepted that no coal should be imported through the new proposed port facility, I am sure that that assurance would assist my hon. Friends to support the Bill. He could give that assurance now if he so desired.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend will know as well as I do that British Coal tabled an amendment to the Bill in Committee with that precise purpose. It wanted an assurance that, for a short time only, no coal would be imported and it sought that amendment to protect the coal industry. The amendment was rejected.

Mr. Michael Brown: Let me respond to the intervention from the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). It is not for me to decide whether coal is imported; it is for customers to decide whether they want to buy British coal. It is for the users of the port, exporters or importers, to decide upon that given the market conditions.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman is not always consistent, and that intervention suggests that he has shifted his position a little. A few years ago I recall him saying that the Bill had nothing to do with coal imports and that the terminal would be used for purposes other than for importing coal.

Mr. Illsley: My hon. Friend was right to say that the contract between British Coal and the new electricity generators is an interim one. It is also important to consider the fixed-term nature of that contract. There will be no price increase in the cost of that coal for the next three years. If inflation continues at its present rate or increases, as it is likely to do under this Government, the contract will represent a net loss and a net price reduction to British Coal.

Mr. Barron: I do not know the exact details of the contract, but it has been mooted in the press—normally it gets to know about such matters well before Parliament—that that is likely to be the case. In the next three years, as in the past three years, further reductions in the price of British coal are likely. It is a great pity that, in the past three years, we have not seen commensurate reductions in the price of electricity. The cost of electricity increased so that the industry could be floated without debt. That has been achieved at a great cost to the electricity consumer, industrial and domestic.

No one will disagree when I say that the natural catchment area for the new port will be the Aire valley, the lower Trent valley and the power stations that they contain. Those power stations are largely served from collieries in the Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire coalfields. There are six specific power stations in that area—Drax, Ferrybridge, Eggborough, Thorpe Marsh, West Burton and Cottam. In 1987-88 those six power stations took some 34 million tonnes of British Coal's output—nearly half the total of British Coal's sales to the Central Electricity Generating Board. It is obvious that there is a strategic significance about a port on the Humber rather than in any other area.

All the power stations in that area are supplied by collieries of the north-east, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire. If the port is developed and is used to import coal it will have its greatest effect on the power station at West Burton. In 1987-88 that station drew 4 million tonnes of coal from the Nottinghamshire coalfields. It is also worth considering the effect on Cottam power station, in Nottinghamshire. On 6 January an article appeared in the *Financial Times* by Maurice Samuelson, who knows a great deal about the generation of electricity from British coal supplies. He described what is already happening in the catchment area and made some specific reference to Cottam when he said:

"Some 40,000 tonnes of Australian coal were tried out last week at the Trent Valley's Cottam power station, owned by the PowerGen division of the Central Electricity Generating Board. Colombian coal has also been tested there."

The article continues:

"Like similar trials carried out by the bigger National Power company, the aim is to prove the burning characteristics of different coals"

We all know that this is precisely what is behind the proposals that have been in front of us since May 1988. There can be no doubt that the 10 million tonnes of imported coal coming into the catchment area will have a major regional impact, putting at risk almost a third of the British coal supplies to those major power stations. Such a large reduction in the market would inevitably result in substantial closure of deep mine capacity. It would be impossible to rearrange the overall market for coal to avoid the greatest number of closures taking place in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, with Nottingham probably suffering the most. It is impossible to rearrange our internal market to stop that happening.

The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who has sat throughout this debate, chaired the Committee. That was contentious, not just because of the views expressed by Opposition Members but because many outside organisations petitioned against the Bill. We have commented on the special report that was published and I shall not repeat what was said at the time. My hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) reported on it only too well. When I tabled a parliamentary question it became clear that the Government were not going to take any measures to protect the indigenous coal industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) mentioned a letter from the Secretary of State for Energy in July that year, explaining in five-page detail that the Government would not take action to protect the

British coal industry. If any hon. Member wants to protect the British coal industry, he or she should join us in the Lobby to vote against the Bill's Third Reading.

Dr. Michael Clark: It is too early to say whether the Government will take measures to protect the coal industry. The idea of the special report to which the hon. Gentleman referred is to alert the Government to the dangers to the coal industry should the port facility—if and when built—be used heavily for coal importation. The Committee decided—granted, with my casting vote—that there was a need for a port facility, but there was a danger if that facility was used too much for coal and that the Government should be alerted to that danger. It is too early to say whether the Government will respond to that danger.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful for that intervention. I shall read out the first sentence of the answer given to me by the Secretary of State for Energy on 30 October 1989. It states:

"It is not this Government's policy to restrict imports of coal."—[*Official Report*, 30 October 1989; Vol. 159, col. *21*.]

I shall give the latest news about what is likely to happen in the coal industry. During the past five years, while there has been a tremendous increase in productivity, of which all Members should be proud, the industry has suffered job losses of more than 100,000.

On 9 January the *Financial Times* reported that a source of "senior coal industry officials" warned of another 5,000 job losses each year for the next three years in the British coal industry. That is without any increase in imports through the port facility proposed tonight.

The effects are only too plain. The Government say that it is not a matter for them, but, as has been mentioned, Government Departments have to pay out special assistance, whether to the coal industry in restructuring grants for 70 per cent. of the cost of colliery closures or to other organisations in coalfield areas to pay for the damage that they have already suffered through past closures.

Mr. Eadie: Further to the intervention of the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), I should like to put on record a quote from the Secretary of State for Energy's letter. It states:

"In responding to the Committee's concern, I must emphasise that it has never been the Government's policy to restrict the import of coal. Decisions on coal purchases, whether from indigenous or imported sources, must be for the commercial judgement of those concerned, on the basis of a willing buyer and willing seller. It would be quite wrong to compel coal users to purchase supplies from British Coal by denying them the right to buy from the supplier of their choice. But neither would we prevent coal users from buying as much coal as they would wish from British Coal."

That is a policy of "you go first and I'll go before you." Contrary to what the hon. Member for Rochford said, the Government have made up their mind.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention. There should be no question in anybody's mind and there is no way that any hon. Member can avoid the issue if there is a Division on Third Reading later tonight.

Money has gone from other Government organisations to coalfields that have already suffered from closures and we should avoid any further British colliery closures being caused by the Bill. I have a news release dated 9 January 1990 from the Rural Development Commission. I did not know about that organisation until I received the press release, but I have made inquiries and it is totally Government-funded to look after problems in rural areas. The Department of the Environment has given the commission permission to set up projects in the British coalfields. The press release states that this is

"in the light of circumstances which have now arisen"

in the midlands areas following pit closures. It continues:

"Particular emphasis will be given to those areas where unemployment rates have remained high—East Derbyshire, North Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire."

The precise areas that are now suffering will suffer further if the Bill is enacted. It could not be clearer for anybody to see the implications of what will happen if the Bill is passed tonight.

Hon. Members should ensure that they do not sit wringing their hands about the position in the one or two pits that may be affected, but should consider the major effects that the Bill will have on the country and the coalfields, and vote with us against the Bill's Third Reading.

8.57 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): My views opposing the Bill have been well noted in previous debates, but I shall remind the House of the dangers of the Bill receiving a Third Reading tonight. The Associated British Ports proposals strike at the heart of Britain's coal industry and coal-fired power generating capacity. The proposed port will most directly threaten the collieries of the east midlands and Nottinghamshire, which have already paid a heavy price for British Coal's rationalisation and restructuring programme. Such communities face the loss of more efficient and productive pits, many of which have received substantial investment in recent years. More than 25 collieries in the east midlands have been identified as at risk from the Humber port. Up to 10 will be displaced by between 4 million and 5 million tonnes of foreign coal, and at least 15 will be closed by a 10-million-tonne importation, putting 24,000 miners at risk.

Coalfield economies are highly dependent on the coal industry and a multiplier of two is a realistic assessment of the knock-on effect of the loss of one mining job—thus, every colliery job lost will lead to another lost in another sector. If 15 collieries closed, the total impact would be the loss of about 30,000 jobs.

The areas affected are those that already have very few job opportunities. For example, six of the 15 travel-to-work areas at risk lie in the botton 10 per cent. of travel-to-work areas, graded by long-term unemployment. The coalfield communities threatened by imports already face a range of economic, social and environmental handicaps. Employment structures have been dominated by coal and other basic industries, with a marked lack of the service sector engine of regeneration. Environmental quality is poor and land reclamation programmes will take decades to tackle the dereliction. If all the collieries at risk were to close, another 2,500 hectares would require reclamation——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I accept the hon. Gentleman's point about the communities that will be most intimately involved—the midlands and Yorkshire —but I assure him that the port will affect coal mining communities right across the country, particularly in south Wales, where British Coal recently issued a circular to all households receiving concessionary coal, apologising for the fact that the company had to give them inferior

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

imported English coal instead of good Welsh house coal. British Coal suggested to the users, most of whom are elderly, that they should carry out certain practices to reduce the pollution from the low quality coal. The knock-on effects will be felt in other coalfields, too.

Mr. Stewart: I apologise for concentrating on my deep anxiety about my constituency of Sherwood, but the hon. Gentleman is correct about the knock-on effect penetrating Wales——

Mr. Barron: If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about the knock-on effect, why did he say nothing when the Blidworth colliery in his constituency recently closed?

Mr. Stewart: I do not wish to delay the House by going over what I said about the closure of that colliery, but I am quite prepared to give the hon. Gentleman all the records of what I said here and in the local press.

High import levels raise the prospect of greater road transport of coal. Nottinghamshire county council secured payments from the CEGB for damage to roads from the increase in road movements during the 1984-85 strike. The loss of pits removes an important source of revenue from central and local government, whatever types of rates and collection are used.

I contend that the dramatic improvement in the fortunes of British Coal, the massive investment by Government and the enormous changes already borne by the coalfield communities should not be squandered for the illusory benefits of foreign coal. Development of the Humber port will severely damage the economies and communities of areas that have fallen progressively further behind the wealthier regions of this country. For these reasons I shall oppose the Third Reading.

9.2 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Like many other Opposition Members, I was born into a mining community and worked in mining all my life before coming to this place. I want to tell Conservative Members, especially those who represent Nottinghamshire, that although I understand that they are representing the interests of their constituents and opposing the threat to their livelihoods, I take great exception to the way in which the miners whom I have loved all my life have been deliberately deceived in the past.

After past debates on the Bill I was sick in the guts to read press reports that Nottinghamshire Conservative Members had accused the Opposition of not blocking the Bill. It was never reported that Conservative Members had told their constituents that the Conservative Government and their supporters were pushing the Bill through the House—a Bill that was going to close many Nottinghamshire pits. Miners are genuine, hard-working people and they are not to be deceived. Conservative Members representing Nottinghamshire know that as a result of tonight's vote the Bill will be passed and many pits in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere will close.

Since the early days of the Bill, all hon. Members have known that it has had Government support. On the first occasion we saw the Prime Minister leading her troops through the Lobby in the early hours. I and other hon. Members have sat through every step of the debate on the Bill. Indeed, I sat through most of the debates in Committee.

I was aware of the unenviable task that faced the Chairman of the Committee and his Conservative colleagues. They were aware of the Government's support for the Bill, although I do not suggest that they were anything but impartial. Having said that, I hope that the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark)—the Chairman of the Committee—will tell us whether, had he been aware that the Government were not going to take into consideration the wishes of the special report and give consideration to the effect on the mining communities, he would have given his casting vote. With greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, I do not share his view that the Government still have time. Had the Government intended to make a statement arising from the special report, they would have done so tonight.

Dr. Michael Clark: The hon. Gentleman's last comment anticipated the answer that I had intended to give him. It was the answer I gave in my intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). I said that I still think that there is plenty of time for the Government to take whatever steps are necessary to protect the coal industry should that facility be used heavily for the importation of coal. As for my voting intentions tonight, I shall be abstaining, following the pattern that is traditional for Chairmen of Committees. Indeed, I have abstained in all Divisions since I took the Chair, as have many other Committee Members.

Mr. Lofthouse: I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman could say what is meant by the phrase, "taking all the necessary steps to protect the mining communities." I was astounded to hear the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) say what he did because he has sat for years on the Energy Select Committee taking evidence on the coal report and the Electricity Bill. Without exception, he has heard much expert evidence from different chairmen of British Coal, different Secretaries of State for Energy and Lord Marshall, all of whom at some time conceded that the importation of coal means the running down of the mining industry.

Recently Malcolm Edwards, the marketing director of British Coal, told the Committee that the ports were to be extended for the major purpose of the importation of coal. That is a fact and the House knows it. If the mining industry is run down to 60 million tonnes—I am aware that under the new agreement it goes to 65 million tonnes in three years—and the press statement from British coal is true, the figures must be renegotiated in three years time and reduced to the magic figure of 60 million tonnes—the magic figure in that leaked document. It has never been denied. In five years time that will coincide with the extension of the ports, which will be ready to receive a further 5 million tonnes. That means the loss of 30,000 miners' jobs over and above the 27,000 that have been lost in the past five years.

In the mining communities in 1989 the average age of the workforce was 34, so without the attractive redundancy payments that miners over 50 have received hitherto those young men will be without any future prospects or even any weekly payments to cushion the blow. When we are told that the Government will take

steps in relation to the mining communities, what sort of steps are meant? In fact, no steps at all will be taken, and the hon. Member for Rochford knows that only too well.

It is clear to many people, certainly to my hon. Friends and I, that what is proposed is all part of Government policy to run down the mining industry for purely dogmatic reasons. The Government are prepared to finance, at great expense to the taxpayer, 20 per cent. of nuclear supply to the electricity industry. Nobody knows the true cost of that. Recent figures put to the Select Committee on Energy by British Nuclear Fuels gave a decommissioning cost at present prices of £4·6 billion. Nobody can possibly know what the true cost will be if and when decommissioning becomes necessary in due course.

It is clear that the Government are prepared to spend a lot to run down the mining industry and extend the ports. Once we reach a demand level of 60 million tonnes, the coal industry will have been run down to such an extent that we shall not be able to meet the demand from the electricity industry. We will then be in the hands of foreign competitors. The additional demand for coal will have to be met by coal from abroad. For how long then will prices stay low?

It is deceitful to try to shelter behind a document stating that the Government will bear in mind the consequences of what is proposed in the mining industry. I have tried to explain those consequences. I urge hon. Members tonight to think carefully before taking a drastic decision. No Conservative Member can put his hand on his heart and say that further imports will not be necessary. It is clear that the proposed extension of the ports is designed to cater for the rapid rundown of the industry and of miners' jobs. Before that takes place, we have a moral obligation to the mining communities, many of which, like mine, have already been destroyed. It must be made clear what will be done for those communities before such a drastic step is taken.

I appeal to the hon. Member for Rochford and all Conservative Members to give serious consideration to the points that I have raised. They should join us in throwing out the Bill, at least until we have received firm assurances on behalf of the mining communities.

9.12 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I was wondering why we had not seen in his place the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Having heard the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and other Opposition Members, I now know why the hon. Member for Dagenham has not joined us. After all, he was the architect of the Labour party policy document about making the change and meeting the challenge or making the challenge and meeting the change. I cannot recall the precise title of that document. Whatever it was, it was a vacuous title of meaningless words.

Mr. Eadie *rose*——

Mr. Hood: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Gentleman in order in treating the House with such frivolous disrepect when we are discussing an important Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Bennett: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the policy document to which I referred was frivolous, I agree with him. It is clear from what has transpired tonight that that cleverly packaged, well-written, meaningless policy document was designed to convince us that the Labour party had become consumer friendly, was in favour of competition, was against monopoly and wanted to get rid of the big bad old nationalised industries and their poor ways. But we find that, when Labour Members are scratched, they really want to go back to the good old days of anti-competition, import controls and restrictions on industry. They want to stop anybody importing and companies setting up businesses in this country, and they do not want new ports. They want a siege economy. The Opposition do not want industrial change. They want a nice cosy monopoly for the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mr. Eadie: I wish that the hon. Gentleman had given way earlier. He was a bit rude. I had intended to assist him. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) wrote to me and apologised for not being able to be here to contribute to the debate. He is on unavoidable business elsewhere. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept his apologies in good faith.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman says that the hon. Member for Dagenham is unavoidably away. I am not surprised. If he were here he would see that all the revisionism of the last 12 months has been swept away in one night and that we are back to the good old-fashioned Labour party of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. If the hon. Member for Dagenham could see that he would be ashamed.

Mr. Flannery: You nasty man.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Member, who is an expert in nastiness, accuses me of being nasty. I was merely pointing out for his edification that the underlying opposition to the Bill is opposition to competion. All the arguments used to oppose the Bill have been used by protectionists over the years to oppose any competition from abroad to British industry. It has not done British industry any good to be protected for 100 years. Competition has improved it and that has been brought about by market forces and by the customer having an alternative.

The Labour party wants to ensure that there is no alternative and that the customer is forced to use the product of an industry dominated by one trade union by which many Opposition Members are sponsored. That is the real reason for their fervent opposition to the Bill.

Mr. Illsley: When the hon. Gentleman talks about competition, is he referring to fair competition or to competition from countries such as Colombia with its drug industry and its child labour? Is he talking about South Africa? We have heard much in the debate about the situation in Colombia, South Africa and China. Has he considered the £1·2 billion that our coal industry has paid to the Central Electricity Generating Board since 1980? If price reductions had not been forced on British Coal over the past 10 years British Coal would be profitable even now. British Coal has paid out hundreds of millions of pounds in interest charges every year for the last decade to the Government, who paid over the money to the CEGB

[Mr. Illsley]

to fatten it up before privatisation. We are not afraid of competition. British Coal can compete with some of the best, but it cannot compete with unfair competition.

Mr. Bennett: Clearly the hon. Gentleman has not been following proceedings on the Coal Industry Bill. At the moment the Government are writing off a British Coal debt of between £4 billion and £5 billion. If the coal industry can claim to be supported by any Government, it is the present Government.

We are talking about the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) having the opportunity for a £30 million investment in the construction of a new port. Any hon. Member who had the opportunity for such investment in his constituency would be fighting for it. I congratulate my hon. Friend on speaking up for his constituency. I would be delighted to have a £30 million investment in my constituency. In my area we are considering an application by the CEGB to import coal to Milford Haven. I warmly support that because the customer comes first and the best way to improve the performance of British Coal and our mining industry is by the force of competition from abroad. We are faced with a balance of payments deficit, and it is wrong to try to get round it by setting up a siege economy and banning imports. We should improve the competitiveness of British industry so that it can compete with foreign imports and sell abroad.

Mr. Michael Brown: Does my hon. Friend recall that when I was first elected to the House I represented a steel industry constituency and that Britain had a large, monopolistic supplier of steel? That industry had to compete with foreign steel and, as a result of having to face international competition, it is now one of the most successful industries in the world. It is profitable and private and serves the customer. That is an example for the coal industry that protectionism does no industry any good.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend is right. One has only to look at the shake-up in British Steel in the early 1980s following the disastrous strike at the beginning of the 1980s led by Mr. Bill Sirs. The British steel industry, having shed a large part of its work force, has become lean, competitive and able to compete abroad. For example, in Llanwern in south Wales, half the labour force now produces twice as much. That is the way forward for British Coal and for other old-fashioned nationalised industries that for too long have been protected.

I am concerned that tonight we have the same old-fashioned, anti-competitive, monopolistic views from the Labour party. It has not changed its real policies one jot. When we have a debate such as this, away goes the glitz and the fancy packaging and out comes the reality of the Labour party, wedded to the union block vote, to sponsorship and to the views of the masters who put Labour Members into this place. They are not interested in competition; they are interested only in protecting their own industry from the forces of competition which every other industry in Britain has to face.

It would be a sad day for Britain if the Bill were defeated tonight. It would mean that the customer did not come first. It would mean that the producer, the supplier, came first, and that would not be right for the future of British industry. I hope that the Bill will receive its Third Reading.

9.21 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I apologise for my voice. I am recovering from a chest infection.

The Bill has helped to give rise to misgivings about the private Bill procedure. It, above all private Bills, has created disquiet. Having been a member of the Committee that considered the Bill for five and a half months, I can well understand why.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not wear a wig, but you wear another hat as Chairman of Ways and Means, and you are conducting an inquiry into the private Bill procedure. Some months ago, you said that hon. Members who sat on private Bill Committees should be objective, fair and reasonable.

As I understand it, private Bills basically relate to planning permission, and that can be controversial. A major development in any area can affect the environment or the community, but it is not usually as politically sensitive as this Bill has been.

Four Back Benchers, three of them of only a few months' standing, have served on the Committee considering the Bill. It dealt with imports and exports during a period when our balance of payments deficit increased from £2 billion to £20 billion. It dealt with attempts to regenerate parts of south Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire that were savagely hit by the decline of industry in the past. The Bill is deeply political in a way that no private Bill should be.

The Bill has been intertwined with, and has taken the place of, Government legislation, by opening the door to the privatisation of the electricity industry. The sponsor says that it does not necessarily have anything to do with the future of the coal industry. The truth is that I and other hon. Members considered the Bill in Committee for five and a half months, in 26 double sessions. Advice on that Bill and on an adjacent Bill came from the well-known management consultants Coopers and Lybrand, who stated that, excluding scrap, iron ore and coal, the ports on the Humber could develop only to the tune of 8 per cent. more business between 1982 and 1987, which is less than 2 per cent. a year.

On the basis of the figures presented to the Committee by the promoters of the Bill, there is no justification for expenditure of £30·5 million at 1988 prices and of development costs of as much as £370 million at Immingham on the basis of the trade expected there, if coal is excluded. Steel and scrap is dealt with by British Steel using its own facilities, so the only product that could be imported is coal.

The Committee was wholly political, in that its two Conservative members voted for the Bill and against amendments, whereas two Labour members voted against the Bill—and having failed to defeat it, then voted for the amendments. We know full well about people who take the chair and use their vote. Bradford has had two Tory lord mayors who helped to pass all kinds of controversial measures over the past 18 months by using their casting vote.

Mr. Redmond: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be safe to draw the conclusion that the usual channels manipulated the selection of the Chairman of that

Committee? Labour and Conservative Members take it in turns to chair Committees, and by manipulating that convention it was possible to ensure that the Committee's Chairman would be a Conservative, who could influence the result of the voting.

Mr. Wall: My hon. Friend knows more about such procedures than I do, as a relatively new Member of this House. Two Bills were taken together, and the normal procedure would be for an Opposition Member to chair one of the Committees and for a Government Member to chair the other. If that had been done, the Opposition too would have had a casting vote.

The port in question cannot be for any purpose other than the importation of coal. In response to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), cars are not brought in on Panamax ships of 80,000 and 100,000 tonnes. How many chemical manufacturers on Humberside import chemicals in those quantities? Not one. It only makes sense to compete against the ports of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp—the ARA ports —if one can import a bulk cargo—and that can be nothing but coal.

I believe that the Committee's Tory members were embarrassed and under pressure, not from Conservative Members representing Nottinghamshire constituencies but from the Government, as a result of the hatred that resides in certain sections of the Tory party towards miners and mining communities. No such Committees would normally demand concessions from the promoter of a Bill unless even its Conservative Members were well aware that coal importation was the issue really at stake.

I am the grandson of a dock worker and was brought up politically on the Mersey docks, where I learned to debate and to fight politically among dockers and the dock industry. I have nothing against the development of Immingham or of any other port. However, only a madman would deliberately open a facility that cannot be economically viable or used sensibly except for importing coal. Even a little Englander does not deliberately set out to sabotage his own economy. The only cargo that can come in is coal and that coal can only replace coking coal that goes to the power stations in the Trent and Aire valleys, and that will mean the loss of miners' jobs.

I shall bring my contribution to an end with two quotations. Doctor Ben Fine told the private Bill Committee that the Bill would mean the deliberate importation of between 7 and 10 million tonnes of foreign coal into the Humber to ruin jobs. In Committee, we spoke of 15 pits and 15,000 jobs, and Doctor Fine said it could be 28 pits and 28,000 jobs. He went on to say:

"According to our figures, the economic and social costs of pit closures will be made up of three components. First, lump sum redundancy payments will be of the order of between £191 million and £360 million, depending upon the extent and consequences of transfers. Second the annual recurrent direct costs due to dole payments and lost income tax, etc. will be in the region of £150 million and this cost will be supplemented through the multiplier effect on other jobs by a further £100 million."

Doctor Fine spoke of a total cost of more than £600 million, and of further devastation in areas such as south Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, upon an industry that has lost 97,000 jobs and has seen nearly 100 pits closed, with all the problems that that has already caused for those communities.

The Humber ports, without the deep anchorage, already import twice as much as they export.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): While my hon. Friend is talking about losses, can he not mention the profits that the newly privatised electricity industry will make? They want to build a new power station in my constituency. It was promised, and then turned down by the Government. The electricity industry will make enormous profits out of the cheap coal that it can bring in. The two tie together, and that is one of the factors that the Government are not stating.

Mr. Wall: Even that profitability is illusory. The case has been well argued. If we close the pits, if we go to 60 pits and 60 million tonnes, or, as many hon. Members think may be possible, to 50 pits, 50,000 miners and 50 million tonnes of coal, then we will be at ransom to the world fuel and coal markets. There is no way out of that.

The truth of the matter is that we have to realise that there is a serious political point to the Bill, which should not have gone to a private Bill Committee. If I go on to such a Committee again, in similar circumstances, I shall learn to be a guerrilla. I have always been opposed to guerrilla tactics to sabotage a Committee, but it is wrong that the Government's policy should be carried out in this way.

There are many Opposition Members here who represent mining communities. Some Conservative Members represent mining communities in Nottinghamshire. Because of the procedures of the Bill, what remains of their most vital industry is threatened. Existing jobs are threatened with dislocation and so are existing services. They are also threatened with a reversal of all that they and their local authorities have done so painstakingly to try to repair the damage caused by previous redundancies. That is the situation that those hon. Members face.

Because of the political nature of the Bill, it was not amended, and hon. Members have not had the opportunity to amend it on behalf of their electors—the miners, the mining communities and local authorities—so that the Bill can meet their needs.

9.34 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I shall be voting against the Bill for quite a few reasons. First, the Government have abused the private Bill procedure in an attempt to ensure that what should be a Government Bill reaches the statute book. Secondly, in view of the United Kingdom's current port capacity there is no need for such a Bill. Thirdly, if the legislation is enacted, many British coal mines will close. Fourthly, the intention is to import cheap foreign coal, mainly—despite the protestations of Conservative Members—from such countries as South Africa and Colombia, not Australia and the like. I was interested to hear Conservative Members say that most of the imports would come from China. Following events in Tiananmen square, that strikes me as weak reasoning.

Fifthly, I share with other Labour Members a feeling of deep distrust about the Committee's decision to allow the Bill to get this far. Sixthly, I believe that it is mainly aimed at helping the Government's friends in the City, rather than being concerned with the nation's needs. Seventhly, it reflects the Government's historic hatred of the coal mining industry, and particularly of its work force: it is not really to do with the nation's mineral reserves.

Eighthly, the Bill is concerned with the destruction of many mining communities. Ninthly, the British taxpayer

[Mr. Alan Meale]

will be paying for private profit through lost reserves and the money spent on unemployment and social security benefits, and other aid resources paid to the mining communities. Finally, the Bill's whole intention is to use energy resources for profiteering purposes, to the ultimate cost of the British public.

Let my explain my reasons in detail. First, most hon. Members who are now in the Chamber will agree that the use of the private Bill procedure rather than Government time is a disgrace to the House. Some hon. Members, especially those from Nottinghamshire, have again tried to use the weak excuse that this is not a Government-backed Bill. They, and any other hon. Member who is in any doubt, should recall the way in which, in the early hours of the morning, Ministers in their droves arrived to vote for it. There was evidence that whipping procedures were being used to bring more and more Conservative Members into the Aye Lobby—and, as has already been mentioned, on one occasion the Prime Minister herself turned up to vote for the Bill.

If any hon. Member needs further proof, he should look towards the Government Front Bench and observe the delicate piece of machinery called the Government Whip. He has sat there throughout the evening, cajoling his hon. Friends and reminding them that their time will come soon, when the Division Bell rings.

My second point relates to port capacity. The Government are pushing the Bill through for the sake of private profit, at a time when between 26 million and 30 million tonnes of port capacity is currently available and could adequately meet any extra needs. It is disgraceful that, through the use of the private Bill procedure, investment is being allowed that could lead to the loss of many coal mines in Britain. I pay tribute to the Coalfield Communities Campaign, which has done a great deal of work in this regard. It is supposed to be a cross-party organisation. A few Conservative Members, particularly those from Nottinghamshire, say that they support it. It says that 12 pits will close if the Bill is passed. It would also result in a threefold loss of coal-related jobs in the coal mining communities. If the Bill is passed, 40,000 to 42,000 people will lose their jobs in coal mining communities throughout the country, but particularly in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.

Conservative Members used fringe arguments about coal imports. I have received a letter from an anti-apartheid organisation in South Africa which asks hon. Members to vote against the Bill. It would lead to the import of South African coal. Millions of tonnes of South African coal have already come here. It has been shipped to such places on the continent as Rotterdam and Ghent where it has been mixed with other coal and then brought to our shores, in particular to the north-east and Humberside. It is disgraceful that hon. Members, of whatever party, should allow that to happen. They should resist the importation of another 8 million to 10 million tonnes of cheap coal.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has had many free trips to South Africa. [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful"] He wants the Bill to be given a Third Reading. Other Conservative Members who are likely to vote for the Bill should recall that, apart from South African coal, Colombian coal, dug by children of only eight years of age, is coming to this country. The Colombian Government manufacture drugs that are peddled around the world. Conservative Members ought to reflect on the fact that they will be supporting a Government who allow children to dig cheap coal in Colombian mines.

Opposition Members question whether the proceedings in Committee were correct. It is important to point out what happened on one occasion. During the debate a member of the Committee left his seat and spoke to a consultant. He gave him a message of support. In those circumstances, I question whether the Bill should have been allowed to proceed. It ought to have been referred to a new Committee for further consideration.

The Bill has to be placed alongside what the Government are trying to do to the coal mining and energy industries. They do not even try to hide the fact that they intend to privatise the supply of energy in order to provide a fast buck and a quick profit for their friends in the City.

To support the Bill would be an absolute disgrace and shame. I ask Conservative Members to vote with the Opposition and throw it out.

9.43 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Opposition Members say that the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill should not be given a Third Reading. Unfortunately, many Conservartive Members have not listened to the arguments. Had they done so, they would not give it a Third Reading.

The hon. Members for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) should get to know what the industry is about. On previous occasions they have explained to the House why they oppose the Bill. Obviously, they were trying to kid their constituents and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. At least they should be truthful when they tell their constituents that they are opposing the Bill for the right reasons.

It is a great pity that the country and the Government have not learnt any lessons. In 1972 Conservative Members applied the same philophy to cheap oil. Thank God we have a mining industry because the Tories were nearly caught with their pants down. Thank God that the mining industry survived. History shows that the coal industry can compete, given the same terms and understanding as are given to other British industries. It is a great pity that market forces dominate everything to the detriment of our country and that Government policies are motivated only by profit and greed.

It is a great pity that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) did not remain in his previous constituency instead of opting out. I feel sure that his former constituents in Scunthorpe would have been only too pleased to vote for his opponents. He put forward what he had done for his constituents as a model and then opted out without giving them a chance to show how they felt. Had he stayed, I am sure that his former constituents would have returned a different Member of Parliament.

If that had happened in days gone by, the Monarch would have sent for the Tories responsible and had their heads chopped off. The Government's policies are not in the long-term interest of the nation and should not be pursued.

Finally, if we are interested in humanity, we should be interested not only in Britain but in the world because we have a duty and an international commitment to humanity. The Bill seeks to import coal from South Africa and Colombia and that can be motivated only by profit and greed. It is a pity that the Bill was not amended in Committee because of the Chairman's casting vote. It stinks that the Government support it and there is no doubt whatsoever that there is a Whip on the Bill. This time it has not been put on paper, but it has got round by word of mouth. They are telling hon. Members to support the Bill to make sure that they get a Government job.

9.48 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I shall be brief and to the point, which is very much in character, as the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) will agree. The Bill is about closing pits and importing apartheid coal. The miners know it, the mining communities know it and a hell of a lot of people on both sides of the House know it. The Conservative Members who support the Bill also know it. The Government also support the Bill. Tonight, as we have seen throughout the proceedings on the Bill, the Government will bring out the payroll vote. The woman from the little flat above the shop will probably support the Bill in the Lobby tonight.

I am pleased that Conservative Members who represent Nottinghamshire constituencies oppose the Bill. We are told that four Parliamentary Private Secretaries oppose it, but I remember the days when, if a PPS felt strongly about an issue and wanted to be taken seriously, he made his views felt. If a Bill that will close a dozen Nottinghamshire pits is not a point of principle for a Nottinghamshire Member of Parliament, I do not know what is. I would have more faith in the sincerity of the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and others if they said, "On a matter of principle I am resigning as a PPS", but they have not chosen to do so.

The miners' parliamentary group knows only too well the effect that the Bill will have on mining communities, as does the Coalfield Communities Campaign. To its credit, it has gone up and down the country putting the case for the coalfield communities. Unfortunately, one or two hypocrites have put their name to the campaign but have had no heart in it.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) is playing the jester tonight. He talked about Labour Members wanting a cosy monopoly for Members sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers. I shall remind him of the cosy monopoly that they have had since the Government took office in 1979. They have had 120 pit closures, over 150,000 miners have lost their jobs and a proposal in the Coal Industry Bill will lead to another 40,000 jobs being lost.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Gentleman complains about the number of pit closures under this Government. Will he remind the House of the pit closures record of the Labour Government under the stewardship of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)?

Mr. Hood: I will not take up that point. Some Conservative Members who represent Nottinghamshire have seen 18,500 jobs lost in Nottinghamshire since 1979 but have said nothing about it. Another 10,000 to 12,000 jobs will be lost in Nottinghamshire.

We know the effect that the Bill will have on mining communities. I sincerely hope that some Conservative Members will have the guts to stand up for the communities and will not support the bovver boys of the South African Government.

9.52 pm

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): I am pleased to contribute to the debate, which has run over months and, indeed, years, to highlight the devastation that the Bill will cause if it is passed.

I am sure that its passing will have a major effect on my constituency and the general economy of the area that I represent. The decline of the British coal industry as a major employer in the mining communities has had a considerable and disastrous effect since 1985. Labour Members do not doubt that if the Bill is passed more than 25 collieries will be at risk.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who is talking to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and not listening to the debate, said that the purpose of the Bill is to divert shipping from Rotterdam to the Humber port. That is an acceptance that the purpose of the Bill is to divert shipping off-loading coal in Rotterdam to the Humber ports.

I find it disdainful that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has tried to mislead the House by suggesting that the intention of the Bill is not the one that I have stated. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) was a member of the special Committee which considered the Bill. In his speech he made the relevant and salient point that the proposal could not be sustained economically without large imports of coal going through the port. It must be in the mind of the developer to import large amounts of coal.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is contradicted by the developers, who readily admitted in the Committee that they would be able to import only 1·2 million tonnes of coal by 1993. Obviously they cannot import more than 2·5 million tonnes because the port will not be capable of handling more than that at that point. I suggest that the promoters of the Bill intend to expand the capacity of the ports precisely in order to increase the tonnage capacity from 2·5 million tonnes to a possible 10, 12 or 15 million tonnes. Conservative Members who deny that that is the purpose behind the Bill are blinded by their political disdain for miners and the mining industry.

Evidence was submitted to the private Bill Committee by the petitioners against the Bill about consequences of the proposed tonnage of imported coal. They suggested that 15 collieries would be closed with a loss of 15,000 jobs if, as British Coal suggests, 7 million tonnes of coal were imported.

Opposition Members are clear that the imposition of this private Bill will have major consequences on the mining industry. I hope that the House will reject it. It is ironic that those Conservative Members who oppose the Bill are the same hon. Members who supported the Union of Democratic Mineworkers in 1984 to 1985, who put the Government in the position that they are in today. The UDM miners will be the people most affected by the importation of coal which the Bill will allow. It is ironic that those miners, whom Conservative Members represent, will be most affected by the proposals on nuclear power stations.

Mr. Meale: Is my hon. Friend aware that already the noise——

Mr. Michael Brown *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 232, Noes 209.

Division No. 32] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hill and
Mr. David Davis.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob

Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Knowles, Michael
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Bernie Grant.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you could draw to the attention of the Serjeant at Arms the difficulties created in New Palace Yard by the hordes of ministerial cars blocking the area and preventing easy access to it—because of a Bill that is not supposed to be whipped but for which the payroll vote has clearly turned out to get it through.

Co-operative Development Agency

10.14 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): I beg to move,

That the draft Co-operative Development Agency (Winding-up and Dissolution) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 30 November, be approved.

The Co-operative Development Agency was established by the last Labour Government under the Co-operative Development Agency Act 1978—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is an extremely important Bill that abolishes an important organisation. I want to hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that hon. Members who are not listening to the debate will leave the Chamber as quickly and as quietly as possible.

Mr. Eggar: In 1977, a working party was appointed by the then Secretary of State for Industry to develop the idea of a CDA. One of the working party's recommendations was that the Government should bear the cost of setting up the agency and running it for a period of three years. After that, it was expected that the CDA would become self-financing.

The original remit of the CDA was a wide one—to promote the adoption and the better understanding of co-operative principles and to represent the interests of the co-operative movement. The Board of the CDA decided to concentrate on the worker co-operative sector and it has been successful in promoting the co-operative concept and encouraging the setting up of worker co-operatives. When the CDA was first founded, there were only 300 worker co-operatives; today there are more than 2,000. The agency has also developed a set of model rules for registering co-operatives.

Plans for the agency to become self-financing have not been borne out by experience and it became clear that the CDA was unlikely to become self-sufficient. This Government extended the life of the agency through the 1981 Co-operative Development Agency (Grants) Order and allowed funding for the agency up to the maximum of £1·5 million provided for under the 1978 Act. That limit was extended to £3 million under the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984, which also gave the CDA greater freedom to act commercially to undertake training and to enter into partnership.

The ceiling of £3 million set in the 1984 Act was due to be reached around the second half of 1990. The Government needed to decide whether to extend the life of the current CDA, to alter its functions or to propose its winding up.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Mr. Cope) asked the chairman of the CDA to present proposals for its own future, including the feasibility of a wider remit covering alternative forms of work. Those proposals, received in June 1988, suggested refocusing the agency's activities on the areas of employee participation and employee share ownership through employee share ownership plans, with only a minor role for co-operative development.

We accepted the CDA's case that the work of supporting and promoting co-operatives could be carried out by other organisations at local level. We could not accept the argument that the CDA's role should extend to ESOPs. After all, there is already considerable private sector activity in that area, and it would not be appropriate to give such responsibilities to a statutory body.

In January 1989, my Department issued a consultation letter throughout the co-operative movement proposing that the CDA should be wound up. The responses to the letter were evenly divided on the question of continuing to support the CDA. A factor that weighed especially heavily in the consideration of the responses was that the organisations that supported the proposal for closure were in the worker co-operative sector. There was a general impression in those responses that the CDA had done its job and that there was no continuing need for a statutory body to promote co-operative development.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Minister aware that the Co-operative Development Agency receives 2,000 inquiries every year from people interested in setting up new co-operatives? Who will deal with those inquiries once the CDA is wound up?

Mr. Eggar: It is a pleasure to answer the hon. Gentleman and to speak to him across the Dispatch Box again. A number of queries that now go to the CDA will be dealt with by other bodies, be they local CDAs or other bodies that wish to set up a service of the kind that the CDA is now offering.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me. I shall return to the matter when I reply to the debate, and I have news later in my speech which may reassure him.

Mr. Foulkes: I do not want the Minister's speech to be decimated, but he might be interested to know, bearing in mind his former incarnation, that Costa Rica is notable for the promotion of co-operatives. He might care to examine that situation. I trust that he is not saying that local agencies can provide the whole range of expertise, knowledge, understanding and experience that is provided by the national CDA, which can learn lessons from one part of the country and apply them elsewhere.

When inquiries come in to be dealt with—as I said, the CDA is dealing with 2,000 a year—they can be dealt with in a national perspective, with all the experience and understanding that is available from the CDA's national involvement. Is the Minister aware that no body will be fulfilling that function once he has wound up the CDA?

Mr. Eggar: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. There are already other bodies able to fulfil that function. Other bodies are doing it now. After all, it was the CDA's response to my predecessor's request for suggestions about the role that the CDA might play that showed that the CDA recognised that there was not a representative role to play with worker co-operatives.

A point of particular concern to Opposition Members is the role that might be played by an organisation after the CDA has been wound up in respect of registration because, as I said, the CDA has played an imaginative and critical role in helping worker co-operatives to set up.

Discussions are continuing between the CDA and other bodies that might take on that role, and that role must be negotiated with the Registrar of Friendly Societies. There was, as I said, a general impression in the responses to the consultation document that the CDA had done its job.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, announced on 13 July the Government's decision that the life of the CDA should not be extended when the ceiling for funding was reached. We had asked the CDA to prepare plans for its closure.

The CDA proposes that the agency should cease functioning by the end of September of this year and that final closure, following a three-month winding up period, should be completed by the end of December 1990. The CDA has contacted organisations supporting co-operatives seeking views on which other organisations might wish to take over its existing activities.

Mr. Michael: The Minister referred to the likely role of local CDAs in taking up some of the work of the CDA, and he will have taken careful note of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). We need assurances that local CDAs will be encouraged by his Department so that the burden may be picked up comprehensively, for some areas of the country are covered effectively by local CDAs while others have no such organisations.

Mr. Eggar: We have already discussed that together, as the hon. Gentleman is aware. I certainly see a role for assistance with the formation of co-operatives for the new TECs, the training and enterprise councils. As I have already told the hon. Gentleman, I shall point out to TEC boards and TEC chairmen that one of the things that I hope they will look at is local assistance for the establishment of co-operatives. The nature of that help will vary from one area to another, but I am sure that it will be available and I should like to see that.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Can the Minister say whether the tender documentation for TECs makes any reference to co-operatives and co-operative development?

Mr. Eggar: The documentation has not been finalised. Obviously, it cannot cover every area, but I assure the hon. Gentleman, as I assured Opposition Members who came to see me about the matter, that I am convinced that worker co-operatives have an important role to play, especially in inner cities and in areas where traditional forms of business may not be appropriate. I shall draw that to the attention of TEC chairmen and TEC boards. I do not think that there will be any reluctance by TECs, especially those in the inner cities, to follow that through and try to be of assistance. They will be able to work with local CDAs where they exist. Where there are no CDAs, I am sure that TECs will seek to play an active role.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I thank the Minister for giving way, because question and answer helps to clear up many points. I think that he is saying that either the local CDAs or the TECs will carry on the activities of the national CDA. Will the TECs have an obligation to encourage local co-operatives, or will they simply be able to if they want to? There is an important distinction. The CDA has an obligation. Will that be passed on to the training and enterprise councils?

Mr. Eggar: There will be no legal obligation about encouragement, just as there will be no legal obligation on the TECs in other areas. There is no change to the local CDAs. I do not think that the national CDA is able to play the local role that the local TECs will be able to play. I shall refer later to other parts of the CDA's present role.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I served on the Committee that examined the original Bill in 1978, and I can assure my hon. Friend that while I and my hon. Friends did not oppose that Bill, we were extremely doubtful that it would be successful on a national basis. We were interested in the local aspect, especially in the light of the Spanish Mondragon experiment. I urge my hon. Friend to encourage local co-operative agencies and developments in the way that we have encouraged small businesses. I remind the House that some 500 net small businesses are set up every week under the system that we have evolved. I am sure that local co-operatives and development agencies will be equally successful.

Mr. Eggar: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I hesitate to correct him, but I can tell him that some 1,200 net new VAT registrations occur every week, rather than the 500 that he quoted. That means that our policy on small firms is even more successful than he has outlined.

The relatively small number of staff of the CDA who will be made redundant will be offered redundancy on the main Civil Service terms.

I should stress again that the decision to wind up the CDA in no way reflects any criticism on the board or the staff of the agency, because we are very appreciative of the work of Mr. Ralph Woolf, the current chairman of the CDA, his predecessor, Lord Oram, and those who have served on the CDA board. I particularly mention George Jones, the present director of the agency, its former director, Dennis Lawrence, and the CDA staff and those who have worked as volunteers and seconders.

Our decision to wind up the CDA should not be interpreted as meaning that the Government do not support the co-operative concept. Co-operatives have an important role in the Government's housing and agricultural policies. Co-operative ideas are important for small ventures and have particular potential in enterprise as an alternative to conventional forms of business. Co-operatives have particular potential in inner cities and on housing estates.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Is my hon. Friend aware that there has been contact between the CDA and Bolton Business Ventures with a view to the latter taking on a role as a centre of expertise for co-operative marketing in the north-west? Is not that a good way to develop the co-operative idea as part of the parcel of initiatives that can be offered through excellent enterprise agencies such as Bolton Business Ventures?

Mr. Eggar: I was aware of that, and I completely agree with my hon. Friend. That is the way that matters should proceed. I hope that other enterprise agencies, where there are no active CDAs, will take up that opportunity, as well as local TECs. It is particularly interesting that my hon. Friend mentioned the idea of co-operative marketing initiatives. That is an area where there may not have been as much development in the United Kingdom as in other countries.

[Mr. Eggar]

My Department is prepared to consider applications for financial support for innovative co-operative projects. There has been concern that closure of the CDA, which chaired the Co-operative Forum and provided its secretariat, will result in a general lack of leadership in the co-operative movement.

The need for leadership in the co-operative movement is really a question for the movement itself. It does not provide a case for a statutory body. The hon. Members for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) are worried that there will be no means to represent the movement to Government. The question of continuing the Co-operative Forum is being considered by a study group from among the co-operative movement's members.

As I have already said, I am prepared to consider an application for funding the costs of servicing a new co-operative forum, so long as it is understood that the Government's support will at least be matched by the co-operative movement and that it is on a short-term, pump-priming basis.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): If the Minister is to set up some structure in his Department to assist co-operative development and to find resources to help a new co-operative forum, why is he winding up the CDA, if not in a fit of pique? It is evident that it still has much work to do.

The hon. Gentleman must forgive us if we are sceptical about the Government's attitude. We saw the Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box holding up the Visa card. The whole idea of co-operative development and co-operative enterprise and its links with Socialism is anathema to the Government. That is the real reason why the CDA is being wound up. Co-operative developments are going on the length and breadth of the land. They need the CDA. The Minister cries crocodile tears at the end of the CDA, yet at the same time tells us—*[Interruption.]* Let me ask the Minister a question. If the Minister supports co-operative development enterprises, why does he make difficulties——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. That is enough for an intervention.

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you had such a hard time as a result of that intervention. We have not acted in a fit of pique. The Government have come back twice to the House to extend the life of the CDA and the funding available to it. It was made clear in the working party established by the then Secretary of State for Trade in a Labour Government that central Government funding was to enable the CDA to get off to a good start, but that it would have to rely for its funding on the co-operative movement as a whole.

The present Government have twice gone out of their way to extend the CDA's life. When the 1984 Bill was introduced, we made it clear that we were looking to the agency to fund itself, and we extended the powers available to it so that it could develop into other areas and thus assist in its own funding. Although I understand the hon. Gentleman's strength of feeling, it is unfair of him to describe our decision—which has the support of a large part of the co-operative movement—as one made in a fit of pique. I repeat: the Government are prepared to consider funding an organisation that would represent the co-operative movement, provided that it is on a short-term, pump-priming basis and matched by funds from within the movement itself.

As the Minister responsible for small firms, of course I represent the interests of all forms of smaller enterprise to my colleagues within Government, and I shall continue to do so on behalf of the co-operative movement. I and my officials are willing to pursue any points of Government policy that affect co-operative enterprises.

I emphasise that, as the Government's enterprise policies will be increasingly delivered by training and enterprise councils, local CDAs and other co-operative organisations should be directing themselves at the boards of the emergent TECs. They will need to demonstrate what they and the co-operative movement have to contribute to local economic development.

In general, we do not intend to tell the TECs how to run their affairs, but, as I have already made clear, I shall point out to TEC chairmen and board members the important contribution that co-operatives can make, especially in inner city areas.

The Government are happy to support the co-operative concept and are prepared to contribute to the funding of innovative projects. The Government have, after consultation, concluded that there is no continuing need for a statutory body to promote the concept of co-operatives, and therefore we are not seeking legislation to prolong the life of the Co-operative Development Agency or to increase the ceiling for funding. The order thus proposes that the Co-operative Development Agency should be wound up.

10.37 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): It is a pleasure to speak on the subject of the Co-operative Development Agency, especially as I am the president of a local agency in my own northern region.

The Minister concedes that the CDA has done good work and that that work must continue. The only question that the House must decide tonight is whether, on the basis of the Minister's comments, there is any realistic possibility of the CDA's functions continuing under the type of institutions that he favours. Any reasonable person listening to the Minister's speech would conclude that the answer to that question is, at worst, no—and that, at best, it is a doubtful yes.

The CDA was established in 1978 after a long debate within the co-operative movement and elsewhere. The idea was to establish a sole agency to provide leadership in the co-operative sector, co-ordinate the activities of co-operative development, and allow and facilitate the exchange of the best ideas and practices within the movement. At that time, there were only about 150 co-operatives operating in the United Kingdom, employing 4,000 to 5,000 people. The Bill to set up the Co-operative Development Agency was given an unopposed Second Reading. Therefore, it was established by consensus, and because there was a powerful case for it.

In 1981, the working of the CDA was reviewed and, on the whole, it was found to be successful. In 1984, we debated in detail whether to extend its funding for a further period and the argument that it should be extended

was accepted. The present Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who at that time was the Minister in charge of these matters, said:

"We are convinced that the CDA represents a useful means of promoting employment and is a small but significant addition to our general policy towards small business."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1984; Vol. 53, c. 778.]

In 1984 there were some 1,200 inquiries a year coming to the CDA, and there were 700 co-ops. The CDA continued to develop the co-operative movement and to increase the number of co-operatives and the number of people employed in them—so much so that, in 1987, the Department of Employment published a survey of the CDA, and again accepted the case for its continuing role.

Today, we have reached the stage where the CDA receives about 3,000 inquiries a year, and some 2,000 co-operatives are in existence. Some people believe that as many as 25,000 jobs have been created within the co-operative movement. Of course, that was also a result of the work of many other bodies, but it is reasonable to assume that the CDA played some part in the process. There are also about 100 local development agencies, the majority of which are assisted by local government—indeed, they would not exist were it not for local government, and I shall explain the importance of that in a moment.

From my own experience in the northern region, I know that the nature of co-operatives also has changed. The conventional idea of a co-operative is a health food shop, but there are now light engineering co-operatives and catering and security service co-operatives in the northern region. They cover a range of worthwhile activities.

The CDA has extended its activities. Worker co-operatives now form only about 70 per cent., at the best estimate, of their functions. There are 70 marketing co-operatives operating in the United Kingdom to help companies and others to realise the best advantages in marketing. There are community co-operatives and equity finance co-operatives.

The Government's position on the future of the CDA, which has been explained in brief answers, can be summarised as this: the CDA has outlived its usefulness and there are now other agencies that will perform its tasks.

We must ask searching questions, in the light of what the Minister accepts is the good record of the CDA, on whether its work will continue. There is apprehension in the co-operative movement, even among those sectors of it that may have had doubts about the CDA, as to whether the work of the agency, valuable though it is acknowledged to be, will continue as it should.

I do not think that anyone can say that the role of a national body has become otiose. Perhaps the most important reason for saying that is that elsewhere in Europe co-operative development activity is expanding. In Spain, Mondragon has assets worth more than £5 million. In France, 5 per cent. of activity is carried on in co-operatives and in Italy the co-operative movement is growing and is at about 7 per cent.

Mr. Thurnham: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the co-operative movement in Italy is subsidised by the Government in a way that will have to cease before 1992, as it will contravene the Single European Act?

Mr. Blair: The contingency plans recognise the need for a central body to co-ordinate that activity. With respect, I think that Italy makes our case rather than the hon. Gentleman's.

Part of the Government's case is that the work done by the national CDA will continue to be done by the local CDAs. As the Government accept, local CDAs are largely dependent on local authority funding, and I do not think that any local authority member whom I have consulted believes that the Government can be sanguine about the prospect of that funding continuing. Last year saw the closure of a number of local CDAs: indeed, the umbrella CDA for the northern region has had to be wound up.

The burden of the Minister's speech was that we should rely on the training and enterprise councils to do the job. That is a remarkable proposition. The TECs are a largely unknown quantity even in respect of training, let alone looking after co-operatives, and no one could reasonably say that co-operatives will be a priority for them.

When my hon. Friends and I asked whether the TECs would be under an obligation to assist co-operatives, the Minister effectively said that they would not; there would merely be a ministerial desire for assistance to be given. He must forgive us for desiring something a little more concrete to bolster the co-operative movement, especially as it will lose some of the private sector European funding that it currently receives.

As it has been accepted that the CDA does a good job and that its function is still required, I feel that we are entitled to some sound guarantees before we take the step of winding it up: we must be sure that that function can be properly performed by other bodies. As matters stand, it is impossible to be at all confident that the support enjoyed by co-operatives during the CDA's tenure can be realistically expected to continue. If it does not, many thousands of co-op workers—who want to be their own bosses and keep the profits that they make, and who enjoy the co-operative spirit—will be put at risk.

This may not be a central sector of the United Kingdom's economy, but it is a vital one. With the degree of Government commitment that we require, the sector could grow. I ask the Minister to think again, even at this late stage. It would be tragic if, casually—for I think that the Government's attitude is casual—we allowed an opportunity to build up such a worthwhile part of our economy to pass us by. If we let the co-operatives suffer, the country will suffer, too, and the Labour party will not agree to that without protest.

10.48 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome the opportunity to speak on an employment subject, given my new-found freedom on the Back Benches. I also welcome the Government's decision that the time has come to move on from the CDA concept. The CDA was a quango set up by the Labour Government—although the present Government have given it their support during the 12 years of its existence, and have allowed it every chance to develop in new ways by means of local enterprise agencies, as I mentioned in an earlier intervention.

I must take up the point made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) about Italy. Italy—where the co-operative idea is as well developed as it is anywhere—recognises the need to move away from state backing. The report, headed "Joint Enterprise Groups in Italy", produced by the CDA study group which visited Italy, points out that existing aid amounts to as much as 40 per cent. rebate of expenses within the Italian co-operatives. However, it recognises that after 1992 aid will have to cease, because that would be against the EEC's anti-competitive laws. The report continues:

"With the expected ending of state aid after 1992, some consorzi directors felt that they should go into trading, buying and selling on behalf of members, for which a commission would be charged and thus becoming financially independent. It seems therefore that post-1992, United Kingdom marketing groups (which are not receiving any state aid)will be on equal footing to their Italian counterparts".

If the hon. Member for Sedgefield is looking to Italy, he is looking at exactly what is being done in this country now. We are ahead of the Italians.

Without a doubt, the enterprise agencies can do the job much better than any national co-operative development agency. I am pleased that when Bolton Business Ventures was set up in 1983 the Prime Minister paid it a visit. It has gone from strength to strength. It is a great tribute to the partnership between central Government, local government and private business. It is a great credit to Mr. Derrick Warburton and Mr. Roger McMullen in particular, who played such an important part in setting it up. The present director, Mr. Paul Davidson, supplies the leadership that is so important an ingredient in any partnership or co-operative. The Minister referred to the importance of leadership in the co-operative movement. It must come from within the movement. It should not be forced upon it by means of a quango.

Mr. Michael: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that enterprise agencies need help from public funds? It is that, as well as the partnerships that they create, which enables them to help businesses to develop. I am the director of a successful enterprise agency. Does he accept that the integrated nature of the co-operative work that is available within the agency is a strength that is recognised by other sectors? However, special skills, advice and knowledge are needed if the agency is to be able to assist co-operatives to develop.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. The success of enterprise agencies depends on the development of a spirit of partnership. However, nothing remains static. Organisations must develop. Enterprise agencies should become much more self-sufficient and less dependent upon Government funding. That is needed when new businesses agencies are set up, but it should not be so necessary for businesses that are already well established.

Bolton Business Ventures is discussing with the Co-operative Development Agency the possibility of establishing a centre of co-operative marketing expertise in the north-west to take over the role that formerly was partially played by the CDA'S office in Manchester. There have been moves to set up a new body—Co-operative Enterprise North-West—to take over the work that is done by the Manchester office. I wish any future organisation well, but it must stand on its own feet and not look to the Government for support.

Leadership is all important in any co-operative. The individual members of the co-operative must decide among themselves what their responsibilities should be. The success of any organisation ultimately depends either on a single leader or on a very small team who are able to assume the full leadership role that is so very much needed.

I welcome the remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister about the possible role of training and enterprise councils in helping to continue the work of the CDA in providing encouragement to co-operatives. I am sure that we should look in an all-embracing way at co-operatives as just one initiative, one venture, among many alternatives in which business enterprises can develop. Individuals should consider all the alternatives that they can adopt in developing their own businesses.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman is wrong in saying "all the alternatives". There can be only two alternatives. The hon. Gentleman should refer to "all the options".

Mr. Thurnham: I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is an infinite number of options and different ways in which businesses can organise themselves. The eastern European countries see the United Kingdom Government as an outstanding example of how an administration can help small businesses. I look forward to the continuing success of all the Government's initiatives in this sector.

10.55 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): If one is allowed to be sentimental on these occasions, it may be worth reflecting that, while the 1978 legislation was unopposed, my former hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley, Richard Wainwright, was influential during the Lib-Lab pact in pushing it forward. That might be acknowledged by the occupants of both Front Benches. Despite the rhetoric that often comes from the Government Front Bench about the horrors of the Lib-Lab pact——

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): What of your ex-right hon. Friend, Jo Grimond?

Mr. Wallace: My predecessor, who is now Lord Grimond, with his particular references to the Mondragon experience, raised this issue on many occasions in the Chamber, and he continues to do so in another place. The 1978 Act was a worthwhile product of that period of government, and that has been recognised by the Minister this evening. Indeed, that also was recognised when the 1984 legislation was passing through the House. The CDA has fulfilled an important role in the development of co-operative enterprises in Britain, and there is still much more that could be done.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), from the Opposition Front Bench, spoke of the 5 per cent. contribution which co-operatives make in France and the 7 per cent. that they achieve in Italy. I do not know what the United Kingdom figure is, but I suspect that it does not even make the statistics. I am sure that there is still considerable room for expansion.

I do not necessarily believe that co-operative ventures the length and breadth of the country offer a universal panacea, but they are one of many forms of ownership and management that can be appropriate in many circumstances. They have a worthwhile contribution to make to the economy.

The Minister referred to the appropriateness of co-operative ventures in inner-city areas. I represent a constituency of remote rural areas where co-operatives, including co-operative shops, have been developed. For example, on the Isle of Eday, in Orkney, and on Papa Westray, a hostel and a guest house have been developed. These co-operatives have been most important in maintaining the social fabric of the communities. In disparate geographical areas, there is clearly a role for co-operatives.

If an agency is right and proper in 1978, it does not automatically follow that it should be fulfilling a similar role in 1990. Before the CDA is wound up, however, we should surely be satisfied that something else will take its place to fill the gap. I was not persuaded, and I do not think that many others were—I do not think that the Minister himself was—when he advanced the various ways in which the gap would be plugged. There are other relevant bodies. For example, the Industrial Common Ownership Movement has a national role and it is widely recognised nationally in its promotion of the co-operative ideal and its advice, and references have been made to the local CDAs, but I do not think that anyone feels that the entire country will be adequately covered if the CDA is wound up.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) mentioned the many inquiries which were received in the past year—I think that there were over 2,000—by the CDA. Where are those inquiries now to be referred? I suspect that if people bother to inquire, they will not be answered.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The hon. Gentleman raises a serious matter. Under the vesting provisions, every contract, agreement, licence and authority of the CDA passes, with modifications, to the Secretary of State. It is clear to the House—the hon. Gentleman might like to develop this theme—that this is hardly encouraging, because the CDA has the expertise but the Secretary of State has nothing. I therefore pose a question arising from that: why have we heard acclamation of the co-operative movement and every reason, even from the Minister, for retaining the CDA yet not one good sound reason for winding it up?

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Member makes our point well. It is right to say that the CDA's expertise could be dissipated or lost.

We heard that the training and enterprise councils may be able to take on the role of the CDA, and no doubt as he goes round the country the Minister will encourage chairmen to do so. However, as he said, there is no requirement for them to do so and it is not written into the tender documentation. Even with the good will of TEC chairmen and board members—in Scotland, one assumes that the local enterprise companies will be given similar encouragement—where will they obtain expertise or advice to support co-operative ventures? It was accepted that local CDAs by no means cover the country, so again there would appear to be a gap.

We cannot depend on TECs or local organisations to fulfil the role of the CDA in a number of other specific matters such as making people aware of the possibility of a co-operative venture.

Much has been said about the European Community. I understand that the European social fund has provided a considerable amount of money that the United Kingdom has been good at tapping to train people in co-ops. I am not saying that if the CDA goes all that money will be lost—the Industrial Common Ownership Movement has done very well in attracting such funding—but much of it could be. Clearly hon. Members have not been satisfied tonight that there will be sufficient bodies with expertise prepared to pick up the pieces after the CDA is wound up.

Tonight we heard the Government support the co-operative venture. I have a book entitled "Small Firms in Britain", which has a fine picture of the Minister at the front, page 18 of which says:

> "The Government also supports the development of the co-operative sector."

Only one sentence on the subject appears in a large glossy pamphlet on small businesses.

We are entitled to ask, how are the Government supporting the co-operative sector? We have received no answer this evening to that fundamental question other than a hope and a prayer, and that is not sufficient to merit the winding up of the CDA.

11.2 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): I shall be brief, because other hon. Members want to speak.

The challenge posed by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on the winding up of the Co-operative Development Agency and by my intervention suggest that the Minister is in an exceptionally weak position. One of the penalties of being a Minister is that he has had to come to the House like some courier from a higher authority to pass on the message that the Government have decided to wind up the CDA. Whatever else is said about the CDA, the Minister has conceded that the co-operative movement has an essential part to play in the economy of the nation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) mentioned the changing pattern of the co-operative movement. He mentioned its responsiveness to innovation and to the challenges of the regions in which it works and the co-operation that it enjoys with other industries. Busy as it is at regional and local level, its need for professional advisers was answered by the development of the CDA. The CDA could sit back and give the professional advice that was essential to the development and investment projections of a wide range of co-operatives.

When the House has before it an order such as this at this late hour, it is entitled to be given substantive reasons why the CDA must be wound up. More than that, the House is considerably discouraged that the Government are winding up the CDA while paying lip service to the

[Mr. Ted Leadbitter]

co-operative movement. They suggested that the contracts, licensing function, agreements and the authority of the CDA should be passed to the Secretary of State.

How on earth can the Government envisage that a state Department could fulfil even tentatively or marginally the role of the CDA's professional advisers? That is a challenge that the Minister may like to consider. In years to come, he might suggest that this measure was a sort of apprenticeship for him. It is his first mistake, for the simple reason that he has parroted a brief which has been prepared for him for which he is not entirely responsible. It is his duty to do it, and I commend him for that.

The measure has been retailed because somewhere in the Government—probably in the Minister's Department—a decision has been made to lead the House of Commons to believe that the Government are still with the co-operative movement and that, under the Secretary of State's umbrella, the CDA can be dispensed with. That is utter nonsense. The Minister must find reasons which the House will understand substantially to support the Government's determination to wind up the CDA. He will not find any, because there is none.

For the first time in the House, a statutory body has been disposed of without the Minister giving a reason for it. I have seen many quangos disappear. The argument that there were too many jobs for the boys was sound. That is a different kettle of fish. In this case, a substantial co-operative movement is doing remarkable work with people who have great enthusiasm and are producing results. Although there have been failures, the movement has a remarkable record. There is a healthy level of co-operation between the co-operative movement and industry in my region.

The challenge to the Minister is simple. Before we vote on this measure, can he find one reason why he has become the messenger boy of someone who has acted prejudicially in Government circles against the CDA?

11.8 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): It is a privilege for me to speak tonight as the chairman of the parliamentary group on co-operatives. I note that the last opportunity that we had to debate the issue was on the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984.

The CDA was established by Act of Parliament in 1978 to promote the development of a co-operative sector of the economy. I pay tribute to several people who were wise and prescient enough to introduce the Act. They are my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), who was the Minister of State, Department of Industry at the time, my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who introduced the Bill on the Floor of the House, and two deceased hon. Members, my friend Sidney Irvine and Laurie Pavitt, who played a great part in the 1978 debate and I record our appreciation of those deceased Members.

Another hon. Member who welcomed the Bill was the then hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), now the Secretary of State for Health. He gave it a cautious welcome and said that if it adhered to the market economy he would welcome it. My friend the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) should note that his colleague at that time, Richard Wainwright, made sure that it adhered to the market system and that guaranteed the Government's welcome for the Bill. Throughout its history the CDA has adhered to the market economy and it has been correct in all its dealings. We view its demise tonight with great sadness.

When the CDA was set up it had a grant of almost £900,000. In 1981 that grant was increased to £1·5 million and in 1984 it was further increased to £3 million. In the years since then, however, it has had not more than £200,000 to spend. It has done a lot in those years on a meagre budget.

It is worth noting the 1987 report of the Management and Personnel Office of the Treasury, which looks at non-departmental public bodies. That report was complimentary about the CDA and, although it recognised that closure was an option in 1990, it learned towards a more expanded role for the CDA. That report is a further reason for its retention. The report recommended that it should continue to encourage the development of co-ops as they contributed to employment opportunities. The report said that such co-ops had led to the growth of employee participation. It is important to recognise that.

Since 1978 we have had a private sector, a public sector and, most importantly, a readily identifiable co-operative sector. With the demise of the CDA no recognition will be given to that third sector.

As a result of the establishment of the CDA, opportunities were given to those who might otherwise have been disadvantaged in the labour market—that was also mentioned in the 1987 report. The CDA has done its job to help those who might be adversely affected by business closure. It has helped women, ethnic minorities and the disadvantaged of inner-city areas.

I have met with Ministers to plead with them on behalf of the CDA. After listening to the Minister tonight, it is clear that we are up against benign neglect on his part. Tonight no one could claim that the Minister knows thoroughly what the CDA is about. We could not put our hands on our hearts and say that the Minister, having looked at the problem and taken a caring stance towards employment and the third sector, was right to decide that there was an alternative. What has stood out tonight is that there is no alternative.

Mr. Michael: The Minister has said that a little money will be available on a pump-priming basis only hereafter. Does my hon. Friend agree, however, that Government encouragement is important for business generally? Aid to business generally has gone on for many years, but no one talks about tapering or stopping that aid. Support for the co-operative sector, an important business sector, should not be allowed to trail off. It should remain an important element for the long-term future.

Mr. McFall: Exactly. The figures available make a credible case for the CDA. In 1977-78 there were 180 co-operatives. Ten years later, in March 1988, there were 2,000. It has been estimated that 25,000 jobs have been created in workers co-ops since 1978, at an average cost of £3,500 a job. That is a matter for debate, but when the Minister sums up will he answer these points? Has he taken those issues on board when deciding to run down and wind up the Co-operative Development Agency? Many of those

employed in the 25,000 new jobs would not have established any other form of business had it not been for co-operative enterprise, and that is important.

I wish to do the Minister justice and analyse the Government's case for closing down the CDA. I have looked through the Second Reading debates in 1978 and his predecessors' statements and I detect three main reasons for the Government saying that they will close it down. First, the CDA has done the work that Parliament asked it to do. That is an insulting answer because the CDA was obliged, under the 1978 Act, to make annual reports to Parliament, which was obliged to look at them. Not once in those 10 years has there been any criticism of the CDA and what it does.

The Minister says that the CDA has done its work and there will now be a network of local CDAs. However, will they still be in line and be able to maintain a strategic direction for their work? It must be remembered that those local CDAs have prospered over the years only because of the deep involvement of local authorities. I do not need to remind my hon. Friends that local authorities have been under tremendous pressure during the past 10 years, not least due to the introduction of poll tax. Therefore, local CDAs will not have recourse, through local authorities, to the pump priming that they require. Local CDAs cannot take over from where the national organisation has left off. If the Government still intend to wind up the CDA, would it not be sensible for them to support local co-operatives and therefore avoid duplication, and give the job to organisations with a track record and an expertise built up over 10 years?

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) mentioned the number of inquiries. The CDA received 2,754 inquiries in 1987-88, the last year for which figures are available. To where will those inquiries be directed? The Minister should consider that. Will the inquirers ring up the Department of Employment? If so, the phones will be red hot.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because he is teasing out an important point. Two possible methods of inquiry were reflected in the Minister's speech. First, people could go to local CDAs and, therefore, the Minister should give a commitment to give assistance to widening the network of local CDAs. Secondly, as my hon. Friend has just mentioned, there is an obligation on the TECs to provide help. Will the Minister spell out an obligation on the TECs, and will he ensure, through his Department, that they have the necessary expertise for this specialised element of employment creation and business assistance? That element is important. It would greatly reassure us if the Minister were able to spell it out in that way.

Mr. McFall: I shall come to that point. Will the Minister be kind enough to leave his home telephone number so that the 2,754 inquiries can be directed there? That is as good a reason as any I have heard from the Minister, so I am looking for a response on that.

The Government say that the financial arrangements for the CDA are more generous and available to enterprise agencies. As a constituency Member of Parliament, I say that my local enterprise trust could not have prospered had it not been for the good work of the district and regional councils. That position is mirrored throughout the country. Therefore, the new arrangements are not more generous and available to enterprise agencies. Because of the lobbying in 1978——

Mr. Turner: The Minister offered the opportunity for CDAs to respond at local level, but he must know very well what the experience of local government has been under this Government. He knows that section 137 has made it far more difficult for local authorities to respond to CDAs. The Minister must tell us tonight that he will allocate money to local government and to TECs if he wants to achieve the aims that he set out.

Mr. McFall: TECs are a virgin enterprise; we do not know how they will perform, so how can the Minister be confident that they will look after the interests of the co-operative sector? The interests of this third sector of the economy have been looked after year in, year out by local authorities, which have provided the pump priming. That will now be taken away.

The Minister's last argument, by implication, was that the Government no longer support the idea of a Government-funded national agency. But the Government fund other agencies—Food from Britain, the Housing Corporation, and the Equal Opportunities Commission, for instance. I have not heard the Government argue for their dissolution, so if they are in favour of such organisations, why not the CDA?

I ask the Minister seriously to consider the economic disadvantages if the co-operative enterprises go down. Co-operatives are different from companies. They have different constitutions and aims, but, like companies, they operate under the imperatives and within the restraints of the market. That was evident in 1978 and that truth stands today.

The existence of the CDA gives co-operation a higher status. It shows people that the Government are interested in the third sector——

Dr. Godman: Is there nothing in the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Bill, which had its Second Reading last night, that might provide the Scottish co-operatives with any comfort and compensation for this disgraceful action?

Mr. McFall: The Minister cannot come up with anything. Everything is still at the drawing board stage and up for bargaining. Co-operatives must take their chance along with others. The Government have the brass neck to get rid of the co-operative sector at the same time as going ahead with the TECs scheme in Scotland. The Government are showing that they are not interested in the 25,000 jobs that have been created in the past 10 years, or in any other jobs that might come from the co-operatives. If they were interested, they would encourage the CDAs —that would show that they were serious. I have had three meetings with Ministers in two Departments about this, which shows that the CDA crosses departmental boundaries. That does not happen in other areas. Now, however, we shall return to dealing with a single Department.

The co-operative sector—workers' co-ops, housing co-ops and so on—has widespread implications for the economy. Although the Minister was kind enough to give us the chance to discuss the matter, he showed no appreciation of how we feel about it, or of its economic consequences. Bearing in mind that the Government have

[Mr. McFall]

not repealed the Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984, or the 1978 Act, I look forward to the next Labour Government reconstituting the CDA. I only hope for the sake of the country, the economy and the people in these enterprises that that will be done within their first 12 months of office.

11.25 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am glad to have an opportunity to speak briefly in this debate. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to the constructive comments about the way in which the functions of the Co-operative Development Agency should continue after the life of that body is ended, as the Minister clearly intends it to be.

I declare an interest as I am sponsored by the co-operative movement in which I have been involved for almost 20 years. It is something of a tradition in my constituency as my predecessor, now Lord Callaghan, together with my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), encouraged the original concept of an agency. I was a founder member of my local CDA and also of the local enterprise agency.

I commend to the Minister the model of the Cardiff and Vale CDA and the Cardiff and Vale enterprise agency, which work closely together. I think that the Minister would acknowledge that the enterprise agency is one of the most successful in the country. That might be because on its board are representatives from local authorities and other public sector bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency, together with representatives from private business, such as locally based industrialists who take an interest in the economy, and from the Co-operative Development Agency. That sort of strong partnership, where each of the models available can be used to the best advantage, is just what we should be encouraging.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Too often we hear Ministers trying to put co-operatives into a tight category. I, too, am sponsored by the co-operative movement and together with my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) I played a significant role in starting the first Co-operative Development Agency in England and Wales—in west Glamorgan. Is it not true that all who have been involved in the great movement of small co-operatives know that many people who learn the lessons of enterprising co-operatives do not always stay with them, but take those lessons to every sort of enterprise? The damage that will be done tonight is that that will stop.

Mr. Michael: I agree with my hon. Friend.

I was interested to learn of the results of a survey of the needs of business and the ways to develop business commissioned by the south Glamorgan local authority. The dynamic, entrepreneurial American who undertook the investigative work on behalf of an American company —who we thought would be unsympathetic to the co-operative model—in fact said that with computing and new technology developments it would be the most suitable form of management for small, entrepreneurial firms. He encouraged the idea of building in the support of co-operatives as being the cutting edge of the most appropriate form of modern management.

Mr. Turner: My hon. Friend makes an important point about the development of co-operatives and small businesses. Does he think that the Government have a grasp of the ethos of co-operatives? Are they prejudiced in favour of companies set up under the Companies Acts and against those set up by the Industrial Common Ownership Movement? Is that prejudice borne out by their constant consideration for enterprise agencies, which deal with conventional businesses? Does not the proposal to abolish the Co-operative Development Agency show their indifference to the development of co-operative businesses?

Mr. Michael: I understand my hon. Friend's point and agree that the proposed abolition of the CDA supports the concern that he has expressed. Recently, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), on behalf of the co-operative movement-sponsored Members of Parliament, held a meeting with the Minister. Although he has not moved tonight as far as we had hoped, I welcome the fact that he is obviously prepared to listen to our points. The development of co-operatives should not be a matter of controversy or dogma, so I hope that the Minister will consider with an open mind many of the points that have been made in the debate and will search for models that will enable proper support to be given to co-operative development.

The strongest form of machinery for co-operative development is probably at local level. Groups trying to set up often do not have experience and need help over a period of time. They do not need a quick, sharp bit of advice but assistance over time. We need a network of local CDAs, and with the abolition of the national CDA, its function could be filled by some other body at the centre which could help the local network to do a good job throughout the country.

The Minister will appreciate our concern about the training and enterprise councils. These bodies have not yet established a life and expertise, yet they may be the only organisations on which co-operative development can take place in future. The Minister should do everything possible to enable the TECs to gain the necessary expertise to function properly.

Experience shows that time invested in helping groups is repaid well, as my hon. Friends have pointed out. The American expert of whom I spoke made that clear to me. That proves that the expertise of the national CDA should not be lost and that local CDAs and the TECs should be encouraged to take on a positive role. They will need help in the coming years from those who have developed a knowledge of what is required to achieve a successful, small CDA network and for successful co-operative businesses to be developed.

11.32 pm

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): In the few minutes available to me, I make a final appeal to the Minister to think again on this issue. It has been made clear in the debate that a great deal of work remains for CDAs to do. If the Government wish to avoid being charged with not being interested in co-operative development and with having a prejudice against that form of business, they should be prepared to re-examine the matter.

Before coming to the House I was a member of a large workers' co-operative in the west midlands. It has a large

turnover and is a successful business. It was started by eight people who were made redundant from the steel works and who invested their redundancy pay to set up a business. To be truthful, we did not on that occasion need to consult the national CDA. But throughout the country, many businesses have depended on assistance from the agency. The success of a business depends upon its integrity and it must be efficient. It is in the market place and must make sound commercial judgments about the way in which it is run. A co-operative does not depend on being able to call upon a dividend but has to rely on the surpluses that it develops to pay the wages of its workers. The Government should laud such principles.

For years we have had high unemployment and people have languished on the dole and have had to suffer the frustration of not being able to contribute to their community and to the benefit and welfare of their families. We should encourage the kind of development that allows people to set up in business and pay themselves wages, thereby having the independence of a wage packet and the privilege of running a business. That is what co-operative development agencies are assisting thousands of people to do every week.

In the interests of the thousands of people who still want to make a commitment to co-operative development, I ask the Minister to think again about this matter. He should take it back and have another look. Let us keep our co-operatives alive.

11.36 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I was the Minister responsible for the development of the concept of the co-operative development agency. The Bill was a consensus measure when it went through and the present Secretary of State for Employment, who was a Back-Bench Member at the time, commended it to the House when he was speaking to an intermediate Bill after 1978.

We have had incredibly good value from the concept because its cost over the years has been negligible. It is important to bear in mind the fact that the benefits given to the co-operative movement are minute compared with the cost of schemes that have been introduced to help small businesses. By the nature of their structure, co-operatives have been excluded from those schemes. For example, the business expansion scheme was a good and valuable one in its time, but it was equity based and co-operatives, because of their constitutional and financial structures, were unable to apply to the scheme. The money that the Government spent on that project would finance a co-operative development agency for a century with change left over.

It is important to remember the original concept. As my hon. Friends have said, the co-operative sector is the third element in our commercial operations, the other two being the private and public sectors. The aim was to try to develop this intermediate sector as it has been developed elsewhere in Europe. The co-operative movement is diverse and has a range of activities and, therefore, concentration is difficult. Similarly, a range of Government Departments have responsibilities that impinge upon the co-operative movement, and concentration is difficult there. At negligible cost we provided a focal point for the co-operative movement and for Government which has facilitated ease of consultation for over a decade. That has benefited the co-operatives and the Government. Sadly, it is being unnecessarily destroyed.

11.39 pm

Mr. Eggar: We have had a good and well-informed debate. I have listened with considerable care to the experiences of Opposition Members and I have taken on board the detailed points that they have made.

I repeat the assurance that my Department will look at innovative proposals and we will consider whether we can fund them. I also repeat that we are prepared to help the co-operative movement by part funding, pump-priming, a secretariat for a short period until it can fund itself fully, as long as those funds are matched by the co-operative movement.

I agree with the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) when he says how sad it is that the late Laurie Pavitt and the late Sydney Irving could not be present. During their time in the House they made a tremendous contribution to the cause of the co-operative movement in the House and more widely. In addition, my friend, the noble Lord Graham, still plays a considerable role in the other place on behalf of that movement.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) was, as he said, involved in the initial Bill. He referred to the relatively small sum of money involved. However, I must refer him to the remarks of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who, sadly, is not in his place, when he announced the Labour Government's intention to set up the CDA. He said:

> "After this formative period, during which the Agency should develop its own sense of corporate purpose, its finances will be expected to derive essentially from voluntary contributions from the co-operative movement and income generated by the charging of fees for the Agency's services." —[*Official Report*, 6 April 1978; Vol. 947, c. 756.]

At that time the hon. Gentleman gave an assurance that public funding for the entire agency costs would not be necessary after the initial three-year setting-up period.

Immediately this Government came into power, we realised that there was no short-term chance of the CDA becoming self-financing and in 1981 we made available another £1·5 million. That was a considerable contribution and there was another contribution in 1984. No one can say that the Government have not made finance available over a considerable period.

Mr. Alan Williams: The Minister must be careful not to misrepresent what my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said. It was never envisaged that the CDA would be self-financing after three years. In the original financial provision, which I made when I was in Japan on an inward investment programme at the time of the Second Reading debate, we made an initial provision of £1·5 million, of which £0·9 million was available in the first three years. Therefore, we had already made provision in the original Act to go beyond three years and, as I said in Committee or on Third Reading, we intended to review that at the end of the three years and extra financial provision was built into the Bill.

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry if the hon. Member for Bradford, South went beyond the brief that the right hon. Gentleman gave him. I can only comment on what the hon. Gentleman said at that time.

[Mr. Eggar]

Opposition Members, many of whom are sponsored co-op members, will be close readers of the *Co-operative News* and will have read the comments that appeared in its editorial on 19 December 1989. It said:

"The Co-operative Movement is also being called upon to put up money for the Co-operative Forum, to help with the transitional period that will follow the end of the CDA— and so it should. Sadly, however, this seems to evade the real question, which is: what is the Movement doing to recreate, from its own resources, a body that will continue the work of the CDA? With the hindsight of the last decade, it can be seen that it was an error to allow the Co-operative Development Agency to become dependent on Government largesse."

The last paragraph of the editorial says:

"The threat to the future of the CDA has, in fact, provided an opportunity for the traditional Movement to pull back the worker co-operatives into the mainstream. Hands would have to dig into pockets—but the rewards would be the dignity of self-help instead of the humiliation of passing the begging-bowl round Whitehall."

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 191, Noes 180.

Division No. 33] **[11.44 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy

Eadie, Alexander	Michael, Alun
Eastham, Ken	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*	Moonie, Dr Lewis
Fatchett, Derek	Morgan, Rhodri
Faulds, Andrew	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Mowlam, Marjorie
Fisher, Mark	Mullin, Chris
Flannery, Martin	Murphy, Paul
Flynn, Paul	Nellist, Dave
Foster, Derek	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Foulkes, George	O'Brien, William
Fraser, John	O'Neill, Martin
Fyfe, Maria	Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Galloway, George	Parry, Robert
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*	Pike, Peter L.
George, Bruce	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Prescott, John
Graham, Thomas	Primarolo, Dawn
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*	Quin, Ms Joyce
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*	Radice, Giles
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Randall, Stuart
Grocott, Bruce	Redmond, Martin
Harman, Ms Harriet	Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Healey, Rt Hon Denis	Reid, Dr John
Hinchliffe, David	Robertson, George
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Robinson, Geoffrey
Hood, Jimmy	Rogers, Allan
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)	Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Hoyle, Doug	Ruddock, Joan
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	Sedgemore, Brian
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Sheerman, Barry
Illsley, Eric	Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Ingram, Adam	Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*	Short, Clare
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald	Skinner, Dennis
Kirkwood, Archy	Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Lamble, David	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Lamond, James	Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Leadbitter, Ted	Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Leighton, Ron	Soley, Clive
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*	Spearing, Nigel
Lewis, Terry	Steinberg, Gerry
Litherland, Robert	Stott, Roger
Livingstone, Ken	Strang, Gavin
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*	Straw, Jack
Lofthouse, Geoffrey	Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Loyden, Eddie	Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
McAllion, John	Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
McAvoy, Thomas	Turner, Dennis
McCartney, Ian	Wallace, James
Macdonald, Calum A.	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
McFall, John	Wareing, Robert N.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*	Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
McLeish, Henry	Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
McNamara, Kevin	Williams, Rt Hon Alan
McWilliam, John	Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice	Wilson, Brian
Marek, Dr John	Winnick, David
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*	Worthington, Tony
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Martlew, Eric	
Maxton, John	Tellers for the Noes:
Meacher, Michael	Mr. Frank Haynes and
Meale, Alan	Mr. Martyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Co-operative Development Agency (Winding-up and Dissolution) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

PETITIONS

Ambulance Dispute

11.56 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I am pleased and proud to present a petition organised by the ambulance trade unions in Yorkshire in support of their claim, and their request that it be put to independent arbitration.

The 40,000 signatures attached to the petition are an addition to the 5 million—an all-time record, I understand—attached to the petition presented before Christmas by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I know that the people of Yorkshire have been queueing up to show their support for the ambulance crews and to give money, and I only hope that the Government will take some notice of the contents of the petition and the number of signatures attached to it.

The petition reads:

That the ambulance dispute is in need of urgent resolution. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House urge the Secretary of State for Health to use the good offices of ACAS and agree to arbitration in order to end this unnecessary dispute: and urge the Secretary of State to provide a pay formula for the ambulance service similar to that for the other emergency services.

To lie upon the Table.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I wish to present a petition supporting the ambulance workers, which has been signed by 40,000 members of the public in west Yorkshire, including many of my own constituents as well as people from the neighbouring constituency of Calder Valley.

That the ambulance workers' case is just has been recognised by everyone except, possibly, the Prime Minister and one or two sycophantic Ministers. That they have behaved impeccably in the face of massive provocation is indisputable, and I urge the Government to listen to the people of this country and to end this unnecessary dispute. I do not intend to repeat the words in the petition, but I think that everyone recognises that it is time that justice was done, and time that the suffering that the Government are causing the workers and the public came to an end.

To lie upon the Table.

Cyprus

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

11.59 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): The case that I intend to make this evening is that Britain's policy towards Cyprus has been mistaken for many years. I came across a quotation that sums up the beginning and the end of the problem in Cyprus. It comes from the memoirs of Glafkos Clerides, one of the more liberal and far-sighted Greek Cypriot leaders. He said:

"In reality, the opportunity for a settlement was lost not only because of our refusal to give the Turkish community autonomy in local government but because Makarios continued after seven years of hard struggle at home and abroad to hold the view that the Turkish Cypriots being a minority on the island should be reduced from the position of partners given to them by the Zurich and London agreements to that of enjoying only minority rights."

That was Archbishop Makarios's policy. It was also President Kyprianou's policy. It is not President Vassiliou's policy. That is the problem. The Greek Cypriots want the Turkish Cypriots to accept that they are a minority. The Turkish Cypriots say that there has to be a bi-communal republic, as provided for in the London and Zurich agreements of 1960. A bi-communal republic was founded, with reserve powers for both communities.

The reason was simple. There never was and there never had been a Cypriot nation. There were two communities, both looking to their motherlands. One suspects that Archbishop Makarios did not sign that agreement believing that it was final. He signed it in the belief that it was only an interim measure, on the way to the final achievement of Enosis. He believed in that all his life.

The Akritas plan for the overthrow of the republic was formulated and adhered to. In April 1963, the supreme constitutional court in Cyprus ruled illegal Greek Cypriot amendments to the law relating to municipalities. The Greek Cypriot executive ignored the ruling and overrode it. Consequently, the neutral German president, Dr. Ernst Fortshoff, resigned. At that point, constitutionality and the rule of law in the republic of Cyprus ended. Everything else flowed from that.

At that time, the guarantor powers did nothing, and the Akritas plan proceeded to unfold. In November 1963, Archbishop Makarios presented his 13-part proposals to amend the constitution. The amendments consisted of removing all the Turkish Cypriot safeguards. Needless to say, the Turkish Cypriots refused to accept them. In December, what was proclaimed to be a double Christmas for the Greek Cypriots took place. There was an all-out attack by Greek Cypriot forces and EOKA gunmen on the whole of the Turkish Cypriot community.

The facts are recorded in the Select Committee's report: that 103 villages were destroyed, that there were 27,000 refugees, that there were hundreds of hostages and that people were murdered—we do not know how many. At that point the plan faltered. The Turkish Cypriots were not destroyed immediately. They managed to fight back. Makarios appealed to the United Nations, thus involving the United Nations. The result was that all Turkish Cypriot representatives in the organs of state were expelled —by force in many cases. The Greek Cypriots unilaterally abrogated the constitution and abolished all Turkish Cypriot safeguards and rights.

In April, the President of the republic, Archbishop Makarios, denounced the treaties establishing the republic. From that moment, there was a de facto division of the island. From possessing 30 per cent. of the island, the Turkish Cypriots were confined to about 30 ghettos covering only 3 per cent. of the island. They were under an economic embargo; they were starved. If they ventured outside, they were shot.

The violence flared over 11 years from 1963 to 1974, and the guarantor powers did not intervene. Finally, when Archbishop Makarios was toppled by a coup instigated by the Greek colonels and wholesale slaughter—Nicos Sampson, a well-known EOKA gunman——

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Perhaps my hon. Friend will agree with me that Nicos Sampson caused us enough difficulty during the period to which he is referring. That the Turks should have had to consider being ruled by a regime headed by Nicos Sampson causes one to have the greatest sympathy with the Turkish side of the question.

Mr. Knowles: My hon. and learned Friend is correct. The Turks intervened; they landed. That was a warning, but the Greek Cypriot attacks did not cease. After the Turkish forces had landed, the inhabitants of five villages were slaughtered. I know that some of my hon. Friends have seen the memorials. Everyone, from six-week-old babies to 85-year-old women, was butchered in cold blood. In Famagusta, the entire Turkish Cypriot population were threatened with massacre. So the Turkish forces rolled on.

I am not sure what the British Government expected then to happen. It seems that, once the ceasefire line had been established, they expected the Turkish Cypriots happily to return to the rule of the Greek Cypriots under an illegal republic whose constitution had been illegally amended. Instead, the Turkish forces stayed to safeguard the Turkish Cypriots. During the following year, an exchange of population took place. Shortly afterwards, the Turkish Cypriots established their part of the federal state, which was what they were after.

The British Government's reaction was to continue to recognise the republic of Cyprus—the Greek Cypriot two thirds of the country—as the legal Government, although it was the Greek Cypriots who had instigated the destruction of the republic. They were rewarded by continuing to be recognised as the legal Government and the Turkish Cypriots were ignored. How were the Turkish Cypriots supposed to survive? They decided to form their own state, which we did not recognise. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will make the point that no other country has done so apart from Turkey. In all justice, I do not see that the Turkish Cypriots could have done anything else.

There were eight years of negotiations, primarily with President Kyprianou, which led nowhere. Finally, in 1983, the Turkish Cypriots decided that they had to declare their independence, and they founded the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. I fail to see what else they could have done in the circumstances. The 1960 constitution was dead; it had been abrogated by the Greek Cypriots. We could not expect the Turkish Cypriots voluntarily to return to Greek Cypriot rule, or perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister thinks that we could.

The problem has been well summarised by one writer on Cyprus:

"The Turks can't forget and the Greeks can't remember."

If one talks to Greek Cypriots about the days before 1974, they paint Cyprus as an idyllic island. That may have been the position for the Greek Cypriots, but it was not for the Turkish Cypriots. The Turks, however, will not go back to Greek Cypriot rule. They have a lower standard of living in the north than is the case in the south, but friends of mine in northern Cyprus have put the case to me. In many instances they lost great wealth, lands and houses, but they say, "At least our children can play outside; they are not going to be shot."

A powerful argument must be advanced to overcome that degree of fear. The tragedy is that the Greek Cypriots did not look at a map. Cyprus is 40 miles from Turkey but 400 miles from Greece; they forgot that simple reality.

Could any Turkish Government have ignored what was happening on Cyprus? They were legally justified as a guarantor power to the 1960 agreements to bring their forces on to the island. Apart from that, could any Government 40 milies away have ignored the potential slaughter of 150,000 Turkish Cypriots? One remembers the reaction to the threat to 1,800 inhabitants of the Falkland Islands 8,000 miles away, so one can imagine the pressure on the Turkish Government. Any Turkish Government in a similar position would have had no choice but to intervene.

A story has been put about that, somehow, a trade-off for Turkey's entry into the European Community could be the withdrawal of its troops from Cyprus. I recall—I should be glad of the confirmation of my hon. Friend the Minister on this—that there was a trilateral agreement between the Community, Turkey and Greece that Greece would not use its influence when Turkey's entry was discussed.

There are worrying factors at present. There has been an enormous Greek Cypriot arms build-up in the south and full conscription with reserves of 80,000 men. I do not ignore the possibility of further armed conflict. If a single Turkish soldier is a threat to the Greek Cypriots—those are the terms in which they think—he is the only acceptable guarantee to Turkish Cypriots, because when they were being slaughtered, the only country that cared and the only country that sent troops was Turkey. Without a Turkish guarantee, I cannot foresee the Turkish Cypriots reaching agreement.

Is it the Government's view that the 1960 treaties and constitution are still in force? If so, what pressure have we exerted on the Greek Cypriots to declare null and void their unilateral amendments to the constitution? If that is not our position, why do we not recognise the two republics? Once the 1960 republic and constitution had been destroyed, either both remaining parts of Cyprus were illegal regimes or they were both legal regimes. We adopted an illogical position by recognising only one and not the other. I seriously question whether we got it right. I suspect that, at that time, the British Government hoped that their action would bring about a settlement, but after almost 30 years we must ask whether that was realistic or correct.

If the Secretary-General of the United Nations can meet the leaders of both communities, why cannot Foreign Office Ministers? We say that we support the Secretary-General's position, but do we if we meet the leader of only one community? Foreign Office Ministers should meet President Vassiliou and President Denktash. If my hon. Friend the Minister believes that the 1960 constitution is still in force and we do not recognise both republics, President Denktash must be recognised as the vice-president of the republic of Cyprus, which was his position under that constitution.

It seems to me that we have got ourselves into a logical impasse. The Greek Cypriots say that they are in favour of restoring the partnership and want to be friends with the Turkish Cypriots. Yet the Turkish Cypriots have seen nothing but unremitting hostility since 1963. There are attempts to destroy the economy, embargoes, pressure on flights and violent attacks on the United Nations forces on the green line.

Another worry is the Greek Cypriots' view of President Denktash. I do not know whether they believe it, but they portray President Denktash as a personal obstacle to a settlement. I believe that the absolute reverse is the truth. He remembers Cyprus as one island. He has friends who are Greek Cypriots. Anyone who is a great deal younger than him is not in that position. If this generation of leaders cannot reach an agreement, I am not sure that an agreement can be reached.

The Government must be clear on several points. If the Turkish Cypriots are not treated as partners and if equality is denied, there can be no federation on Cyprus. If there is no federation, the two former partners will live separately. Any peaceful settlement must take notice of the basic anxieties of both sides.

12.15 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): This has been a useful debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) and I congratulate him on raising the issue. He speaks about the issue with a good deal of knowledge. I know that he has studied it carefully and knows Cyprus well. He has a particular understanding and knowledge of northern Cyprus. He has deployed his case temperately and moderately and that is valuable.

Inevitably, a good deal of what my hon. Friend said involved the history of this troubled island. Sadly, the sense of history in Cyprus is predominant. Memories are long and people in both communities have not forgotten the history that led the island to its present condition.

I hope that the House will forgive me if I concentrate my remarks not on the history of the island, but on the present position and prospects for improvement. We must focus our attention on that. My hon. Friend asked questions, quite properly, about the Government's position and about the possibilities for the island, to which I shall endeavour to give answers. It is right that this matter should be aired in the House and that the views of both communities are ventilated so that the House can understand the issues fully.

The last time that the House debated this subject was on 26 May 1989 in an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs). Regrettably, there has been little positive movement since then. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office said in that debate, we believed that the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus, President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash, had negotiated with a degree of flexibility up to that point. He called on them to show yet more flexibility and imagination, with more of the spirit of compromise, to

[Mr. Francis Maude]

crown the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts with success, to re-unite the Republic of Cyprus and to remove a cause of instability in the eastern Mediterranean.

My right hon. Friend registered our strong hope that the two leaders could agree on a draft outline settlement before their next meeting with the Secretary-General. That joint meeting took place on 29 June. Sadly, it had proved impossible beforehand to agree the terms of an outline. Nevertheless, the meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere. The Secretary-General noted that the ideas discussed with the two leaders up to that point offered a real possibility of bridging the positions of the two sides. He sought and obtained their agreement to continue their work on the outline, with a view to a further joint meeting with him in the autumn.

But here we are, six months later, and the two leaders have yet to resume their face-to-face talks under United Nations auspices. It is right that we should ask ourselves and endeavour to answer the question, what went wrong?

First, there were the unfortunate events of 19 July, just a week before Mr. Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash were due to hold the first meeting in the new round of the talks. I shall not rehearse the story of those events in detail to those of my hon. Friends present, nor to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) who is just about present with us. Those matters are familiar to the House.

Suffice it to say that Greek Cypriot demonstrators, many of them violent, were allowed to penetrate the United Nations buffer zone in the heart of Nicosia, where the zone is wide enough to take a couple of vehicles only. They overwhelmed the small contingent of the United Nations force, which did not know in advance where the demonstrators would be, and entered an area whose status remains at issue between the United Nations force on the one hand and the Turkish Cypriot authorities and Turkish military on the other.

The House will recall that members of the security forces on the Turkish side then entered the scene en masse, and the upshot was the arrest, trial and detention of more than 100 Greek Cypriots in gaols in the north. Most of those were released fairly quickly, but the last, including the bishop of Kitium, did not return to the south until the end of July. These events could hardly have made the atmosphere for resumption of the intercommunal talks worse.

Secondly, we saw a dispute about the status of the draft outline settlement which the United Nations had prepared in close consultation with the leaders of the two communities. That, too, is now history. But I must say that the claim by one side that the draft had been prepared in contravention of the understandings that the Secretary General had reached with the two leaders does not square with the facts as we understand them. We made our views clear in a statement on 24 August.

I much regret that those events should have served to undermine the good progress which had certainly been made up to that time. Much constructive work was done up to June, and I give the credit for that to both sides.

I hope that that effort and the good will expended on that process will not prove to have been wasted, and that the ideas in the UN paper, which the House should remember was submitted to the two sides as food for thought to aid their discussions—not as a formal UN proposal—should continue to be available to be drawn upon by both sides when the talks resume.

The emphasis must now be on where we go from here. The signposts are clearly marked in the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council before the council's debate on renewal of the UN force mandate on 14 December. It summarises recent developments, dispassionately and factually, and I commend it to the House. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. In it the Secretary-General describes his separate meetings with the two leaders in October and again at the end of November and early December.

At the most recent round of meetings the Secretary-General invited both parties to attend an extended session of talks with him in February to agree on the headings for a draft outline settlement, and to proceed to negotiate its terms. He suggested that those headings should include a joint statement underlining the close relationship between the negotiating process and the overall atmosphere in which the negotiations took place and in which the two leaders would indicate their willingness

"to promote in words and in deeds reconciliation and mutual trust between the two communities".

The Secretary-General went on to report:

"President Vassiliou stated his willingness to proceed along the lines suggested. As regards a joint statement, he did not reject the preparation of such a statement at the appropriate time, adding that it should not detract from the agreed objective of arriving at an overall agreement.

Mr. Denktash stressed the need first to agree on a joint declaration of intent on the relationship between the two communities and then to discuss the headings of an outline."

We take no view on what the terms of that joint statement might be. But I believe that the proper place to go into that is at the face-to-face talks between Mr. Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash, when at last those talks resume. That was very much in our minds when we contributed to the drafting of a statement in the name of the Security Council which was issued on 14 December. I have also arranged for a copy of that to be placed in the Library.

In line with that statement, I strongly urge both sides to co-operate with the United Nations, with a view to restarting the talks as soon as possible. I see every advantage in the Secretary-General's proposal to reconvene the talks in February. Certainly a resumption should not be left until after the internal elections to be held in the north, which will inevitably preoccupy Mr. Denktash and his colleagues in the Turkish Cypriot leadership from the spring to mid-summer. That is too long to wait. A settlement is achievable and overdue. It would be distressing if the island of Cyprus had to wait that long for further progress to be made. We also hope that neither side will put preconditions of any sort in the way, or say or do anything that would sour the atmosphere again.

Our concern is simple and unchanging. It is to promote, in whatever way we can, a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the dispute. In doing so, we recognise as cardinal that no settlement can endure if it does not enjoy the support of both Cypriot communities. An agreement that ignored the fundamental concerns of one community would be no agreement at all.

In our own dealings, as the House will be aware, our aim is to be scrupulously even-handed towards each community. We follow that approach to the limit.

However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East and other hon. Friends accept, our policy of recognition of the Republic of Cyprus and non-recognition of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus imposes limits on what we can do.

I want to talk about the future, but I shall take this opportunity, as my hon. Friend suggested, to restate the Government's view that the 1960 treaties remain in force.

I have listened carefully to the case made by my hon. Friend and assure him that we shall continue to give full weight to the interests and legitimate aspirations of the——

Sir Antony Buck *rose*——

Mr. Maude: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me if I do not give way because I have only three minutes left and I wish to cover the other points of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East.

We continue, as we have consistently done, to give full weight to the interests and aspirations of the Turkish Cypriot community. However, there can be no prospect of any change in our basic policy on recognition of the TRNC. Our purpose is, and must remain, to promote reconciliation and not to perpetuate division.

It sometimes seems that proponents of such a change in our policy on recognition feel that it is we who are out of step, not the Turkish Cypriots. But I remind them that the entire international community, with the exception of Turkey, takes the same view as us.

Let no one think that, if the current UN-sponsored negotiations fail to achieve progress within a reasonable time span, we and the rest of the world will be content to see the status quo solidify or that we will slowly move towards recognition of the Turkish Cypriot state. That could not possibly lead to a lasting settlement.

Maintenance of the status quo is simply not a tenable option in the long term, and it is the ordinary Turkish Cypriots who will suffer most from prolonged delay in moving to a settlement. It is sometimes argued—as my hon. Friend argued—that our policy cannot be even-handed if we deny to Mr. Denktash the access to Ministers which President Vassiliou enjoys. I am familiar with that argument.

However, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said in the previous Adjournment debate, Mr. Denktash made it difficult for us to give him the access that he used to have when the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was declared in November 1983.

I repeat also that we do not rule out for ever a meeting between Mr. Denktash and a British Minister. Of course, I would consider one if I was satisfied that it would materially assist the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement in Cyprus. But those conditions do not yet apply——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 11 January 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF LONDON (SPITALFIELDS MARKET) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration of Lords amendments read.
To be considered on Thursday 18 January.

ST. GEORGE'S HILL, WEYBRIDGE, ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*
Lords amendments, as amended, agreed to.

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL *(By Order)*

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for consideration of Lords amendments read.
To be considered on Wednesday 17 January at Seven o'clock.

NEW SOUTHGATE CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM LIMITED BILL *(By Order)*
Lords amendments agreed to.

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*
Read the Third time, and passed.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 18 January.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Monday 15 January.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 18 January.

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Monday 15 January.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Income

1. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied that the current levels of agricultural income are adequate to sustain the long-term viability of the industry.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): The long-term viability of the industry can best be assured by a reformed common agricultural policy that encourages farmers to compete effectively in the market place.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that during the past two years there has been a severe decline in farm incomes? In the livestock sector in Wales, the decline has been 20 per cent. Does the Minister further accept that the 4·1 per cent. increase in support prices is not enough to offset the livestock support amendments, let alone the 9 per cent. increase in inflation? Will he take positive steps to end the disparity between the green pound and the pound sterling to allow farmers to compete effectively?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that when there is a gap between the pound sterling and the green pound, British farmers are competing on an unfair basis. The Commission has made recommendations and we shall ensure, as far as possible, that we defend the interests of British farmers in the negotiations. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, as we are about to enter negotiations, we cannot promise the outcome now; nor can I say how we can best achieve our end, which is to make a fairer Community for British farming.

Mr. Marland: I accept that agricultural incomes have risen marginally in the past year, although I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree that they have fallen substantially since the early 1980s. Does he also agree that the right way forward is for farmers to seek to add value to what they produce on their farms to make it more attractive to the consumer?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it is much more difficult to increase one's income when there is a surplus than when there is a shortage, and all farmers must face that change. We must ensure that the battle is fair, and that Britain's farmers take more account of the need to sell their products effectively in the market place. I have tried to put that message over as widely as possible, and I thank my hon. Friend for his help.

Mr. Hood: Is the Minister aware that farmers in my constituency are worried about their long-term future because of the lack of anthrax vaccine? I raised the matter in Scottish Question Time on 20 December, and was promised a reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord J. Douglas-Hamilton); so far, however, I have received no such reply. Will the Minister have a word with his colleague and then provide me with some information, so that I can perhaps give some comfort to those worried farmers?

Mr. Gummer: I shall be happy to take the matter up immediately with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who, I am sure, will give the hon. Gentleman the answer that he wishes.

Sir Hector Monro: Bearing in mind the low level of agricultural income over the past few years, will my right hon. Friend try to bring some confidence to hill farmers by assuring them that in 1991 this country will receive at least as much in hill livestock compensatory allowance as it will in the current year, and that the same will apply to the suckler cow subsidy? Both are extremely important in rural areas.

Mr. Gummer: I hope to be able to make an announcement about HLCAs very soon. My hon. Friend will know that we fought very hard against the discriminatory stand taken by the European Community against our hill livestock farmers. We won a much better result than we had expected, but we nevertheless find the Community's decision entirely discriminatory, and we shall continue to fight such decisions.

Mr. Molyneaux: Is the Minister aware that the current value of the green pound is having a serious effect on the beef sector, especially in Northern Ireland, where producers are faced with green-pound-subsidised competition from across the land frontier?

Mr. Gummer: I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I shall go to the first round of our European Community discussions very well seized of that point as it applies not only to Northern Ireland but to the rest of the United Kingdom. British farmers can do well if they compete on equal terms and our job is to ensure that we reach our 1992 goal of a level playing field reasonably and sensibly. It will be a tough battle, because other countries do not wish even the Commission's proposals to be accepted.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the severe concern among farmers in west Wales about a green pound gap of up to 19 per cent? Can he confirm that the Government still intend to abolish monetary compensation amounts by 1992?

Mr. Gummer: It is a question not of the Government's intention, but of the inevitable need for the completion of the single market. Any country that suggests that we could have a single market while maintaining a green pound system clearly does not understand what the single market is about. If one country continues to express that view, the rest of us will be forced to carry out a major conversion job very rapidly.

Food Safety Directorate

2. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the operation of his food safety directorate.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): The food and safety directorate brings together all the divisions of my Department that have responsibilities for matters relating to the safe production and handling of foodstuffs, and other consumer protection matters concerned with food. My right hon. Friend the Minister will therefore receive official advice as Minister responsible for food, which is separate from that given to him on the economic aspects of agriculture, food production or fishing as Minister responsible for agriculture and fisheries.

Mr. Rogers: When he set up the consumer panel, the Minister said that it would be an advisory forum for him. In view of the excessive secrecy that he enforces on all his other advisory committees, will he assure the House that members of the consumer panel will not be gagged, and that they will have access to all the information that they require to carry out their duties in the public interest?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman is utterly wrong to imply that excessive secrecy is imposed on all the members of the independent advisory committees who advise this Department. None of the eminent scientists who advise us would be willing to serve on such committees if they were unfairly gagged in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests. I can assure him that the consumers and advisers who will serve on the consumer panel will want to serve only if they have access to all the relevant information.

Mr. Latham: This is a simple question. Will my hon. Friend confirm that food safety is the priority in his Department?

Mr. Maclean: Food safety always has been, always is and always will be the prime priority of this Department.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister recall an answer that he gave me shortly before Christmas? I asked how many of the turkeys and chickens that were being sold were likely to be infected by salmonella. His answer was that the last time that an examination had been carried out on a sample of a mere 100 chickens, it was found that 64 were contaminated with salmonella. I have had no answer on the number of contaminated turkeys. The Minister also said that if cooking was carried out properly, the problem would be solved. As the last investigation was carried out two years ago, will he institute a proper investigation and give further information to the public on the correct cooking of turkeys and chickens?

Mr. Maclean: I have 700 experts and scientists in my Department. Between them, they know practically all that there is to know about food safety. In view of the marvellous Christmas that we have all had, there is no question of me, or any of my experts, telling 25 million British housewives how to cook the Christmas turkey.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister not understand that while he is slashing research into food safety, sacking scientists by the thousand and delaying the introduction of vital regulations, the general public will have little confidence in a food safety directorate within his Department that is responsible directly to him? Why does he not show that he takes the issue seriously by establishing a food standards agency, independent of the Government, as advocated by the Labour party and many other information organisations?

Mr. Maclean: During the past few days we have announced a massive amount of research expenditure on bovine spongiform encephalopathy. That was followed by the announcement yesterday of further research expenditure into BSE. I was even asked on radio why we were spending so much on research. The Department is spending more money on research into essential food safety measures. All the staff who work in my Department

are not paid or funded by any outside organisation—neither a trade union, nor a commercial interest, nor any other media or vested interest.

Railway Freight Trucks

3. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to provide for the inspection of railway freight trucks travelling to the United Kingdom from the continent after the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Gummer: Our intention will be to complete inspections of incoming rail freight as quickly as is possible, consistent with the need to safeguard human, animal, plant and fish health, but the precise arrangements will depend on decisions still to be taken in the Community.

Mr. Trotter: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it must be in the interests of the country as a whole that there should be the speediest possible transit for freight trains to Britain? Does that not require health inspections to be carried out at several locations, just as is proposed for Customs examinations? Would it not be ridiculous if all the freight wagons had to wait at Willesden, or some other spot in London, for health examinations, which would delay transit to the north and other areas?

Mr. Gummer: I am determined to do that as quickly as possible, so long as we can also safeguard animal, plant and fish health. That has always been and it continues to be our priority. That is why we are the independent protectors of the health of our nation. No one else can be.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister discuss the animal quarantine regulations with the National Union of Railwaymen?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to discuss the animal quarantine regulations with anyone, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that first I want to find out how we are to operate the regulations on both sides of the Channel. I need to have clear information about that before I hold wider discussions. If, however, the hon. Gentleman wishes me to look into any particular matter, I shall be happy to do so.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the methods of checking food imports proposed by the Labour party, which involve detaining the food until it goes bad, would be illegal anyway under European Community law?

Mr. Gummer: It is a great sadness that in the past week the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), the official spokesman for the Opposition, told people that he would have broken European Community law by holding up food coming into Britain until it had been tested. That is wholly contrary to European law and would do British farmers and the British farming industry great harm, because every other European country would treat our products in exactly the same way. The hon. Gentleman was among the first to attack the French when they attempted similar checks on sheepmeat.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister deny that here is a clause in European legislation that allows him to prohibit contaminated food from entering Britain when public health is at risk? Does he further deny that salmonella-contaminated eggs have been coming into this country from Holland and that in the four days awaiting the test results those contaminated eggs were for sale in shops in Britain? Why should there be two standards, one for British eggs and one for foreign eggs?

Mr. Gummer: Of course, British eggs are healthier because we have tougher rules here than in any other EC country. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself for misleading the British people. He knows that what he proposes would be wholly contrary to European Community law, and he should not perpetrate what is entirely wrong.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that much of the inspection of inter-European traffic is necessary because health regulations in the rest of Europe do not come up to our standards? It seems wrong that British farmers have taken such stringent measures to get rid of salmonella in eggs while Dutch and other farmers do not have the same regulations.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is exactly right. That is why we are encouraging a campaign for all the boxes of British eggs to be marked, "British". That is why there will be notices in almost every supermarket pointing out that the eggs sold are British and that is why we remind British farmers that, instead of complaining about imports, they should be campaigning about the advantages of British eggs, which are better protected than any others in Europe. Above all, we are fighting in the European Community to bring other countries up to our standards.

Radioactivity

4. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in which areas of the United Kingdom levels of radioactivity are such as to prevent or restrict local agricultural production from being used in human consumption.

Mr. Maclean: We continue to operate controls over the movement and slaughter of sheep from certain upland areas of Cumbria, Scotland, north Wales and Northern Ireland that were affected by radioactive deposition following the accident in the Soviet Union in 1986.

Mr. Hardy: Would it not be fair to describe the Government's record of response to the problem as almost furtive negligence? In the nearly four years since that accident, can the Minister honestly say that his Department and the British public have been adequately informed? Did not the Swedes carry out an aerial survey within six weeks of the disaster? When will we in Britain emulate our neighbours?

Mr. Maclean: I had always regarded the hon. Gentleman as fair until now. I do not recognise the description that he has given. No other country in the world acted as promptly or as comprehensively as the United Kingdom in taking action to protect all our food supplies. I invite the hon. Gentleman to go to the Library of the House of Commons, where the shelves are groaning under the weight of information that we have made available to the public and to the House about how we have protected the food supply. We have carried out an

aerial survey and it has not given us any more safety information than the men on the ground looking at the soil.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that Chernobyl was a ghastly accident for the Soviet Union does not mean that our power stations are in the same category? Concordski fell out of the sky, but Concorde is still flying. We have the necessary means to monitor and to protect our people from accidents that will not occur in our power stations.

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the technological failures of Socialism, just as in recent months we have seen its political failures. Shortly, we shall see its political failures in this country as well.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To be fair to the British farming industry for once, and that includes myself, does the Minister agree that British farmers are producing healthier food in the 1990s than they ever have in this century?

Mr. Maclean: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's statement. Characteristically, he is fair and accurate, and I am delighted to agree with him.

Fishing Quotas

6. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on European Community fishing quotas.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): We won the best possible opportunities for British fishermen consistent with the need to conserve stocks, which is now an urgent priority.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister take this opportunity to emphasise that the schemes for the sale and leasing of quotas, which he has been mooting in newspapers over recent days, are entirely speculative and not yet Government policy? Will he take on board the fact that any such scheme would have a devastating impact on the fishing industry in certain areas such as the north-west coast of Scotland, where it is vital to the local community's economic well-being and dominated by the small boat sector?

Mr. Curry: In the present very difficult circumstances for the fishing industry, the Government have a duty to examine all the options that could provide long-term stability. I have made it clear that we are examining that scheme, which is known as individual transferable quotas, in the light of the decision of New Zealand, parts of Canada and Iceland to adopt it. If it offers us some help, we shall discuss it with the industry. We certainly should not introduce anything without the consent of the industry and we should consult it fully. If the scheme offers nothing, we shall throw it away.

Mr. Mans: Does the Minister agree that, when fishing quotas are set, it is vital to ensure that they are within the scientific evidence available on the size of stocks? Will he not follow the lead given by certain fishing interests in Scotland, who suggest that we should overfish and thus not preserve our stocks for the future?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. We have always been scrupulous to negotiate catching levels that are consistent with scientific advice. The alternative is to fix them on the advice of politicians, which tends to be less reliable.

Mr. Salmond: Has the Minister fully considered the social and economic impact on fishing communities of the Council's decisions on quotas? Will he comment on the case of Forbes boat builders in the village of Sandhaven in my constituency, which has just laid off a quarter of its 32-strong work force? Is the Minister saying that boat-building and repairing skills, which have been present in that village for almost a century, are no longer needed? Has he ruled out any form of aid to cushion the blow on fishing communities?

Mr. Curry: As I have said many times in the House, I cannot invent fish. There is a problem with stocks; we must get our fishing effort in line with the availability of stocks. That, of course, means that there must be contraction in the fishing industry. The skills to which the hon. Gentleman referred are certainly important. I hope that by trying to secure the long-term interests of the fishing fleet, through technical, conservation and better management measures, we shall secure the future of such jobs in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Morley: No one can deny that the fishing industry is facing one of its most severe downturns in recent years, but is that not due to appalling mismanagement over 10 years, not only by the EEC but by the Government? Is it not a fact that in the 1980s, with grants, the Government encouraged the expansion of the fishing fleet, against scientific advice? Yet they are now refusing to help to reduce the fleet with decommissioning grants. Does the Minister accept that the industry needs a strategic plan that takes into account supplies, conservation measures, technical assistance and grants? Why are the Government prepared to pay farmers not to produce crops but not prepared to help fishermen who cannot catch fish?

Mr. Curry: I have been seeking to discuss our long-term plans with the industry. That is why I have not brought forward any plans from secret committees and why I discuss our projects quite openly. If they work, we shall see whether we can adopt them and if they do not, we shall throw them away. I notice that when I start to talk a little about schemes that might be helpful, many people become alarmed.

Mr. Trotter: I thank my hon. Friend for attending the North Shields fish quay last Friday. I remind him of the concern expressed to him by the industry about the serious consequences of the cuts in quotas that have been inevitable for this year. Can he confirm that there will be recompense for the quotas that the fishermen lost last year as a result of the excessive fishing by other fishermen, especially north of the border? Will he give particular consideration to the EEC laying-up scheme, which was discussed with him on Friday?

Mr. Curry: I know that my hon. Friend takes a particular interest in this and he accompanied me on my visit to North Shields, which I enjoyed very much. He has raised two separate issues. When fishermen have suffered from over-fishing elsewhere, there is a mechanism by which they are compensated, and we shall ensure that that mechanism is observed. The laying-up scheme was designed by the Community to respond to specific

circumstances. It does not, of course, respond to the circumstances in which one needs to achieve a significantly lower fleet and there is a long delay in payment. Were circumstances to arise in which that would be a useful instrument, we should not, of course, close any doors.

Total Allowable Catches

7. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals for a compensation and decommissioning scheme to allow the English fishing industry to adjust to reduced total allowable catches.

Mr. Curry: I do not believe that decommissioning would provide value for money. It would not achieve any worthwhile fish conservation objectives because it would not lead to a proportionate reduction in fishing effort.

Mr. Mitchell: I am saddened by that reply. There can be only two explanations of the Government's refusal to do justice to an industry that has been brought to the brink of ruin by the failure of the EEC to provide proper policing on conservation. The first is that they are too mean to do it and the second is that they made such a cack-handed, crackpot cock-up of the compensation scheme last time that they are now anxious to redeem their own reputation at the expense of the future of the industry. Which is it?

Mr. Curry: The answer is very simple. The hon. Gentleman reaches for someone else's wallet whenever he finds himself in a difficulty. We do not believe that that is appropriate. The sensible way to approach these matters is by putting far greater emphasis on conservation. I accept that in the past, the European Community has not given sufficient priority to that area. The second method is to produce far more intelligent management measures that are designed to secure the long-term future of the industry. We are doing that and, no doubt, the hon. Gentleman supports us as we do so.

Mr. Wallace: It appears that the Government have rejected decommissioning on the grounds, as the Minister says, that it does not give value for money and is interventionist. As the Government are obliged by the European Community to find some way of reducing fishing effort by the end of January, do they intend to impose a compulsory laying-up period for the fishing fleet for certain parts of the year and will that be done without compensation for the fishing industry? Is that any more acceptable, because it is still very interventionist?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is referring to our commitment to reduce fishing effort for haddock by 30 per cent. We shall consult the industry fully on the proposals and we hope to be able to come up with a formula that the industry accepts as being intelligent and operable.

Mr. David Porter: Before my hon. Friend comes up with that sensible solution, will he bear in mind that the fishing industry is extremely complicated? There are many different interests to balance and he must also balance the interests of the taxpayer. Will my hon. Friend consult widely and carefully with all the different parts of the industry before he makes a statement?

Mr. Curry: I am very aware from my visits around our ports that they do not always have the same interests. I am also very aware that Lowestoft, which my hon. Friend represents, regards itself as being a very special fishing port. We shall be certain to consult all industry interests fully.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

8. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions there have been on the issue of access as part of the conditions for farmers receiving grants for designated evironmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: The payments are designed specifically to encourage environmentally beneficial agricultural practices and are not conditional upon permitting increased public access.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that the payments have been a fairly successful initiative? Will he also accept that there has been considerable disappointment among those who like to enjoy the countryside that they have not had better access to it and that there is now growing alarm from farmers in the areas because the Government have refused to increase the payments in line with inflation? Could not the Minister solve both those problems by putting up the payments in line with inflation on the basis of agreeing that there should be better access for those who want to go to the countryside to enjoy peace, quiet and fresh air?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman, whose interest in these matters is well known and respected, will accept that there is a problem in trying to balance the various interests in the countryside—even, for example, the difference between those who want additional access and those who are seeking primarily the conservation of flora and fauna. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to mix the two aspects.

On payments for environmentally sensitive areas, we have found that farmers are prepared to do that job at the price that we have offered, and we believe that they will continue to do so. We will, of course, keep the payments under review, as we promised.

Mr. Donald Thompson: When my right hon. Friend considers the conservation of the countryside will he bear in mind those people who, for generations, have been concerned about the countryside, such as farmers, sportsmen and others who live in it?

Mr. Gummer: It seems a pity the some people still believe that there is a conflict between farming and conservation. Farmers have conserved the countryside throughout its history—in fact, in large measure, they have created the countryside. Farmers are the front line in conservation. I will not allow people to believe that they should be attacked for the job that they do.

Salmonella

9. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the feasibility of completely eradicating salmonella enteritidis from the egg production process.

Mr. Maclean: The Government accept that complete eradication of salmonella enteritidis is unlikely to be

feasible. The measures that have been adopted are designed to reduce the level of infection to the minimum that can reasonably be achieved.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. I ask my question on behalf of the chicken farmers in my constituency who are extremely worried about Government policy on salmonella enteritidis. As we have already slaughtered over 1 million of our domestic chickens, and given that this form of salmonella is ineradicable—it is as much a part of chickens as their feathers are—when will my hon. Friend decide that enough is enough, and realise that our national flocks are threatened with total extinction and that, between Gummer and Gumbro, we will not have a chicken industry any more?

Mr. Maclean: Not unnaturally, I disagree with my hon. Friend's concluding comments. I cannot tell her when the present scheme will end. We shall consider all the scientific evidence. My hon. Friend is a doughty fighter for the British chicken industry. I invite her now to use her considerable presentational talents to help to market the British egg like never before and to use that wonderful slogan which the Agriculture Select Committee has given us—"British eggs are safer than imported eggs." If she turns her attention to that, I am sure that she will do a marvellous job for the British chicken industry.

Dr. Reid: Does the Minister agree that there is little value in reducing the salmonella content of British eggs if we allow salmonella to be imported wholesale? Will he confirm the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that salmonella has been found in imported Dutch eggs but that, by the time that tests reveal the presence of salmonella, the eggs have been distributed and are adorning the breakfast plates of Britain? Why does the Minister not use the available EEC regulations on contaminated food and stop the distribution of imported eggs until they are tested and cleared?

Mr. Maclean: It is nonsense for the hon. Gentleman to talk about salmonella being imported wholesale. That is an outrageous allegation. Had he bothered to read the Select Committee report on Tuesday, he would have seen that the Agriculture Select Committee has also agreed that the incidence of salmonella in foreign eggs and the risk from them is remarkably low—the same as in this country. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is dishonest to suggest that we could use powers in this country to delay for ever and a day until they are approved imports of eggs that have no salmonella. That is not the correct approach. I agree with the approach of the Agriculture Select Committee. We will intensify our efforts in the EC to get a salmonella control order across the whole of Europe, because that is the proper and sensible solution.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

10. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the level of compensation for farmers whose herds are infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Maclean: No, Sir. We believe that 50 per cent. of the value of the animal as if it were healthy is fair compensation for an animal which is terminally ill and therefore worthless. Compensation of 100 per cent. is paid on animals that are slaughtered and found not to be infected.

Mr. Steen: As there are similarities between neurological disease—wasting disease in the human brain—and BSE, and as we know that diseased sheep pass that disease to cows, although we do not know whether it goes to the human brain, will the Minister explain why he is not giving farmers the incentive to expose cows in the early stages of BSE so that they do not go on to the market for sale, as is happening in North Yorkshire and Northamptonshire, with the result that it is going into the food chain, with the beginnings of BSE in the system?

Mr. Maclean: I can help my hon. Friend considerably. What he says is just not the case. We have so many safety belts and braces on this operation it is not true. About 99 per cent. of all animals are caught at the farm stage. We then have the offals ban, which removes all offals which could contain BSE, such as the brain, from all animals. That is the first pair of braces. We also have the state veterinary service, the members of which go to the markets, and we have meat inspectors in slaughterhouses doing spot checks. So because the offals are removed, there is no prospect of meat contaminated with BSE getting into the human food chain.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister gives assurances, but I do not believe that they will reassure either producers or consumers that BSE is being prevented from getting into the human food chain. A row erupted yesterday between environmental health officers from my area and the Department. The officers believe that they are being overruled from taking the necessary action to prevent contaminated offal from getting into the human food chain through meat. I understand that, because the industry lobbied the Ministry to try to get action taken, the Ministry intervened. This is turning into a scandal.

Mr. Maclean: I advise the hon. Gentleman to check his facts. I do not blame farmers for wanting to get 100 per cent. compensation for all animals, but the hon. Gentleman must not pretend that 50 per cent. compensation is somehow leading to infected animals entering the food chain. I am satisfied that my veterinary officers behaved absolutely correctly yesterday. It is irrelevant whether the animal's head was or was not cut off before it entered the slaughterhouse.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Why not?

Mr. Maclean: Because the relevant offals have been removed from all animals' heads. I advise the hon. Gentleman to check his facts.

Mrs. Currie: I thank the Minister for his prompt and efficient efforts to deal with the problem and in particular for the increased allocation for research into BSE, which is a matter of great concern in my constituency. As and when he is considering financial assistance for farmers affected by this problem, will he also take into account the damage done to farmers affected by the other problem of contaminated meat—lead in feedstuffs that has gone to some of my farmers' cattle?

Mr. Maclean: I thank my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the extra money that we have made available for food research, and I hope that that will stop

Opposition Members from continually suggesting that essential research for food safety has been cut, which is patently not the case.

As for compensation, we believe that the measures that we have taken on BSE are absolutely fair, and that legal channels are open to those who have been affected by lead in feeding stuffs to claim compensation from the appropriate suppliers.

Mr. Ron Davies: If what the Minister says is true, will he explain why there are regular and consistent reports from county council trading standards departments indicating the identification of BSE-infected cattle at livestock marts and abattoirs? Is it not a fact that the Tyrrell committee, the Minister's own scientific advisers, and the Government's announcement of the new research programme are clear indications that the Government recognise the real danger that exists to human health? Given that, why will the Minister not accept that the only way to prevent BSE-infected products from going into the human food chain is by offering 100 per cent. compensation, thereby stopping the entry at source?

Mr. Maclean: That is absolute nonsense. Neither 100 per cent. compensation nor 50 per cent., compensation is the means to stop any infected offals entering the food chain. That is done by cutting out all the relevant offals. People wrongly call BSE "mad cow disease"; but it is a disease of the cow's brain and central nervous system. Those offals are removed from all cows whether they have BSE or not. There is, therefore, no question of meat being infected by BSE as those offals are removed.

European Commission Foodstuffs

11. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the distribution of free European Commission foodstuffs with a view to increasing the number of distribution centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I will shortly be deciding on the arrangements for distributing surplus intervention foodstuffs to our most needy citizens.

Mr. Cryer: Is the Minister aware that great difficulty was caused in the city of Bradford by the relatively small number of distribution centres and that although that caused great distress to a number of old people who had to queue for long hours, the Ministry turned down my request for extra distribution centres? Is he also aware that organisations such as the Dovesdale club in my constituency were willing and able to distribute the foodstuffs, but were turned down? The Ministry therefore contributed to the distress and difficulty caused by the distribution process. Will the Minister give me an assurance that he will consider establishing more distribution centres?

Mr. Curry: When this not very satisfactory scheme began, we took the view that distribution would be carried out by voluntary agencies. In fact, five undertake that task in Bradford. I have no intention of erecting a Government bureaucracy. Those organisations that can satisfy our requirements will, of course, be given entitlements, but the more that take part, the less each will receive and there is very little food to go around. Although I do not think it is a sensible scheme, we shall operate it as best as we can.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that irresponsible wage claims unrelated to productivity will, if granted, lead to higher inflation, an erosion in the value of savings and the destruction of jobs?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is quite right. If our wage costs rise faster than those of our competitors, our competitors will get the orders and the jobs. The movement of wage costs is disturbing. On the last available figures, for the second or third quarter of last year, United Kingdom wage costs were up by 6 per cent; those of the United States were up by 2 per cent; West Germany's were up by only 1 per cent; Japan's were down by 1 per cent; those of France were down by 3 per cent. and those of the Netherlands were down by 4 per cent. Those figures mean that all those concerned with getting orders and jobs in this country must have a careful look at keeping wage costs down.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us how far she is prepared to blame herself and her Government's policies for the rate of inflation?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, we have made it quite clear that there was too much money in the system for our output and therefore steps had to be taken to correct it—and they are being taken. I should point out that a rate of inflation of 7·6 per cent. was regarded as so low by the previous Labour Government that they had ambitions to get down to it.

Mr. Kinnock: But when it is the Government's deliberate policy to keep mortgage rates and interest rates very high, to increase electricity prices and fares and shortly to impose both the business rate and the poll tax, is not the director general of the Confederation of British Industry absolutely right to say that inflation is the Government's fault?

The Prime Minister: No. Inflation happens when we have too much money in the system, which means that we are taking more out in money than we are putting in in output. That has to be corrected by two means. The first is by interest rates and the second is by keeping a tight fiscal policy. We are doing both.

Mr. Higgins: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the old-fashioned attitude of some trade union leaders who have not learnt lessons of the 1979-80? Will she reject the view that an increase in productivity automatically justifies a pay increase? It may be that productivity is rising in an industry but demand is falling. In those circumstances, a pay increase may not be justified.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend. The first rule is that wage increases must not outstrip productivity. As my right hon. Friend said, the other rule

is that increased productivity comes from substantially increased investment of capital, so there must be a return on capital. Another rule should be that increased productivity should result in price reductions. The consumer is entitled to reductions if we are to remain competitive.

Q2. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: Can I remind the Prime Minister of the views that she expressed during a previous inustrial dispute? She said that she believed that the three emergency services—the police, the fire service and the ambulance crews—should have their pay negotiations taken out of the industrial arena and settled on the basis of a pay formula. Given the obvious merit of the ambulance crews' case, their overwhelming public support and the division in the ranks of the right hon. Lady's Government, is there any reason, other than her own love of confrontation, why there should not be a settlement of the ambulance dispute based on her own idea of a pay formula?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept the early part of the hon. Gentleman's comments. The ambulance crews' pay should be settled by reference to the NHS. The matter went before the Clegg commission, which rejected the claim that it should be settled on the same basis as the police and the firemen.

The pay claim dates back to last April. Some 84 per cent. of NHS employees settled last year's wage claims at 6·5 or 6·8 per cent. None of them were prepared to put the patients' interests at risk. It would be unfair to them to give in to those who refuse to settle through the Whitley council machinery.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: My right hon. Friend may recall that at precisely this time last year I expressed my fear at the availability of crack spreading in our inner cities. One year later she will be aware of the escalation of the problem and the increased haulage of cocaine. In the light of those events, will she take the opportunity to reiterate the Government's determination to take every initiative possible to crack down on drug pushers? Does she have a message for young people who may be tempted to take drugs?

The Prime Minister: I agree that crack is a new and damaging form of cocaine. Last year Customs seized more cocaine than heroin, which shows that it is on the increase. We are co-operating, through the economic summit, to do everything possible to stop the laundering of the cash from drug trafficking. As my hon. Friend knows, we are supporting the efforts of President Barco of Colombia—*[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: We cannot hear.

The Prime Minister: Of course hon. Members cannot hear as they are making so much noise.

We are supporting those who wish to cut down the growing of and trafficking in cocaine in Latin America. There will be an international conference in London in the spring when, in conjunction with other Governments, we shall consider ways to try to cut the demand for drugs. We shall tell our young people about the dangers of taking drugs in the hope that we can prevent them from being tempted to take them.

Q3. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Redmond: Why is it that, according to ministerial answers, between now and the year 2013 the student loan scheme will cost the British taxpayer £2,170 million more than the present student grant scheme that it will replace?

The Prime Minister: There are obvious reasons. On a loan scheme, money is paid out for many years before money is returned. As it is returned—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is impossible to hear.

The Prime Minister: I should hardly have thought that the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) would need to ask the question. When the money is returned it will enable us to put more back into education.

Mr. David Howell: Given my right hon. Friend's absolute determination to defeat inflation, what does she think of the idea, apparently supported by the governor, deputy governor and former deputy governor of the Bank of England, that a statutory obligation to maintain the stability of money should be placed on the Bank of England?

The Prime Minister: That obligation should remain as part of the Government's duty. As my right hon. Friend knows, there are two ways of achieving the goal. The first is by keeping money tight, which can be done only by interest rates. Secondly, it could also be achieved by tight fiscal policy—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am aware that there is a problem with the microphones. It is difficult to hear.

Q4. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does not the Prime Minister understand that if her policy is to increase interest and mortgage rates it is obvious that people at work will demand higher and higher wages to pay for those higher interest rates? Is it her view that there is no alternative to that strategy—if so, it means that the wage demand escalation taking place is irreversible—or does she have some other secret policy which she is unwilling to disclose to the House; a sort of informal incomes policy based on the threat of higher and higher unemployment?

The Prime Minister: Wage costs and wage claims and their settlement are matters for industry. We hope that workers will take into account the fact that if wage costs price their products out of the market, workers price themselves out of jobs. The alternative to using the right policies to deal with inflation—interest rates and a tight fiscal policy—is to let inflation rip. That would result in far

more unemployment than the steps we are presently taking, through which we have created more jobs in this country than ever before.

Q6. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Porter: As we are to some extent still a nation of shopkeepers and my right hon. Friend was born and brought up above the shop, as I was, what message does she have this week for those small businesses and shopkeepers worried about uniform business rates?

The Prime Minister: First, the amount raised from the business rate next year will be the same as this year plus inflation and, therefore, there will be no real increase in the business rate. My hon. Friend knows that there have been some changes in the business rate, one cause of which is the first rating revaluation since 1973. That has given rise to nearly three quarters of the increase in rates and would be an object lesson for anyone wanting to apply it to a domestic rating revaluation. My second point involves the way in which the business rate is collected. Because of those two factors the increases will be applied over a transitional period of at least five years so that the larger businesses do not pay more than 20 per cent. extra in real terms and the smaller ones no more than 15 per cent. in real terms each year during that period. It will be the first time that businesses have had an assurance about rates. It will be of great benefit to those manufacturing businesses and shops in the north and will help them to keep their costs down and get their jobs up.

Mr. Ashdown: While on the subject of shopkeepers, will the Prime Minister give her support to the "Parents Against Tobacco" campaign launched this week? Does she realise that its surveys reveal that more than 50 per cent. of shopkeepers are still prepared illegally to sell cigarettes to children under 16? What steps will she take to ensure that the law is enforced or, better still, strengthened, to provide an effective blockade between the tobacco industry and our children?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the law is enforced by the police. We have already taken some steps. For example, in conjunction with the European anti-cancer campaign, I announced a programme of £2 million for anti-smoking advertisements aimed at teenagers. That was launched on 11 December 1989. Although far too many young people between the ages of 11 and 15 still smoke, fortunately, the numbers are falling. Only about 8 per cent. smoke now, compared with 13 per cent. in 1984. We give our full support to the "Parents Against Tobacco" campaign. It will keep careful note of where cigarettes are sold to young children and give the information to the police. Knowledge of the campaign should already serve as an effective deterrent to those shopkeepers who perhaps do not take sufficient care to ensure that they do not infringe the law.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The Business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Environmental Protection Bill.

TUESDAY 16 JANUARY—Remaining stages of the Coal Industry Bill.

WEDNESDAY 17 JANUARY—Until seven o'clock, there will be a debate on parliamentary pensions on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Committee and remaining stages of the Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 18 JANUARY—Motions on English revenue support grant reports. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 19 JANUARY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 22 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Social Security Bill.

[Debate on Thursday 18 January 1990
Relevant documents:
Population Report (England) (HC 48);
Revenue Support Grant Report (England) 1990-91 (HC 47);
Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England) (HC 49);
Revenue Support Grant Transition Report (England) (HC 50);
Special Grant Report (HC 51).]

Dr. Cunningham: Given the continuing economic difficulties and the problems being caused to people by crisis mortgage and other interest rates and inflation, when are we likely to have the two separate debates on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement and the public expenditure White Paper? I am sure that both Conservative and Opposition Members are anxious to have an opportunity to debate the continuing failure of the Government's economic policies.

Will the Leader of the House explain why, in a complete break with all precedents and practice, the revenue support grant decisions of the Secretary of State for the Environment will be announced today in a written reply? According to precedent, the Secretary of State has always come to the House to make an oral statement about rate support grant decisions affecting every local authority in England and Wales, but that will not be done on this occasion. Is that because the Government and Ministers are terrified of disclosing the implications of the poll tax and the new national business tax on constituencies, local authorities and individuals throughout Britain?

It is unacceptable for the Secretary of State for the Environment to dodge his responsibility to the House of Commons in this way. After all, his decision will have a major effect on the level of the poll tax and the business tax. The House should have the opportunity to question him on the matter, particularly as this is the first year in which we and our constituents shall have to endure the poll tax.

Since the Prime Minister has now made it clear that the Government are effectively operating a pay policy in the public sector, will the Leader of the House find time for an early debate on that important matter, so that we can raise questions on behalf of our constituents who are suffering so grievously because of inflation, imminent rises in rents, the poll tax and mortgage rates? They should have a clear statement from the Secretary of State for Employment about exactly what that pay policy means.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Obviously, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a precise date for the debate on the Autumn Statement, but I hope that it will be possible to announce it in my next business statement. I shall also be looking for an early opportunity for a debate on the public expenditure White Paper.

On each of those occasions, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be able, willing and delighted to present to the House the economic policy that has served Britain so successfully throughout the past 10 years. He will make it entirely plain that there is no question of a prices and incomes policy of the kind so frequently beloved by Labour Governments. But he will make it equally plain that we shall continue to sustain firm monetary and fiscal policies, and that a crucial part of any sensible economic policy is restraint by those responsible for pay bargaining for the sake of the employment of their own members as well as other people. It is as a result of success in that respect that Britain has been able to achieve a faster and more prolonged reduction in unemployment than any other European country in recent years.

The orders in relation to local government will be the subject of a debate next Thursday. I shall be tabling motions which will enable the debate to run until 10 o'clock and questions on the orders to be put thereafter. The matter is being brought before the House on an entirely new basis. There is no question of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment being terrified of presenting the case to the House. He will be delighted once again to present and justify his conclusions in the debate that will take place next Thursday.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the course taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on the revenue support grant is a thoroughly sensible one and a wise change in the procedure? Hitherto, we have always had the figures flung at us, hon. Members have had no opportunity to discuss them and, in those circumstances, the exchanges have been a farce. It is far better to have the figures before us, allow a week to study them, and then have a proper debate, as we shall do.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend puts his finger on the most sensible aspect of the arrangements that are being set in hand. In addition, the figures are now being made available promptly, with a view to a prompt debate within a week of their being published.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): In the light of the statement made shortly before Christmas by the Secretary of State for Transport on the railway industry, and the speech recently delivered by Sir Robert Reid on the need for more investment in the railways, would it not

be timely to have a debate on the future of our railways, particularly the ways in which Scotland, Wales and the regions of England can benefit from the Channel link?

It was clear during questions to the Prime Minister and from the question asked by the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) that there is great concern about the interest in the uniform business rate. When the legislation was going through, I and my hon. Friends warned of the damage that would be done by linking the uniform business rate with revaluation. It gives me no satisfaction to say, "I told you so," and it is even less satisfying for many small businesses that will have to pay vastly increased sums in rates. Is it not time that we had a debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer any undertaking of a debate in respect of that matter, but it will certainly be noted—I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be prepared to acknowledge this—that the most significant effect of the way in which the uniform business rate will operate will be a substantial transfer of benefit to those in manufacturing industry and in the northern parts of the country principally, as has been advocated by hon. Members on both sides of the House as an entirely desirable state of affairs.

On transport, the important feature is that the recent speech made by Sir Robert Reid endorses and acknowledges the fact that British Rail investment is currently running at the highest level for 25 years and that the Government have endorsed British Rail's investment programme of £3·7 billion over the next three years. That is a 75 per cent. increase over the level of the three preceding years.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, while some right hon. and hon. Members are undoubtedly growing older and deafer, the acoustics in this Chamber are without question getting considerably worse? Consequently, Ministers have some difficulty in being heard by you, Mr. Speaker, and by other right hon. and hon. Members. As there has been a definite deterioration, will my right hon. and learned Friend refer the matter to the appropriate Committee or authority next week, or give the matter some consideration himself?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that there has been any measurable deterioration in the acoustics of the Chamber—[HON. MEMBERS: "Pardon?"] However, a large number of right hon. and hon. Members have drawn that matter to my attention, as they drew it to your attention, Mr. Speaker, yesterday. Our advice is that any problems are due to the substantial antiquity of the existing microphones. When the televising experiment was authorised, it was agreed that the existing acoustic equipment should be used, but the Select Committee on the Televising of Proceedings of the House, over which I preside, is seized of the problem and will be studying what should be done to modernise the acoustic equipment in line with television broadcasting, whether or not that continues.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that, earlier today, the Secretary of State for Health stated that he did not propose giving any further money to Tranx, which is the major national agency for helping people who are addicted to tranquillisers, saying that he will finance only local groups? As no local groups exist in many areas of Britain, where Tranx has filled those gaps, many thousands of people who are desperately addicted to tranquillisers will receive no help in future. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman arrange a debate on that matter next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not familiar with that particular aspect of the subject, but I shall certainly bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, for him to consider.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Bearing in mind the fact that car workers in Britain are not fully subject to market forces because of the effect of the so-called gentlemen's agreement to limit certain car imports, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that now would be a good time to debate that agreement, with a view to abandoning that pernicious and damaging piece of protectionism?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is undoubtedly right in identifying that agreement as one that has some protectionist effect on conditions in the car industry. I cannot yet say whether or not we shall have a debate on that matter in the near future.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that he will stop disrupting the proceedings and business of the House by bringing forward unannounced motions giving draconian powers to Committee Chairs? The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have noted the considerable concern expressed by many right hon. and hon. Members on that matter on Tuesday. I wish that they had expressed similar concern when the matter was before the House last year. Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that, if such motions are to be brought forward, adequate notice will be provided so that they can be properly debated?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Such motions must be brought forward without notice, as they have been in the past, in response to hooliganism of which no notice whatsoever is given. That is the reason for the procedure that was adopted early last year. You, Mr. Speaker, voiced some sympathy with the view expressed in the House on Tuesday that the Procedure Committee should consider whether powers ought to be given to the Chairmen of Standing Committees to take action, rather than interrupting the proceedings of the House. I entirely sympathise with that view, and I hope that the Procedure Committee will consider that matter.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for an early debate on privilege and the proceedings of this House, particularly in the light of the exhibition by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on Tuesday? It would seem that we can either retain our existing privileges or live transmission of the proceedings of this House, but not both.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that the whole House will, or should, support my hon. Friend's view that the privileges of the House are not to be abused as he complains that they have been. It is my expectation still that the availability of television is more likely to expose irresponsibility and hooliganism and lead to public criticism of them than to do the reverse.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconsider the reply that he gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) about a debate on railways? In particular, may we have a debate on the future of the Channel tunnel? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that five workers on the British side and one on the French side have already been killed in the construction work? It is clear that, with the new financial arrangements that have just been made, there will be cost-cutting on a huge scale, which could mean greater danger for the workers involved. There could be a slippage of safety and health regulations as they relate to those workers. Is it not important that we should concern ourselves with the health and safety of workers building the tunnel, and should we not have an early debate on the subject?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that that subject would itself justify an early debate, given the timetable of the House in general, but the whole House will agree with the hon. Gentleman that the necessary expeditious completion of work on the Channel tunnel must at all times be accompanied by proper and continuing attention to the health and safety of the workers involved.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that this month we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill? Do the Government have any plans to mark the occasion? Would it not be an admirable idea to rename Parliament square "Churchill square" in his honour?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to remind the House of the importance of that anniversary and he has made a characteristically attractive suggestion, although I am not sure that it would command long-term universal assent.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware of the deep concern—indeed, revulsion—both in the House and outside it, at the continued slaughter——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Very well put.

Mr. Banks: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I am finding this rather difficult because of this bit actor on my left.

Mr. Faulds: I am merely congratulating my hon. Friend on his utterances.

Mr. Banks: Is the Leader of the House aware of the revulsion at the continued slaughter by the Japanese of minke whales in the Antarctic and will he arrange for an early debate on the subject? If he cannot do that, will he tell the Prime Minister of the deep concern in the House and elsewhere and ask her to ensure that the Prime Minister of Japan is left in no uncertain mind as to how we feel?

Will the Leader of the House also ensure that, when the Foreign Secretary goes to Hong Kong at the weekend, he will not enter a reservation on behalf of Hong Kong allowing 670 tonnes of elephant ivory to be put on the world market? These are important matters which the House ought to have a chance to debate.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is by no means the only hon. Member to have expressed continuing concern about both these matters, and I fully understand why. I cannot now, however, make any kind of undertaking on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary concerning the position that he will adopt on ivory when he visits Hong Kong in the days ahead. No doubt the matter can be discussed in the House at a later opportunity. I join the hon. Gentleman in regretting the decision of Japan to continue catching whales. He will know that we co-sponsored a resolution at the meeting in June last year calling on Japan to reconsider its original proposal to take 400 minke whales this season. We share the hon. Gentleman's regret that Japan decided to proceed, albeit with a lower catch.

Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for the House to discuss the appalling burden that the Labour group on Lancashire county council proposes to impose on the citizens of Lancashire so that Lancashire Members may point out to their colleagues that the predicted increases in spending since last September alone amount to 15·6 per cent., and that reserves have been reduced almost to zero?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Although I cannot promise to offer the opportunity of a debate in the House, I understand why my hon. Friend thinks it right to draw that serious matter to our attention.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on the poll tax to enable the Government to confirm that they propose to exempt young people aged between 18 and 20 who are at school or in further education? The Government could even do something popular for a change by exempting all students in higher and further education from the poll tax, now more widely known as the Tory tax.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The community charge will be the subject of debate next Thursday, as I have already announced. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise that matter, he may have the opportunity then.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sure you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that my right hon. and learned Friend is a splendid democrat—one of the best. He is well aware of the fact that there is deep unease among the public about the Government's proposal to allow mass immigration from Hong Kong. I ask him to postpone bringing the measure before the House. Will he join me in asking all members of the public who are concerned about the issue to write to their Member of Parliament so that the House will be promptly aware of public concern? My constituents——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must be about a debate next week, not about letters to us.

Mr. Marlow: I ask my right hon. and learned Friend if we can have a debate on that proposal next week.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The amount of mail that we receive from our constituents is the subject of continuous private debate in the House.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): May we have a statement from the Foreign Secretary, prior to any further involuntary repatriation of the Vietnamese boat people, on the legal advice that is available to them when they represent their cases before they are repatriated? May we also have a statement on the situation in Hong Kong, where the Government appear to be setting up concentration camps to avoid the vigilance of the media?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's perception of the matter is far adrift from the facts. The only way to deal with the large number of people who have come into Hong Kong from Vietnam in the past few years is by accommodating them in camps that are as comfortable as they can be in the circumstances. Further measures for handling those people will be considered at the third meeting of the international conference's steering committee when it resumes on 18 and 19 January. We are seeking an international agreement on the implementation of the principle that all non-refugees should return to Vietnam. There is some encouraging evidence, which is important, that the United States is beginning to show a greater understanding of our position.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): While my right hon. and learned Friend has been reacting sympathetically towards debates on domestic issues, will he not lose sight of the fact that a lot is happening in the rest of the world? The praiseworthy tendency to have more foreign affairs debates in good time ought to be continued enthusiastically in the coming months.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. and learned Friend has been a consistent advocate of that understandably attractive course. The fact that I have been able to implement it thus far does not necessarily mean that I shall be able to keep up the same tempo, but I shall bear his interest in mind.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Can we please have a debate on the situation of the Vietnamese boat people while they await whatever fate it may be? The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that people are being kept in conditions that are as comfortable as possible. I visited the camps two weeks ago, as I have done on other occasions, and I was shocked. They are not concentration camps in the sense that people are hungry or cold, but they are places where people are kept behind barbed wire, living on shelves four or five high, up to the ceiling, with open sewers. Surely at least the sewers should be closed off.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Since this is an Opposition day, I would ask the hon. and learned Gentleman not to go into detail, but to ask for a debate.

Mr. Janner: May we please have a debate on the details the camps in which people are being kept, as they are not comfortable, not clean, not pleasant and not human, and it is not right for us to have any part of them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. and learned Gentleman compactly and eloquently expresses precisely the case for trying to ensure that the number of people in the camps does not increase, and that is an ample justification for the Government's policy.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Pursuant to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that there is as much time as possible during next Thursday's debate for Back-Bench contributions from Lancashire so that my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell), my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and I may draw the scrutiny of the House to Lancashire county council's proposal to increase spending to a degree equivalent to a 31·4 per cent. increase on the rates?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If my hon. Friends who represent Lancashire constituencies get their case across next Thursday as well as they have this Thursday, they will have done very well.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): When the Government presented their proposals on community care and then combined them with others to produce the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, they failed to provide a braille version. Given the Government's repeated undertakings in the House on their commitment to the disabled, will the Leader of the House make a statement next week confirming that, in future, all Government publications will be produced simultaneously in braille, so that disabled people can gain some knowledge of legislation that affects their lives?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Of course the whole House sympathises with people who are afflicted in a way that requires them to use braille as a means of obtaining access to information. I cannot give the undertaking for which the hon. Lady asks in precisely the form that she requires, but I shall draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I share the concern of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about the renewed attacks on minke whales in the Antarctic by the Japanese Government, and thank the Leader of the House for his sympathetic answer to the hon. Gentleman. As he did not concede the necessity for an early debate, however, will he think about the matter once more? The Japanese Prime Minister is currently visiting London, will see our Prime Minister tomorrow and would, I am sure, be impressed—along with his nation—by the condemnation that the whole House would certainly express.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend will, I think, appreciate that I cannot arrange a debate before tomorrow's Japanese visit, but I can reaffirm what I said in answer to the earlier question: the view of Her Majesty's Government—widely supported, I am sure, on both sides of the House—is that the resumption of fishing for the minke whale is supremely to be regretted.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): The Leader of the House will be aware that the chairman of British Telecom has pronounced publicly that the sleazy telephone service that the Director General of Oftel has so patently failed to control is a "blight on the industry". Is it not time that the matter was brought back to the House, so that we can legislate to deal with it? That is what the chairman of British Telecom wants, what the Director General of Oftel wants and what respectable people in the industry want; why do the Government not want it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not wish to anticipate to any extent the reply that the hon. Gentleman is likely to receive to the Adjournment debate on the subject that he has been fortunate enough to secure for next week.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Although the introduction of credit controls would be impracticable and almost certainly counter-productive, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the widespread concern on both sides of the House about the highly irresponsible attitude of all the clearing banks, and many other financial

[Mr. Andrew MacKay]

institutions, that have solicited business—quite unnecessarily—from our constituents, often young people? We are anxious to arrange a debate so that we can make it clear to the banks that their attitude is discreditable and should cease forthwith.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that my hon. Friend is not alone in his view, which has been expressed in the House on other occasions. He may have an opportunity to express it more fully in the economic debates that we hope to have in the weeks ahead.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Before we discuss the next Social Security Bill, will the Leader of the House make time for us to discuss the effects of the regulation introduced on 10 December? In practical terms, that regulation means that any short-time worker earning £43 a week or more is no longer entitled to unemployment benefit. Is the Leader of the House aware that more than 9,000 textile and clothing workers are now on short time, and that their incomes have, at best, been effectively halved?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on the detail of the hon. Lady's question, but, as she implies, it may be possible for her to raise the matter in the debate on the forthcoming Social Security Bill.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My right hon. and learned Friend knows of the anxiety on both sides of the House about the scrutiny of European legislation. Will he be good enough to arrange for a debate to be held as soon as possible on the Procedure Committee's report on the subject? It would allay many concerns as we move towards the intergovernmental conference and all that goes with it.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know of my hon. Friend's continuing interest in the subject. It was the subject of an important report from the Procedure Committee. We shall want to have a debate upon it, in one form or another, before too long.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): To revert to the question of audibility, of which the right hon. and learned Gentleman seems to be aware, is it not clear that more and more hon. Members are finding it difficult to follow the proceedings? That is not primarily due to the noisy brigade, led by—oh, he has absented himself; he usually sits on my right. Is it not an odd coincidence that this should have arisen after the introduction of all the technical equipment for television transmissions? Is it not more important that hon. Members should be able to hear what is going on in the Chamber rather than that television companies should be allowed to exclude extraneous sounds picked up on these mikes, which is what has happened?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand, and the whole House understands, that we want to achieve both things.

Mr. Faulds: No, we do not. We want the cameras out.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman speaks for himself.

Mr. Faulds: I do.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: But he speaks on that matter only for himself at the moment. In so far as the House wishes to have now, or on a continuing basis in the future, television coverage of the House, we want it to be effective. We also want to have the effective transmission of sound to each other—

Mr. Faulds: That is more important.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: —as well as to the outside world. The Broadcasting Committee is well aware of both those matters. Our awareness will be fortified by the hon. Gentleman's continuing interest in the subject.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): My right hon. and learned Friend has placed on the Order Paper four motions that constitute a major erosion of Back-Bench rights. In particular, he has decided that ten-minute Bills —the only means available to Back Benchers through initiative rather than lottery—should become the subject of the lottery. He has also proposed to curtail certain Back-Bench activities on Friday mornings and the subjects that Back Benchers can raise on Friday mornings by means of private Members' motions. What consultations has my right hon. and learned Friend held with Back Benchers? Is he aware of the substantial feeling about these motions in all quarters of the House? Before they come formally before the House, will he please consult Back Benchers, who hold strong feelings about the issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Obviously, these motions have not appeared on the Order Paper without consideration and discussion. Some of them have been considered by the Procedure Committee. However, in deciding how best to handle these matters in future, I shall take account of my hon. Friend's points.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is the Leader of the House aware of the widespread concern about the decline of the British merchant fleet? It appears to most people that the Government are constantly fudging the issue. There is recent evidence that certain companies have had to use vessels that are unsuitable for the trade because of the paucity of British merchant ships. Is it not time that the Government took this matter on board and held a debate—if not next week, as soon as possible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The subject has been a matter of concern to successive Governments, not only in this country but in other countries, for a number of years, and has led to a series of investigations and reports. I shall take account of the fact that the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to it today and will bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Given that we should practise what we preach, will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for a short debate on the way in which paper is used and abused in the Chamber, both from the point of view of the litter that is left around at the end of the day, which must look terrible to television viewers, and because we are making no effort to use recycled paper? Most of our scribbling is done on the most expensive quality paper. Most civil servants' letters drag on to two sheets of paper, but the second page could easily by typed on the back of the first. Could we have a short debate on the subject, so as to bring it home to all of us?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises a matter which is of increasingly widespread interest among hon. Members. A number of hon. Members have raised the matter with me in different forms. I shall take account of my hon. Friend's enthusiasm.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): If the Leader of the House is to ask the Procedure Committee to look at the powers of Chairmen of Standing Committees, can we be assured that he will ask members of the Chairmen's Panel for their views, as I can assure him that at least one member is not happy about that power being granted to him in the Chair?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take note of the point raised by the hon. Gentleman. I doubt whether there is likely to be unanimity, as there are not many matters that command unanimity, but I shall certainly bring it to the attention of the Chairman of the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give deep and serious consideration to an early debate on the powers of Chairmen of Standing Committees, in view of events this week after my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) had made a personal statement on 19 December? "Erskine May" makes it quite clear on page 389 that,

"Where one Member makes an allegation against another Member, he is required to do so in writing to the Registrar, who refers the allegation to the Committee and informs the Member concerned."

My right hon. and learned Friend will realise that all the problems in the House and in Committee were the result of the failure to comply with "Erskine May". We now require an early opportunity to do something about it. If we cannot have a debate, can the matter be referred to the Procedure Committee as soon as possible?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the points raised by my hon. Friend and I have no doubt that they will be considered by the Procedure Committee when it considers the proposals that result from the conduct about which he understandably complains.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Now that there will be a further rapid rundown of the mining industry, will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate to enable us to discuss Government policy to enable mining communities to attract alternative employment for young miners?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take note of the point raised by the hon. Gentleman, but the Coal Industry Bill is currently before the House.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Following the overwhelming vote at the end of the debate on war crimes, can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House when he anticipates the publication of a Bill based on the Hetherington report?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government are currently considering the form that legislation might take, in the light of the views expressed in both Houses. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary hopes to make an announcement before too long.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): May I take the Leader of the House back to the question asked by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) about the need for mature consideration when we have been deluged with statistics? I make no complaint about that, but surely the House should have the opportunity before next Thursday's debate, having given mature consideration to the statistics published today, to question the Secretary of State in the Chamber so that the debate makes sense.

We were told during the passage of the poll tax Bill that there would be no diminution of information and opportunities available to the House to hold Ministers to account. We will have lost that if we lose the oral statement, which could easily be made on Monday after the weekend, when we have had a chance to look at the figures, and the ability to make use of it in the debate.

The fact that Birmingham's poll tax will be more than £400 is a direct result of the operation of the revenue support grant and the unified business rate. We need answers to questions before we can make a valid argument for our constituents in the short time available in next Thursday's debate. Can we please have that statement on Monday?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The point that the hon. Gentleman raises and the needs of local authorities, among other things, are intended to be met by the fact that we have an early debate, no more than a week, away of the matters that have been laid before the House today.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): May I return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe)? It is in the nature of politicians that they are often bursting to say something, but it is equally the nature of an assembly composed of 650 professional and semi-professional politicians that it is often difficult to find the opportunity to say what one has to say. The ten-minute Bill has been the opportunity where, by sheer force of will—I have twice queued all night—if one really wants to say something, one can make the effort, queue all night and get 10 minutes of prime time. It would be reprehensible if that traditional system were replaced by a balloted system, and I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to reconsider.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but of course there are opposing arguments to be put, which led to the motion being tabled.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): In view of the continuing concern about the substantial outside financial interests of Members of Parliament, would it be possible for the Leader of the House to arrange a debate in the near future? Does he agree that it is highly undesirable that a number of companies use and pay Members of Parliament for their commercial interests, but Members do not necessarily have to declare an interest, certainly not at Question Time? These are matters of public concern, about which there should be a debate as soon as possible.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The matter has been considered and debated a number of times in the context of hon. Members' interests generally, and the Register is available to deal with it. The matter raised by the hon. Gentleman can be considered further in due course.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): In view of the importance of next Thursday's debate, will my right hon. and learned Friend resist any temptation from the

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

organisers of Government business, or from any other source, to put a statement in front of the debate, particularly since, as I understand it, he is refusing the House the opportunity sought by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) to have a statement some time in the week before the debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, I certainly take account of my hon. Friend's point. It is a matter which I try to take into account more generally, but it is not always possible to do so. I shall certainly keep it in mind for that day.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on the seemingly shortened lead-in time between the time when legislation is enacted and when its provisions come into force? Specifically, I think that it is entirely unsatisfactory that there should be provisions in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 for changing the sliding scale for, and means-testing of, home improvements grants for thousands of people. It is still the case today that neither the Secretary of State for the Environment nor the Secretary of State for Wales has seen fit to lay before the House the regulations necessary for local authorities and people who have major problems of house disrepair to know where they stand. Will he please look into that and arrange for it to be done as soon as possible, so that people are certain what the Government will introduce?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In the context of all legislation coming before the House, legislation under consideration by it or by Committee, attention should be, and is, focused on the relationship between the commencement date of an Act and its provisions; it is entirely right that that should be so. I cannot answer the particular point that the hon. Gentleman has raised, but I shall draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will call the three hon. Members who have been rising, but this is an Opposition day. I ask hon. Members to keep their questions brief.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Will the Leader of the House provide time for a debate on the future funding of the national museums in the light of yesterday's report by the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, which recommended, most regrettably, compulsory admission charges? Such a debate would give the Government the opportunity to account to the House for their neglect and underfunding of national museums over the past 10 years and to explain why they are abandoning the long-standing tradition of free access to our national museums.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot offer any undertaking of such a debate, but no doubt the House will wish to consider the report of the Select Committee at an appropriate stage.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House reconsider the reply that he gave my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) regarding the need for a statement on the Government's new pay policy which has developed over the past few weeks? Is he aware that we should like to question the Chancellor of the Exchequer about who is in the pay policy, what is the hidden agenda, what is the pay norm and why company directors received 28 per cent. last year without the Government taking a blind bit of notice, yet when ambulance crews are offered 6·5 per cent. and then try to fight for more, the Government introduce a pay policy to stop them and other low-paid workers of a similar kind?

It is high time that the Government took the wraps off and told the nation the truth—that after 10 years their economic policy is in ruins, and that they have now resorted to putting a curb on free collective bargaining for low-paid workers, especially those ambulance workers who are fighting at this time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is in no sense an appropriate question on the business of the House. If the hon. Gentleman wants to make a speech, he should try to find the opportunity in the course of the two economic debates which I foreshadowed in my earlier answers.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) to make a full personal statement to the Commons to answer the single question that I have asked him in Committee on many occasions and on the Floor of the House of Commons? The question has been asked repeatedly in the Scottish media: by newspapers, by radio and by television interviewers. The question is whether, when he is no longer a Minister, he intends to return to the firm of Michael Forsyth Ltd. When that question is answered, the matter will be finished.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) has behaved in respect of these matters with complete propriety and he has done his best to answer as he should the allegations made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) under the cover of parliamentary privilege. If the matter is as important as the hon. Gentleman has said, he might take the opportunity of raising it outside that cover.

Points of Order

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise this point of order immediately following the point made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). This morning, in Standing Committee E, he attempted once again to raise the allegations that he made on 19 December and on Tuesday, and he was ruled out of order by the Chairman of the Committee.

I want to raise two points for your consideration, Mr. Speaker, on which you can, perhaps, make a ruling at a later date. First, if an hon. Member, having made an allegation in Committee, has had those allegations refuted by the hon. Member about whom the allegations have been made, is it in order for the hon. Member on subsequent occasions, in Committee or in the House, to make the same allegations that have been refuted? That is tantamount to declaring that the other hon. Member is a liar and that one does not believe what he has said.

My second point relates to page 389 of "Erskine May", which says:

"Where one Member makes an allegation against another Member"—

in talking about a Member's interests—

"he is required to do so in writing to the Registrar, who refers the allegation to the Committee and informs the Member concerned."

That has not been done in this case, so may we have your ruling on both points of principle?

Mr. Speaker: First of all, unhappily, it is not possible for me to comment in the House on what happens in Standing Committees. I hope that what the hon. Gentleman has said this afternoon is not true, in view of the solemn undertaking by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), which the whole House heard. It was the reason why the Leader of the House withdrew his motion on Tuesday, so I hope that what has been said is not the truth.

On the second point, there is a distinction between the private interests of Members of Parliament and ministerial interests, which come under different rules. I hope that we shall always deal with each other in this place in total fairness, and as men and women of honour across the Chamber. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman should persist in this conduct.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would you confirm that one of the problems with the present Register of Members' Interests is that it records what has happened and what is happening now, but not what may happen in the future? That is the nub of the complaint of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The wider issue is to ensure that people do not do things now as a Minister or as a Member of Parliament that might bring them further financial reward. Until that issue is resolved, there will continue to be disquiet in the House.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the whole House will agree that it would be marvellous if we could tell what would happen in future, but if the hon. Gentleman wants the rules to be changed, he must approach the Select Committee. This is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I attended Standing Committee E for its entire sitting on Tuesday morning and this morning. I also attended our sitting on Tuesday afternoon. From the Committee's discussions, it was my understanding that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), through the shadow Leader of the House, had given an undertaking that he would not return to these issues. He now says that he only gave an undertaking not to disrupt the Committee. On Tuesday morning, by his repetition of his allegations, despite the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes), the Chairman, to stop him doing so, he disrupted the Committee. May we have a clear ruling that the hon. Gentleman will not use the privilege of the House to indulge in McCarthyite smears of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, when my hon. Friend has given the clearest assurances that there is nothing in such smears?

Mr. Speaker: Again, I have to say, that I do not have direct knowledge of what goes on in Committee. However, in the light of what happened last Tuesday, I have looked at the Committee *Hansard*. I understand that the Minister concerned made a declaration and an open expression of what his interests were. I hope that the hon. Member for Workington and the whole House will accept that undertaking.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise, first to you for going on a bit yesterday in my question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and, secondly to the ambulance workers, for slightly delaying the start of today's debate. I would not have raised this point of order had it not been for the presence of the two Ministers involved in my complaint. I had not phoned their offices to say that I was going to raise it. I require a ruling——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That indicates that it is a matter for the Ministers rather than me.

Mr. Ewing: It concerns the Order Paper.

On 6 December, I tabled a question to the Secretary of State for Scotland about regulations covering the poll tax in Scotland, which the Secretary of State was responsible for laying before the House. On the morning of 7 December, when the Order Paper was published, the Secretary of State for Scotland immediately transferred my question to the junior Minister at the Department of Social Security, the hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard). That question was on the Order Paper from 6 December until 20 December, when it was published for written answer by the junior Minister at the Department of Social Security.

On 20 December, I received from the junior Minister in the Department of Social Security a holding reply stating that she would reply to me as soon as possible. A simple yes or no is all that I require——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that what the hon. Gentleman is saying is extremely important, but it is not a point of order for me in the Chamber.

Mr. Ewing: It is, because I wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland asking on what basis he had transferred my question. I have still not had an answer to that letter. I am asking you to rule that, when a Minister is responsible for legislation which is to come before the House, in no circumstances will that Minister be allowed to transfer

[Mr. Ewing]

questions relating to that legislation. If we are to allow Ministers to transfer questions on legislation for which they are responsible, hon. Members will not know to whom to put their questions.

The final point is that this is 11 January and my question has still not been answered, although it has been on the Order Paper since 6 December.

Mr. Speaker: It has never been the responsibility of the Chair to decide whether questions should be transferred. That is a matter for the Department. On the delay in answering the hon. Member's question, he mentioned that the Secretary of State and the Minister are here. I am sure that they will have heard what was said.

We must move on; we have a busy day ahead of us.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is it not a fact, though, that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is using every opportunity to play fast and loose with the rules of the House to smear other hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that what I have said about this matter will be taken to heart by the whole House. We must deal with each other according to our rules. If any hon. Member wishes to criticise another hon. Member, or the conduct of another hon. Member, that must be done by motion and not in any other way.

BILL PRESENTED

Social Security

Mr. Secretary Newton, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Wakeham, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Secretary Brooke, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Peter Lilley, Mr. Nicholas Scott and Mrs. Gillian Shephard, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to social security and to occupational and personal pension schemes; to establish and confer functions on a Pensions Ombudsman and a Registrar of Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes; to make provision for the payment of grants for the improvement of energy efficiency in certain dwellings; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 51.]

Opposition Day

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. In view of the number of hon. Members who wish to participate in the debate, I shall put a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock. I hope that those hon. Members who are fortunate enough to be called to speak before that time will bear that limit in mind.

4.25 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House recognises that ambulance staff provide an essential emergency service; notes that four-fifths of all ambulance crews are fully qualified to provide skilled attention to the casualties of accidents and to patients with critical medical conditions and that many of the others are recent recruits; records its appreciation of the commitment staff have shown to the ambulance service and the courage they have often displayed at the scene of accidents; is conscious of the overwhelming public support for a just pay award to ambulance staff and for a pay mechanism to avoid disruption of this emergency service in future years; expresses its dismay that the current industrial dispute has remained unresolved for four months; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to commence early negotiations to secure a settlement.

Those words record our recognition of the commitment and dedication of the ambulance service. They call for an urgent settlement of the dispute. There is not a breath of criticism in those words of the Secretary of State. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will well understand that that being the case, the motion does not express my innermost thoughts about his conduct in office.

I read in the newspapers—in some surprising newspapers these days—that the Secretary of State is thought to have got himself into a hole. I must advise my hon. Friends that our duty on this occasion is to throw down ropes to the right hon. and learned Gentleman and, heavy though the burden may be, haul him up until he is within reach of a settlement. If that disappoints my hon. Friends, I assure them that there will be plenty of occasions in the future when they can shove him back down the hole.

If we are to rescue the Secretary of State tonight, we need the co-operation of Conservative Members. Some of them have already tried bravely to get the Secretary of State to see the case for a settlement. Perhaps the most remarkable of those was the present Minister for the Environment and Countryside and sometime Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State when he was last at the Department of Health. The Minister for the Environment and Countryside wrote to the Secretary of State in December saying:

"I can see the logic of the ambulance staff claim."

I understand that since then he has recanted and has let it be known that he did not understand the full ramifications of the dispute. I have no doubt that the full ramifications—

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: —of the dispute have been pointed out to him with vigour and clarity. I am in no doubt about that because I read in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* on Tuesday that:

"when visited by the ambulance staff last week, he was very offensive and said we had made his life hell in Government".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I had not intended to intervene so early in the hon. Gentleman's speech, but to be fair to my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside—who is not in his place and who presumably was not warned that the hon. Gentleman would refer to him—it should be pointed out that the management has made a much improved offer since my hon. Friend wrote that letter, and that seems to represent a significant change in circumstances.

Mr. Cook: I shall return to the management's allegedly improved offer later in my speech. That improved offer would mean converting 6·5 per cent. over 12 months into 9 per cent. over 18 months. I doubt if even the offensive, aggressive and, I read in the article from which I quoted, "disgusting and disgraceful"
Minister for the Environment and Countryside would try to claim that there was a substantial difference between 6·5 per cent. over 12 months and 9 per cent. over 18 months. But I do not expect to see the Minister for the Environment and Countryside voting with us at the end of the debate.

Nor do we table this motion of studied moderation in the hope that Conserviative Members will vote with us. I have stood at the Dispatch Box often enough to know that if I were to move, "That this January is warmer than usual", that motion would be voted down because it was moved by the Opposition. Indeed, the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) would probably have intervened by now to disagree with me. Therefore, I do not expect Conservative Members to join us in the Lobby tonight, but I ask them to speak for their constituents in this debate and to express the public view.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): As the Secretary of State said that, since the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) wrote that letter, there has been an improved offer, does my hon. Friend agree that it would be a good idea if all the other hon. Members who feel the same were to write letters to the press, because that might get the whole thing settled?

Mr. Cook: Yes. I hope that Conservative Members will treat the debate as a debate about a service in crisis. That service is an emergency service. I repeat that it is an emergency service. The crisis in that service has left people lying in pain and distress for longer than any civilised society should tolerate. It has left people in a state of collapse without the skilled treatment that they need at the point when they are attended.

The Government's amendment expresses appreciation of the police and the Army. I have no doubt whatsoever that thousands of policemen and service men in the past four months have given of their best to provide the best cover that they can. But if we are serious in appreciating what they have done, we must listen to what they say to us about the cover that they can provide.

We must listen, for instance, to Mike Bennett, the chairman of the Metropolitan police branch of the Police Federation, who has stated:

"At the end of the day apart from being totally unqualified to run an efficient service, we are using vehicles which really any self-respecting prisoner would complain about, let alone a patient.

We have a standing instruction not to convey people with head injuries in police vehicles, and yet here we are doing it. The vehicles are not designed for this . . . they are designed for carrying goods not people . . . If the money is there why can't it go to solving the dispute?"

There are plenty of cases on record to show that the emergency service that has been brought in as a substitute for the ambulance service cannot cope with emergency calls. Last month I was contacted by Nigel Harris, who is known to Ministers because he appeared at one of their press conferences during the last general election. He is an orthopaedic surgeon. In December, he attended a window cleaner who had fallen three floors. In the course of the fall, the window cleaner had fractured his spine, tibia, ribs, pelvis and forearm. Understandably, the window cleaner was in a state of shock and in acute pain and distress. He was, of course, in fear for his own survival.

It was 50 minutes before a reply could be obtained from the 999 service and two hours and 10 minutes before an Army ambulance appeared at the scene of the accident. When the service men arrived—this is meant to show no disrespect or criticism of them—they did not know how to handle a patient with such multiple fractures and had to be advised by the orthopaedic surgeon how to lift the patient; yet a wrong decision on how to handle that patient could have resulted in paralysis for life.

There are many questions that we could ask the Secretary of State about what he has done in the past four months and about what he tried to say last weekend, but there is only one answer that matters today from the Secretary of State—that is, how he sees the dispute being resolved and how he sees the public getting back a full professional ambulance service.

I have read with care everything that the Secretary of State has said over the past fortnight, and I am bound to tell him that I cannot see in anything that he has said over the past two weeks any strategy for the dispute being settled other than by the unions surrendering their total claim. This is the most serious issue affecting patients in the Health Service at present. It is a dispute that has now been going on for four months. I have put it to the Secretary of State that the priority for him is to make it his job, in the interests of the patients, to ensure that the dispute is brought to an end.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): What level of increase would the hon. Gentleman agree for those less highly skilled and qualified ambulance men—the majority of ambulance men? What would he say to the 85 per cent. of Health Service employees who have accepted wage increases in the middle 6 per cent. range?

Mr. Cook: There are two responses to the hon. Gentleman's last point. First, 85 per cent. of Health Service staff did not settle at 6·5 per cent. Doctors and dentists settled at more than 7 per cent., administrative and clerical grades at more than 9 per cent. and professions allied to medicine at 7·7 per cent. There have been a whole score of settlements in the NHS above that which is being offered to the ambulance staff.

The average public sector pay settlement during the four months of the ambulance dispute has been 8·6 per cent. We cannot know what will settle the dispute until the Secretary of State or his representatives come to the

[Mr. Cook]

negotiating room and negotiations start. If that average public sector pay settlement of 8·6 per cent. was offered to the ambulance crews, the Secretary of State would find himself within a whisker of settling the dispute. I hope that the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) will not try to tell us that that settlement cannot be afforded because the Secretary of State cannot find the money. As the chairman of the Metropolitan police branch of the Police Federation pointed out, the Secretary of State has found the money to pay the police and the Army to do the job of the ambulance staff—it is a great deal of money.

The Association of London Authorities estimates that during the dispute the cost of police cover in London alone has been £3·5 million. There are 14 other areas outside London where the police have been active for the past two months. From figures that I obtained yesterday, I estimate that the total cost of police time in those areas has been £4·4 million. On Tuesday the Minister of State for the Armed Forces announced in a written answer that to 30 November the cost to the Army—for which it was billing the Department of Health—had been £850,000. By now that must represent a figure of £2·5 million. If we add together those three figures, the cost of paying the police and the Army to do a job that would be better done through paying ambulance staff to do it is £10·4 million.

There is a poignant resonance to that figure. The difference between the 6·5 per cent. offered by the Secretary of State and the 11·4 per cent. demanded by the ambulance staff is 5 per cent. Each 1 per cent. on the ambulance staff pay bill is £2 million. In short, it would cost £10 million to settle the claim in full.

The Secretary of State has said that, if he found that £10 million, wards would have to close. Why is it that the Government cannot find the money to settle the dispute but can find the same amount of money to prolong it? Why is it that paying ambulance staff to meet their claim would mean closing wards, but paying policeman the same amount to do the job of ambulance staff does not?

There is one reason why the dispute has been so prolonged. That is the happy knack of the Secretary of State for finding the phrase that inflames tempers whenever he intervenes. I did not think so at the time but in retrospect I think that his original strategy of going into hiding and leaving public comment to Duncan Nichol was a wise one, especially in the light of the amount of debris left behind by his recent interventions—the most spectacular of which was his letter to his constituent, Miss Mitchell.

I do not often congratulate the Secretary of State, but may I congratulate him on the candour with which he conducts his constituency correspondence. I am sure that it must be a perpetual delight to his political opponents in his constituency. There are two points at issue between the Secretary of State, Miss Mitchell and the ambulance staff. The first is whether the ambulance service is an emergency service. It has been repeatedly maintained during the past four months that the ambulance service is not an emergency service on a par with the other two.

It was not always thus. In 1978, the current Prime Minister sent a letter to two ambulance persons which made it clear that she then regarded the ambulance service as one of three emergency services. I have no doubt that in recent weeks the Secretary of State has taken aside the Prime Minister and, like the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, she has had the full ramifications of the dispute spelt out to her.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Gentleman spoke about the so-called Prime Minister's letter, of which I have seen a copy. It was written before the Clegg report, which ruled out some of the things of which the hon. Gentleman talked. It was written by Matthew Parris, who is now a sketch writer for *The Times*.

Hon. Members: Where is he?

Mr. Cook: I am disappointed to hear the cries of, "Where is he?" because I had thought that the hon. Member for Harlow had secured a mention by Mr. Parris in the press tomorrow. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct to say that the letter was signed by Mr. Matthew Parris—I presume the same man—written on notepaper headed in the name of the current Prime Minister and signed on behalf of the then Leader of the Opposition. It is quite explicit in the letter that the office of the then Leader of the Opposition accepted that the ambulance service was one of three emergency services.

In his letter to Miss Mitchell, the Secretary of State contests this claim, on the basis that emergency cases represent one in 10 of all patients carried. I have tried to find out where that figure comes from. It is not an easy figure to find. In a parliamentary question on 19 December, the Secretary of State was asked if he would estimate

"the average time spent by an ambulanceman on transporting *(a)* emergency cases and *(b)* non-emergency cases."

The Minister's answer to the question was:

"This information is not available".—[*Official Report*, 19 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. *165*.]

Where does that figure of one in 10 come from? It is available from some local ambulance services. I have the figures for London for the first nine months of last year—the period before the dispute—*[Interruption.]* I am not sure whether the cameras caught that incident. However, if my hon. Friends look the other way, we may be able to hear the answer in the fulness of time.

I have the figures for the first nine months of last year—before the dispute—for London. They show that, of calls to the London ambulance service in the first nine months of last year, the number of emergency cases was not one in 10 but one in four. I repeat the question: where does the figure of one in 10 come from? If that figure is to be the basis for comparison, can we have the figures for the other two emergency services?

The most comprehensive study of how police spend their time is a study of the Merseyside police. It showed that the police spent 9 per cent. of their time responding to crime incidents, 1 per cent. responding to traffic incidents and 2 per cent. responding to other incidents. That gives a total of 12 per cent. of their time spent responding to incidents, not all of which were emergencies. I would not for one moment suggest that the police are not an emergency service. It would defy common sense to suggest that. However, by the same token, it defies common sense to tell ambulance crews that they are not an emergency service.

On Monday night, the whole country—*[Interruption.]* It is clear from the events taking place at the back of the Chamber that the Secretary of State has brought his own emergency service with him.

On Monday night, the nation had the opportunity to witness the professional and competent response of the ambulance service to the emergency caused by the pile-up on the M25, when six crews, who have not been paid since October, responded to an emergency call to treat victims of acute injuries. Few hon. Members could look on those injuries, far less know how to begin to rescue the victims. Those crews know that they are an emergency service, and they are mystified and wounded that the Health Service is in the hands of a Secretary of State who tries to deny it.

There is another issue in contention which is perfectly expressed in the letter to Miss Mitchell: whether those ambulance crews are skilled personnel or professional drivers. I understand that the Secretary of State is sensitive on that point. He has accused COHSE of doing a scissors and paste job on his letter. Therefore, to avoid any doubt, I shall read the full paragraph. In context, the statement reads no better than it does out of context. Frankly, in the context of a letter to a 15-year-old girl about her father, it reads decidedly worse than when it is taken out of context.

The letter states:

"The vast majority"——

I ask the House to remember those words——

"of ambulance staff have had no extended paramedical training at all. They are professional drivers, a worthwhile job—but not an exceptional one."

It is clear beyond reasonable doubt from the context that the Secretary of State is describing the vast majority of qualified ambulance staff as professional drivers. Four out of five ambulance staff are fully qualified. That means that they are trained in life-saving skills, can treat head injuries and those with spinal injuries and open wounds. All the fully qualified ambulance staff are trained in resuscitation and the suction of blockages. All of them are capable of carrying out childbirths in emergencies. In their career many ambulance staff have carried out more than 50 births at the kerbside. They are all trained in handling and lifting people with serious fractures. Many of them put themselves at risk in providing those services to accident victims.

The ambulance personnel who responded to the pile-up on the M25 drove through the same thick fog that caused that pile-up and attended the victims in that thick fog. Those ambulance staff who attended some Conservative Members in the Grand hotel did so while one floor of it collapsed.

Increasingly, those ambulance staff are being assaulted by those they come to serve. I have here a letter sent by an ambulance man in Barnsley. It states:

"I have had my spectacles smashed on two occasions . . . I have been kicked and abused and, on one occasion, threatened with a shotgun . . . Who is more at risk these days than the ambulanceman from contracting A.I.D.S., or Hepatitis B . . . We don't stop to ask the injured and dying patient if he is suffering with these diseases—we just get on with doing what has to be done."

That is the job that the Secretary of State describes as "worthwhile" but "not exceptional". What professinal driver needs those skills, takes those risks and undergoes that stress?

The Secretary of State and his Department know about the stress on ambulance drivers. Seven years ago it received a report on stress among ambulance workers. It was a report in the context of a study on whether ambulance staff should be allowed to retire earlier than at 65 years of age. That study found that few made it to the retirement age of 65. Most took early retirement, frequently through ill health. Of the few who made it to 65, the average period of survival in retirement was 2·4 years. We are haggling over a pay award to a group of workers whose mortality rate is one quarter higher than the average for industrial workers.

In the negotiations, to quote the Secretary of State's letter to Miss Mitchell, we are told

"the union side has not budged an inch."

Since the dispute began, the staff side has dropped its demands for enhanced payments for overtime, standby payments to staff on call, an increment for long service and a reduction in working hours. The only two elements that remain are for a higher pay award this year—and staff are willing to compromise on the amount—and for a pay mechanism for future years—and staff are willing to compromise on the formula.

The Secretary of State persists in claiming that the staff side is claiming 11·4 per cent. He knows perfectly well that a long time ago the union side said that it was willing to negotiate that figure. One has only to read his correspondence. On 3 January he received a letter from Mr. Roger Poole which said:

"In your recent television and radio interviews you say we are unwilling to move from the 11·4 per cent. claim. We have stated both publicly and privately that we are willing to enter into serious negotiations with you and, if necessary, lower our sights."

For what it is worth, I shall tell the Secretary of State what, in my judgment, would secure a negotiated settlement. I believe that, if he were to split the difference between his position and that of the ambulance staff, he would obtain a settlement in the first hour. It would cost him £5 million—less than half the increase in his advertising budget for the current year for the Department of Health.

It is clear that the Secretary of State will not succeed in making the ambulance staff settle for 6·5 per cent. even if he tries to disguise it as 9 per cent. over 18 months. The ambulance staff are perfectly capable of spotting that that is 6 per cent. over 12 months. Any doubt about their capacity to spot it was resolved by the negotiations with the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel.

The House will remember that the Secretary of State discovered the association in late November as a new authentic force representing ambulance staff. He gave it negotiating rights that it had never had before, hoping that it might accept the offer that the other unions had rejected. Unfortunately for the Secretary of State, the members of the association threw out his offer by a majority of 2:1. Moreover, that was a majority of the rump of the members, after half the membership had resigned in disgust at the negotiations being held.

Since November 1989, I am sorry to say that I have been unable to trace any reference by the Secretary of State to the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel. Nor has he repeated any of the words of praise that he heaped upon it before the ballot took place.

The reason why the Secretary of State could not sell 9 per cent. to the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel over 18 months or 6 per cent. over 12 months to the other ambulance staff is that the ambulance staff can see that no one else is buying 6·5 per cent. Income Data Service provides a monthly analysis of recent pay settlements. Its analysis of the most recent 83 settlements between November 1989 and February 1990 shows that 72 were struck at over 7 per cent., 56 were struck at over 8 per cent. and 18 were struck at over 9 per cent.

[Mr. Cook]

One of those 18 is the pay award to ourselves. At the end of this month, hon. Members will receive a 10·6 per cent. increase in their salaries. We receive that increase because the same increase has already been granted to the principal grade in the Civil Service. I do not see any reason why hon. Members should be ashamed of seeking parity with the principal grade in the Civil Service. For that reason, I voted for the mechanism when the House debated it in 1987. What is more to the point, the Secretary of State for Health voted for that mechanism and so did the Minister of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

I believe that we voted the right way in 1987. It was correct for the House to seek a pay mechanism to settle its pay in future years. Having established that mechanism for themselves, I wonder how they dare table an amendment in the House describing such a pay mechanism for ambulance staff as highly inflationary.

Whenever I turn on the television or radio in the morning, the first thing that I hear is the Secretary of State telling me that he cannot intervene in the ambulance dispute because the management of the Health Service must resolve the issue. May I tell him the views of the management of the ambulance service, as far as they are known? A survey has been carried out, not by the Labour party, or any of the newspapers to which we are affiliated, but by the *Financial Times*. It found that, of 45 chief ambulance officers, 40 wanted a payment mechanism for settling pay within the ambulance service.

What is stopping them from striking a deal that 40 out of 45 ambulance officers want? The article gives the reason. It quotes Mr. Tom Crosby speaking with characteristic frankness. He says:

"it goes right against the grain of Government policy,"

There we have it from one of the most senior managers of the ambulance service in Britain. The reason why a pay mechanism formula is off limits is not because the management of the Health Service do not want it but because it goes against the grain of Government policy. Responsibility for that policy rests with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether, if he were in the Secretary of State's position, he would accept the pay mechanism originally proposed by the ambulance men and their full claim?

Mr. Cook: I am disappointed in the hon. Gentleman. I know that he attends our debates on health. I regret that I could not give way to him in the previous debate. I am sure that he was present during the emergency debate in November. That very same question was put to me by the Secretary of State, and I am sure that the Secretary of State has not forgotten it. My answer then, which has not changed, was that I accept that in the present circumstances the negotiations should include negotiation on a pay mechanism for the future. The hon. Gentleman should stop looking at the notes that are being passed to him to pass to the Secretary of State and listen to what I have to say. I have never said that we would go snap on the ambulance unions' demand for linkage to fifth-year firemen. Nor has the union side said that it would stick out for that and that alone, as the hon. Member for Harlow is aware. It has made it clear that it is willing to enter into meaningful negotiations. However, it has said that a pay mechanism must be part of the settlement.

After four months of the dispute, the public would regard it as perplexing if we were to settle last year's pay settlement only two months before the start of negotiations for next year's settlement, without any idea how that pay is to be determined.

I now turn to what has been the most dramatic feature of the dispute.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will my hon. Friend give way before he deals with that point?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way on this occasion, but I am conscious of Mr. Speaker's instruction and I am anxious to move to a close so that other hon. Members can speak, so this must be the last intervention.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Does he recall that in the late-night debate on 20 December, when the Secretary of State, despite the dispute, reneged on his responsibilities and did not appear, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, who is now here, admitted, in reply to my speech, that the funding of the ambulance service should not be demand-led, that it must have cash limits, and, therefore, the pay policy to which my hon. Friend has referred was automatically cutting into the other services? Is that not something with which nobody in the House or in the country can agree, because surely an ambulance service and an emergency service must be demand-led in order to keep the staff going?

Mr. Cook: Whether hon. Members agree with those statements that my hon. Friend correctly quoted from the Under-Secretary of State, it must be self-evident to hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber that those propositions are not of the making of Duncan Nichol; those limits are of the making of Ministers in charge of the Department, who must accept responsibility for the consequences.

My hon. Friend leads me on to my concluding point. I also recall that the Under-Secretary of State said in his speech that he was aware from his own constituency experience—I do not think that I misrepresent him—of the powerful public support for the ambulance service. That is the most dramatic feature of the dispute. The degree of public support in this dispute is without precedent both in its sheer scale and in the length of time for which it has been sustained.

Consistently, the ambulance staff have been beating the Secretary of State in the opinion polls by majorities of 8:1. On the "Newsnight" poll, when asked whether their sympathies lay mainly with the ambulance staff or with the Government, 65 per cent. of Conservative voters sided with the ambulance staff, leaving only 19 per cent. to side with the Government. That is the sort of margin that the Prime Minister will no doubt claim as a triumph if she is re-elected next year by the 1922 Committee. The Secretary of State can write off the Labour voters, he can ignore the centre voters, but I ask him at least to accept the verdict of his own supporters.

Nor are those just idle responses to pollsters who have caught the public in the right mood. The public out there are backing their vote in the opinion polls with their money. One reason why the Secretary of State will not starve the ambulance workers back to work is that the

public will not let him. I visited Waterloo ambulance station yesterday and I was told that the day before, Tuesday, it received the largest collection it had ever received in donations since the start of the dispute. The public continue to give their support as generously as the ambulance staff give their commitment.

There is, though, one measure available in this building to hon. Members by which they can measure the degree of public support. They can even feel that degree of public support. It is contained in the 100 boxes in the vaults of the Journal Office which contain the petition that my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party received from the ambulance staff and which I presented in the Chamber in the week before Christmas. That petition contains 4·5 million signatures, more than the combined majorities of all Conservative Members. It is the biggest petition ever presented to Parliament in our history.

Every schoolchild is taught that one of our liberties is the right to lobby and petition Parliament. The public have exercised that liberty on an historic scale in this case. No Parliament can persist in ignoring an expression of public opinion on that scale without bringing itself into disrepute. No Government in eastern Europe would ignore such an expression of the people's will.

I hope that the Secretary of State, who is about to take the Floor, will not treat us to another of his lectures that the public do not understand the issue; that the public are taken in by the propaganda and hairstyle of Roger Poole. The country is weary of the Secretary of State's homilies, of the idea that he knows better than all the rest of us and that he will take on all 4·5 million petitioners.

Democracy turns on a belief that, upon occasion, the public are right and the Government wrong. This is one of those occasions. The public are right to insist that the ambulance staff deserve a fair and just reward and that patients and public deserve a pay mechanism so that never again will this emergency service be exposed to disruption.

The vote tonight is not between the Government and the ambulance staff; it is a vote between the Government and the public that they are ignoring. I appeal to Conservative Members to join us in making this a debate that not even the Government can ignore.

5.5 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognises the important contribution made by the skilled and dedicated service of ambulance staff; regrets that some have seen fit to take action against patients in furtherance of a pay dispute; appreciates the work of the police and Army in maintaining an adequate emergency service; supports the Secretary of State for Health and the National Health Service Chief Executive on their handling of the dispute; and urges them not to give way to demands for a higher inflationary pay settlement or any formula or other arrangement that would automatically trigger future pay increases which could only have an adverse effect on patient services."

I suppose that I should be grateful to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) for what turns out to be a helpful rope that he is passing to me with the motion. Having listened to him, I am not altogether convinced that that was his principal motive. I think that he tabled the motion rapidly, or announced his intention of doing so rapidly, after a flurry of press reporting.

I have no recollection of any occasion when a debate on the Floor of the House of Commons has speeded up the resolution of an industrial dispute, and I do not think that that was the hon. Gentleman's prime motive either. Nevertheless, it gives me a valuable opportunity to explain to hon. Members exactly where I think we are now and, most importantly, where we shall be going in order to resolve the dispute which, obviously, no hon. Member wants to continue or ever wanted to start.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a difficulty. I have seen many difficulties in health policies during the years that I have been in the House of Commons. In my recollection, every Secretary of State for Health, in all three Governments that I have seen, has been a controversial figure in a controversial service. I take no objection to that. I do not think that I have set a new record yet, as I have clear recollections of Barbara Castle, but I may be on the way. I knew that when I took on the task.

I also believe that if a Secretary of State takes on the process of reforming the NHS, he is likely to make himself an even more controversial figure, because this is a giant service and in every giant organisation any process of change causes understandable uncertainties, sometimes fears, and even anger.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I shall not give way at this point.

I have always told those outside and those in the House, friends and opponents alike, to look at my actions and to realise that I base my actions, decisions, policies and statements on the NHS on a passionate, personal commitment to that service. It is my determination to make sure that during my period of office the NHS is made a better service for its staff and its patients.

A better NHS requires an even better ambulance service than we have at the moment, and that thought has not just occurred to me during the industrial dispute. Over the years, we have not paid enough attention to the ambulance service inside the NHS. A higher proportion of its staff need extended training that gives the life-saving, paramedical skills to those who are required to deliver the accident and emergency services, and those better-trained staff need to be spread more evenly throughout the country.

We also need to develop a service that concentrates increasingly on the tasks that a Health Service ambulance service is required to perform. Once I have dealt with the short-term points made by the hon. Member for Livingston, I shall touch on the future of the service and relate that to the key problem of the current dispute and how it is to be resolved.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Clarke: No, I shall not give way at this time.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Obviously, the Secretary of State does not wish to give way at this point.

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way, as I always do in this House—but at an appropriate stage, when I have dealt with the substance of the dispute.

I shall deal first with the points made by the hon. Member for Livingston concerning the handling of the dispute and the remarks that I was alleged to have made

[Mr. Clarke]

about ambulance men. There is a particular difficulty in respect of public sector disputes. In every industrial dispute—I have been engaged in several—its reporting in the press and by the other media, and debates in this House, are ultimately never the arena in which the dispute is resolved. The private sector has the advantage that day by day publicity and media events do not play a significant part in its disputes in the way that they do in protracted public sector disputes.

Throughout the ambulance dispute, I have sought to make three key points. I shall make them again in this debate, and enlarge upon them. They are the only points that I can helpfully make to the general public in the day-to-day exchanges. First, the claim is excessive and not justified by comparison with other Health Service staff who have not taken industrial action. Secondly, the management's offer is fair and generous, and it should be accepted. Thirdly, the industrial action organised and taken by the trade unions concerned is against patients and patient services, and it cannot be justified—as industrial action in any essential service cannot be justified. For four months, I have stuck to those points fairly doggedly, while also paying tribute to the caring nature of the work done by ambulance staff and the service itself.

It is inevitable that my message has not always proved popular. It is not possible to represent the case of the Health Service and of the employers against a group of people who are held in such high public respect as are ambulance staff, who can produce a popular message. It is not possible to produce stories day by day of the kind required by the newspapers and the other media in doing their job and make them popular. Those who present the ambulance service claim, who describe in moving terms its work, and who appeal to the public on behalf of what we all know to be an extremely popular group of people can always be appealing—not least in the run-up to Christmas —[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson *rose*——

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was given a very fair hearing, and the Secretary of State is equally entitled to a fair hearing. Constant barracking does little to maintain the reputation of this House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall remain on my feet for as long as is necessary to allow the Secretary of State to receive a fair hearing.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that, in the hearing of the House, the Secretary of State gave an assurance that he would give way at an appropriate point in his speech. The right hon. and learned Gentleman made three specific assertions, as he had every right to do, concerning the dispute. At that appropriate point, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) rose in her place in the hope that the Secretary of State would give way. Is it conducive to good order in this House if a right hon. or hon. Member, having indicated that he will give way at an appropriate moment, refuses to do so when it is reached? Is that not against the traditions of this House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair. I remind the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that other right hon. and hon. Members will have an opportunity to participate in the debate.

Mr. Clarke: I am attempting to dispose as quickly as possible of the aspect known as the handling of the dispute. I want then to move on to the reality of the dispute, the present position, and what the dispute is all about. I do not wish to give way at this point.

I believe that I have disposed of the handling of the dispute, save for that matter upon which the hon. Member for Livingston chose to dwell. He referred to the incident that was the only reason why he tabled the motion—my alleged insult to ambulance men in an extract clipped from a letter sent to one of my constituents. It is within the recollection of the whole House that that incident was the sole reason why the hon. Member for Livingston leapt in and decided to debate the ambulance dispute.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The motion on the Order Paper is in my name, as it is appropriate that it should be in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I took the decision to table a motion on the conduct of the ambulance dispute and expressed a desire to achieve a speedy and satisfactory solution to that dispute many days before Christmas.

It is the privilege of the Opposition not to disclose the precise terms of an Opposition Day debate much before the day itself. I ask the Secretary of State to withdraw completely everything that he just said.

Mr. Clarke: I shall answer that statesmanlike intervention, but I shall not withdraw my remarks. I am relying on the public utterances of the hon. Member for Livingston in making my comments. I believe that the motion was tabled without any consultation with the ambulance staff trade unions and that no one directly concerned with the dispute is of the opinion that the right hon. Gentleman's decision to table it has done anything to speed the resolution of the dispute. A debate on the Floor of the House certainly cannot do so. I continue to believe that that was not the Opposition's prime motive, but I shall move on.

Mr. Kinnock: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to delay the debate, but the Secretary of State made a direct allegation that was entirely misplaced. Naturally, I hoped—as I presume all right hon. and hon. Members did—that the dispute would have been resolved well before today. However, as my right hon. and hon. Friends know, the decision to use this day to debate the dispute if it had not been resolved was taken well before Christmas. I simply ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to withdraw his remarks, because he is unnecessarily diverting this House and public opinion.

Mr. Clarke: Of course I accept the right hon. Gentleman's word, although he also confirmed that the final decision to proceed today was taken—as it must have been—last week. I am relying on the public utterances of the hon. Member for Livingston.

I am glad that the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) is here, because the one further point concerning the handling or conduct of the dispute with which I wish to deal, before I come to the substance of my argument and give way to those hon. Members who have been rising, is the alleged insult that I am meant to have made against ambulance men—last week or at any other time. I make it clear that my views about the ambulance service and the men and women who work for it are identical to those of the general public. I do not know anybody who does not hold the ambulance service and its work in very high regard—[HON. MEMBERS: "You!"]

The arguments of those who support the ambulance men are sometimes based on the proposition that, if one has respect for the work that the ambulance service does —I expressed that respect repeatedly in my letter to my constituent—it follows that one should settle their pay claim at whatever level those who represent them persist in claiming in an industrial dispute—[HON. MEMBERS: "No!"] I am delighted to hear that denied.

It has been a feature of the dispute throughout that those conducting it on behalf of the ambulance men have sought to allege that their action has been provoked in some way, either by a member of the Government or by one of the Government's supporters. Before my letter to my constituent was used, in an amazingly edited form—four words of an extremely long letter—a campaign had been in progress for about a fortnight against my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who was being accused of making provocative remarks to ambulance men in her area. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, what a shame."] My hon. Friend's reputation did not allow that allegation to be sustained. Moreover, I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) is now being accused of having provoked the strike in Kent by her remarks on the "Kilroy!" programme yesterday. This is all ridiculous.

I repeat that I hold the work of the ambulance workers in very high regard. Of course we all applaud their emergency work and we admire the caring nature of the rest of their work. Nothing in my letter contradicts that. Having said that, it is a fact that is relevant in evaluating the ambulance men's claim that, as far as anyone can judge, about one in 10 of the patients whom they carry are accident and emergency patients. That does not just mean "999" patients. In the National Health Service, emergency patients include people who are seriously ill being moved straight to hospital on the advice of a doctor.

The flurry and excitement in the Box during the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston arose when officials went to look for a photostat of the page from the Clegg report from which the one-in-10 figure was extracted. I remind the House that the Clegg commission was set up by the previous Labour Government. Of course, the proportion varies from place to place. More up-to-date figures are available from York health authority. Each year an annual digest of ambulance figures appears, and one might have thought that the hon. Member for Livingston would have consulted it concerning the current figures. The digest shows that, over the country as a whole, about one in 10 patients carried are accident or emergency cases.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: All right. I shall give way on that point.

Mr. Morgan: The Secretary of State will appreciate that the pay of Members of Parliament is based on an automatic formula, although he would probably say that 80 per cent. of us are only professional debaters—[HON. MEMBERS: "We are."] Conservative Members can speak for themselves. The right hon. and learned Gentleman would probably say that for 80 per cent. of her time the Prime Minister is merely a professional ambulance chaser, yet her pay too is calculated on an automatic formula. What about giving the ambulance men an automatic formula to take them out of the political arena?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman may have an automatic formula, but I do not and nor does the Prime Minister.

Hon. Members: Yes, she does.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I do not think that the point made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has the slightest serious relevance to the debate, although, incidentally the pay rise that I am to receive this year is 4·7 per cent.

If the hon. Member for Cardiff, West is worried about the amount that he is to receive following the resolution of the House, he is welcome to give the surplus to a medical charity of his own naming.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way a few times but I would ask hon. Members to intervene on serious points, and as I make progress.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly not. There are some hon. Members to whom I will not give way at any stage during my speech.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Oh!

Mr. Clarke: When wounds have healed, perhaps, but not at the moment. I should hate to be responsible for the hon. Gentleman being named in the Chamber after what happened in Committee.

It is also extremely relevant that only just over one in 10 of the ambulance staff have full extended paramedical training that we have described. There is a clear distinction, as everyone in the service knows, between that training and the six weeks' training which the trained ambulance man undergoes and to which the hon. Member for Livingston referred.

Sir Cyril Smith (Rochdale): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: The whole point of my letter to my constituent—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way!"] I shall give way in a second, when I have finished this point.

The whole point of my letter to my constituent—and it is an extremely important point in the dispute and the discussions—is that, in my opinion, the proportion of people with extended paramedical training should be increased. More important, that view is shared by the

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management of the service and Duncan Nichol's offer has been based on a widening of the differential between the paramedics and the rest and on the aim of moving to a service in which we train many more people. It is a disgrace, for example, that there are only eight in London.

Sir Cyril Smith: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he is a welcome sight to ambulance men when on his feet if not when prone.

Sir Cyril Smith: Does the Secretary of State agree that paramedics have four skills over and above the skills of other trained ambulance personnel? The Secretary of State says that he is keen to ensure a more highly trained and better-qualified service. One of the four extra skills that the paramedics have is in the use of defibrillators. Can he explain why the necessary equipment is not provided by the state and is not part of the equipment of any standard ambulance? If he is so keen on a more highly qualified service, why does he not give the ambulance men the equipment and training, rather than merely words from the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Clarke: That is a valid point; I think that we should. I shall check the facts and write to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not think that he is correct in believing that such equipment is not available anywhere. Let us be clear what we are talking about. Extended training to the full standard takes two months' full-time study and includes training in infusion, intubation, defibrillation and the administration of drugs. It is certainly right that we need more people who can do those things and that we need fully equipped ambulances—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many of us on the Conservative Benches are having great difficulty hearing what the Secretary of State is saying, thanks to the hooligan babbling on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, and I wish that the House would give as fair a hearing to the Secretary of State as it gave to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Constant heckling does little to enhance our reputation.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly.

Mr. Cooke: I advise the Secretary of State that of the 325 defibrillators in service in the ambulance service in Scotland, not a single one has been provided from Health Service funds. Every single one has been provided by charity arrangements. Every single defibrillator that I have met on my way round the ambulance stations has been obtained by the staff of that station either through donations or by seeking sponsorship. If the Secretary of State is serious, I entirely agree that we should seize upon the common ground—expanding the number of paramedics in the Health Service. Will he tackle the scandal of the lack of funds provided for training? In London that has caused a six-year waiting list for people who want that training.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman says that he wishes to increase investment in the ambulance service, and the amount of training, which he knows is costly. He would set those back if he allows excessive pay claims to take the resources required for such improvements.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I must be allowed to move on. We have described, and I hope agreed, the basis on which we are considering the service. Surprisingly, there seems to be almost universal agreement on the desire to upgrade the status and career prospects of those in the service, and to improve its quality.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The Secretary of State did not know the position—ignorant twat.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman obviously reads the newspapers in the morning before he comes to the Chamber, and shouts about them in the afternoon. This morning, there was a description of a two-tier service of the kind that I, and the management, can see us moving towards. The description said that I have not been to Wiltshire——

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is "ignorant twat" a parliamentary expression?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is grossly discourteous, and it is the kind of expression that I hope not to have to hear in the Chamber again.

Mr. Clarke: I visited the Northumbria service about 12 months ago, when I opened a new ambulance station in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos). I talked to Laurie Caple, the chief ambulance officer there, about all that he has done to improve the Northumbria service which, I am sorry to say, is being disrupted at the moment by industrial action being taken by some, if not all, of the staff.

If the Opposition will stop shouting about it, I think that we have agreed to get a better ambulance service within the National Health Service.

Returning to the subject of pay, I think that everyone agrees with the point of my letter to my constituent—that part of an ambulance man's work requires paramedical training, that that ought to be increased, and that the paramedics' work is extraordinary compared with other workers within the Health Service. It was a feature of the management offer at the time that there should be a higher pay rise for paramedics compared to the rest of the staff. As my letter in the Nottingham *Evening Post* makes clear, the unions resisted the offer at the time, saying that it was divisive and elitist. At the Whitley council they demanded that the money that the management wanted to give for paramedical training should be distributed among all the men. If the House wishes to hear good news, as far as I can tell from public statements, that is the first point on which the trade unions have moved for many months. We appear to have accepted that special attention will be paid to the paramedics in the service.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): It seems remarkable that the Secretary of State has been so reluctant to give way. Presumably it is because he is

incapable of dealing with the points raised. Will the Secretary of State explain why only one ambulance person in the county of Staffordshire has received special paramedical training, and he had to undertake the training in his own time, not in work time?

Mr. Clarke: That should be changed, and that is what we are seeking to change. I agree with the hon. Lady that the future of the ambulance service lies in tackling those deficiences. It does not lie in the support of industrial action and excessive pay claims, which is what the hon. Member for Livingston has concentrated on. The future of the ambulance service is one thing that is worth fighting for during this industrial dispute. The House must want to understand the underlying policy of the management of the Health Service and of the Government during such a damaging dispute. I did not want this controversy. We should be devoting time to more important issues concerning the Health Service.

The judgments that I exercise are managerial and political. All right hon. and hon. Members must watch this damaging dispute and ask, what is its underlying cause? Why do the management not move to the extent that the hon. Member for Livingston advises them to do?

During the recess I wrote a much longer letter, in my own fair hand, and distributed it to the chairmen and managers of the Health Service. They are under great strain during this dispute. I sent copies of the letter to every hon. Member. It sets out the underlying problems in the dispute, and the underlying policy problems that would face management if we took the no doubt well-intentioned advice of some of my hon. Friends and of Opposition Members, who have commented in the media that we should move substantially from our position and buy off the industrial action.

One key underlying problem that is political as well as managerial, because it dominates the interests of patients, is that the money about which we are talking, and with which people make so free during debates, comes from the NHS budget. The arrangement whereby those budgets are cash-limited was introduced by the previous Labour Government, and I do not believe that anybody would seriously argue that we should return to completely open-ended financing. In the past two years we have allocated——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way when I have finished this point.

In the past two years we have allocated huge resources to the NHS. Those resources were increased last year and this year. An underlying dilemma of the Government's health care policy is to get the correct balance between fair rewards for staff, which is in the interests of all the staff concerned, and the expansion and improvement of services for patients. When one is in opposition one can exercise the privilege of running away from that dilemma, but one can never do that when in government. If we spend more on pay than is fair and justified we shall be able to spend less on patient services; that underlying truth should be apparent to all.

I do not think that the scale and the sensitivity of the Health Service budgets to pay rises is understood by many people. The Health Service is labour-intensive, and 70 per cent. of its costs are made up of pay. When other industries, or other organisations, have difficulties with pay claims——

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. When I finish this passage I shall give way to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

At Question Time today we heard that industry and other organisations are in trouble on the pay front. However, the difficulties in other organisations are dwarfed by the problems that excessive pay claims pose to a service that employs more than 1 million people. The total pay bill of the National Health Service is £13,000 million each year. When people talk about a little bit of movement on a pay claim, they must realise that 1 per cent. means £130 million. For groups in the Whitley council 1 per cent. would mean £40 million, and that is the entire budget of a major teaching hospital. The entire budget of a large district health authority is £140 million.

As right hon. and hon. Members know from health authority members and managers in their own constituencies, any movement in costs makes all the difference between growth and a stagnation or reduction in services.

We have exercises in the Department of Health, and we make various assumptions about possible Whitley pay movements next year, what other movements in costs there may be and their effect on our plans to develop services. I cannot tell hon. Members exactly what assumptions we made about Whitley council pay, as the managers will obviously not make that public before starting negotiations, but I can tell them that a very small shift in the reality during the year can make all the difference between growth in services nationally and stagnation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Hon. Members will know when I have finished this passage when I give way to the hon. Member for Leeds, West.

I can tell all hon. Members what is my political judgment in the dispute, and what is my political—with a small "p"—priority. Next year, in April 1991, we propose to reform the NHS. The coming winter will end the last year of an entirely unreformed service. The winter of next year will not be dominated by cancelled operations, closed wards and cuts in services, which would be caused if the current industrial action were successful. I will not contemplate the cancellation of operations and the turning away of patients.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has always been open with me: as he has frequently told me, he has supported the ambulance men's claim from the word go, and he continues to speak out evermore vigorously on their behalf. Although I respect his views, let me tell my hon. Friend that if we conceded the claim he would come to me next winter and tell me that his district general manager was complaining about underfunded pay rises, while cutting services and cancelling operations in my hon. Friend's constituency. I know from my hon. Friend's record that he will be equally vigorous and outspoken about that.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I am grateful to the Secretary of State. May I make it absolutely clear that I feel that he could have strengthened the Government's position in regard to fighting inflation if he had conceded

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a modest increase to the ambulance men several months ago, at the same time making it abundantly clear that, whatever industrial action was taken by other public employees, there would be no backing down by the Government? I should have thought that that would have commanded public support throughout the country, and I stand by what I have said.

Mr. Clarke: Let me say with the greatest respect to my hon. Friend that I have been—obviously—very closely involved in the dispute for the past four months. I can tell him categorically that there has never been a moment when a comparatively small movement on the employers' side would have produced the response from the unions that he believes it would have produced. The reason for our activity last weekend, and for the exchange of letters to which I have been trying to draw everyone's attention —because they are the basis on which Duncan Nichol is offering talks—is that we are seeking to move on, while trade unions that have not changed their position since last October are behaving as though small changes did not interest them at all.

Mr. Battle: I am sure that the Secretary of State will confirm that each year he has to go to the Chancellor of the Exchequer with his departmental bid. Is he now telling us that the bid put in by his Department last year for the ambulance workers was lower than the rate of inflation? If so—as he seems to be confirming—why can he not go back to the Chancellor, who has a £14 billion surplus, and obtain the money that the ambulance workers need?

Mr. Clarke: The public spending settlement for the current financial year—the year that we are discussing—which was the first that I negotiated, was based on a Whitley council staff assumption that I can now disclose: it was very close to the 6·5 per cent. at which the bulk of the service has settled. A total of 84 per cent. have settled for 6·5 or 6·8 per cent. Some have received more, because the management is not inflexible, and some of those groups—particularly medical secretaries, operating department assistants and junior clerical staff—had an extremely good claim. Had we not given them such awards, we should have found it difficult to recruit and retain staff whom we wanted.

The public expenditure assumptions that we made last year—the basis on which I settled with my right hon. Friend the present Chancellor of the Exchequer in deciding the amount that we are now spending—would have dealt with the amubulance men's case. The whole dispute is an accident—*[Laughter.]* It is an accident as far as the trade unions are concerned: they settled for 6·5 per cent. last summer. No one on either side of the Whitley council thought that the ambulance men would be difficult this year, and Roger Poole and his negotiating team actually settled for 6·5 per cent. last summer and recommended it to their members. They solemnly believed that the ambulance men would go along with the remainder of the staff, who had accepted the 6·5 per cent.

There are two reasons why that did not happen. First, the ambulance men were surprised with a ballot; secondly, when they went back for a second ballot, it coincided—an unhappy coincidence—with the railway dispute. Just as the ballot papers were in the men's hands, the railway management conceded an increase of 8·8 per cent.

The money that we are spending in the Health Service this year is entirely adequate to finance a fair and reasonable offer for the ambulance men, and £6 million more will be spent on their pay this year if the management's current fair and reasonable offer is accepted.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Many people may feel that accidents require emergency services!

Mr right hon. and learned Friend has the overwhelming support of all who believe that the NHS deserves the kind of priority that he has described; nevertheless, if a no-strike, no-industrial action agreement could be reached with the ambulance men, would it not be worth settling at around 8·6 per cent., which would cost about an extra £5 million or £6 million?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, I must return to the point that I made earlier, when I tried to touch briefly on the handling of the dispute. I do not say this only to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack); I could have said it to many people over the past three or four months.

It is absurd to suggest that industrial action can be discussed and negotiated on television, radio and the Floor of the House of Commons. We are all agreed that such matters should be pursued through talks. Let me answer my hon. Friend by saying candidly, first, that I do not believe that the trade unions involved would contemplate a no-strike agreement: their constitution certainly does not include no-strike clauses, as does the constitution of the Royal College of Nursing—which is the basis of its review body status.

I also do not believe that we can link the pay of any group in the NHS with automatic formulae or with people outside the service. That would undermine the ability of managers to obtain the crucial balance between patient services and pay: that must be within their control, not led by outside influences.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I have given way far more often than did the hon. Member for Livingston, and I do not propose to do so again.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: Well, I will do so once more.

Mr. Couchman: I am very grateful.

Is it not the case that, if a link with either inflation or another group of workers is yielded to all ambulance men, it will lead to a total breakdown of the Whitley machinery? However imperfect and cumbersome that machinery may be, such a breakdown would surely lead to chaos in this year's pay round.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend was the chairman of a district health authority. He is quite correct. We should destroy good industrial relations in the National Health Service if we allowed one Whitley council group to be automatically linked to another group outside the National Health Service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Clarke: I read in the newspapers that I am under pressure from my Back Benchers. I am under very strong pressure from my Back Benchers not to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The key question is what is to happen now. That is what the whole House wants to know. All disputes have to be resolved, and we need to know how this one is to be resolved.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for a Minister to say that he does not intend to allow an hon. Member to intervene as a result of pressure from his Back Benchers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Whether he intends to give way is entirely a matter for the hon. Member who has the Floor.

Mr. Clarke: What happens will depend on Roger Poole and his team. Those hon. Members who wish to know exactly where we stand should do what I have recommended those outside the House to do: to study the exchange of letters between Roger Poole, Duncan Nichol and myself about the basis on which talks could be resumed. There was confusion at the weekend in the reporting, but there has been no confusion about the position and there has been no change in it whatsoever. We have had repeated talks, in public and in private. The trade unions are not putting anything, either publicly or privately, to the Health Service management that has not been heard before, either at ACAS in October or at the last Whitley council meeting in December. A proposition has been put to Roger Poole which he must consider. He has one public line, which we all know. It is, "Come on, Ken, let's sit down, have talks and settle it." The talks with Duncan Nichol, which is where they should take place, cannot go on for ever if the same things are said every time a meeting is held, and then suddenly feelings are aroused because the talks have broken down once more.

The Health Service management has made it clear that the 9 per cent. claim that Roger Poole is pursuing is unacceptable and cannot be afforded by the NHS. The formula is not acceptable, either, for the same reasons as were advanced by Governments and managements throughout the entire time that I have been a Member of Parliament. That view is held strongly by the management, the district health authority chairmen and the chairman of the relevant Whitley council, David Rennie, whose letter appears in this morning's press.

When Mr. Poole says that he is prepared to come to the management and say something new, we all hope that talks will again resume. I am delighted that no hon. Member has tried to intervene on that point.

Ms. Ruddock *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Normally it would be a delight to hear the hon. Lady's intervention, but not at this moment.

Duncan Nichol wrote a letter in which he said that he would be prepared to have talks on the position that I have clearly set out. Understandably, journalists and Members of Parliament then asked me what he would say if the talks were resumed. I am accused of having occasionally lost my cool in the dispute, but I have not yet turned round and said to anybody, "That was a silly question to ask." In a recent early-morning radio programme I was persistently asked that question, after an invitation to talks had been issued. I could not say, "I shall now tell you publicly what Duncan Nichol wants to say if the talks are held." We have reaffirmed emphatically several times, as I did publicly at the weekend, that there is no question of the NHS making more money available. There is no question of any formula.

People try to give helpful advice on industrial relations. They ask, "Does that not mean that you are rather boxed in?" Of course it does not. Many of those who have commented throughout on the dispute have not followed any of the details. They have followed the froth—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Oh, yes. The management made a final offer last year to the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel and the TUC unions. Since then the management has said, and I support it, that there is no more money and that there is no formula. The final offer has been publicly available for weeks. The exchanges between Duncan Nichol and Roger Poole have also been available for weeks. I am sure that no hon. Member who takes part in the debate and criticises our offer will have read the final offer. So far, I have not been interviewed by anybody who has read it. I have never been faced by an opponent, such as the hon. Member for Livingston, who has betrayed any sign of having the first idea of exactly what we have offered, or of knowing where we are in the discussions.

Let me read paragraph 4 of the offer. It proposes that the management and staff sides should undertake

"a joint review of the 1986 salaried structure in the light of 3 years' experience, designed to take the ambulance service into the 1990s. There will be no preconditions as to scope or timing of the implementation of any agreements reached."

The paragraph goes on to refer to important matters, as I know from my discussions with the management, who are not ciphers. They have to determine the negotiations. They have strong views about the details of the negotiations, since they have to deliver the better ambulance service which I am requiring them to deliver as a matter of policy. The paragraph refers to flexible local arrangements and improved productivity, because productivity in the National Health Service, as in other services, can release the resources required for paramedical training and the additional pay that the staff require. All that is in the final offer and provides scope for further discussions.

Mr. Graham: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I will not—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way!"] No. One can be a little more expansive in answers to questions to hon. Members than one can be outside. I have gone further into the substance of the discussions here than it has been possible to do outside.

That is the offer in Duncan Nichol's latest letter concerning the discussions that should now take place, on a basis that is designed to take the ambulance service into the 1990s. It is no good stepping up industrial action in pursuit of 11·4 per cent., or 9 per cent., or any industrial formula.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I cannot resist listening to what the hon. Gentleman has to say. He has been waiting to say it for a long time.

Mr. Robinson: It is no use the Secretary of State talking about an ambulance service for the 1990s when we do not have one in 1990. So long as he stands behind Duncan Nichol and instructs him to say that no more money is available, there can be no settlement. There will therefore

[Mr. Robinson]

be further disruption in the months ahead. He is simply calling for unconditional surrender by one side. One cannot negotiate on that basis.

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was trying to be helpful. The Labour party could be helpful if it urged the resumption of talks on the basis that the management has set out for the unions. They should seriously consider the offer. All of us have other important work to do in the NHS. No one wants patient services to be disrupted for a moment longer.

I wish to concentrate on the NHS reforms. Duncan Nichol wishes to concentrate, with his management team, on providing better services for the NHS. The ambulance workers have better work to do. They should be doing what they do so well—caring for sick and injured people and providing a good, reliable service to the National Health Service. I urge them to resume those duties confident that sensible talks will take place between management and trade unions.

5.59 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): It is an extreme distortion and perversion of reality for the Secretary of State to juxtapose the pay of ambulance men and women with the equipment that should be available in the National Health Service. It is even more perverse when we consider that we have a £14 billion surplus. Some of that money could be used to increase the wages of ambulance men and women and to provide the National Health Service with the equipment that it needs.

I found it strange that the Secretary of State made so many references to publicity. The Government are not normally shy about spending taxpayers' money to maximise their own political publicity. They did it with water, gas, Telecom and electricity and the Secretary of State did just that in a futile way during the ambulance dispute, when he attempted to appeal directly to union members over the heads of their union representatives, asking them to abandon their demands for a decent pay increase and a linked pay formula. Unfortunately, among many other things, the Secretary of State failed to understand that the ambulance men and women decided to do what the Government suggested—they took the union back into the control of its members and demanded action against the pitiful pay award that the Government had offered.

This afternoon, in a speech lasting nearly 55 minutes, the Secretary of State said that there were three key points to the dispute. First, he said that the claim was excessive. He obviously believes that the pay of ambulance men and women is excessive. I should like to see him survive on the pay that they receive for the hours that they work and then tell the Chamber in all honesty that their pay is excessive. Secondly, he said that the management's offer was fair and justified. The offer was 6·5 per cent. During Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon the right hon. Lady told us that the rate of inflation was 7·6 per cent. Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to explain to the House, to the country and to the ambulance men and women how a pay award which is less than the rate of inflation, which represents a salary cut, is fair and generous. It certainly escapes me. His third point was that industrial action was against the patients. He is a fine one to talk, having called in the police and the Army, who are doing their best but are providing inadequate services to deal with our emergencies. Every time the inadequacy of training and equipment was pointed out to him, the Secretary of State said, "That is a very good point. There should be more." Saying that in the House of Commons does not pay ambulance men and women a decent wage and does not ensure that the National Health Service has the proper resources to do its job.

The Government's record in the ambulance dispute is dishonourable and arrogant. They have changed their attitude before and during the dispute. Much reference has been made to a letter that the Prime Minister wrote to an ambulance man in Somerset on 22 August 1978 when she was Leader of the Opposition. The Government make great play of what happened in the latter part of 1978 and the beginning of 1979. The Prime Minister said then that she accepted that ambulance services were part of the emergency services, as were the police and the fire brigade, but that they deserved a pay award that was linked in the same way as that of the police and fire services. I have a copy of the letter and I am happy to read it out if hon. Members do not believe that it exists, but I know that the Government are aware of the letter.

Earlier this week the Prime Minister claimed that her Government acted on sound convictions and principles. But they are the convictions and principles of distortion, fair weather ideas and changing their mind about their principles when it best suits them.

What is so unreasonable about ambulance workers asking to be linked to a pay review body? We have one, civil servants have one, and so do many other workers and services. The Secretary of State says that the ambulance service is not an emergency service. He admitted in his speech today that not all emergency calls come through the 999 service. He talked about referrals by GPs and patient admission. But he did not mention referrals between hospitals. In the south-west patients can be transported from Cornwall to Bristol by emergency ambulance to the nearest hospital able to treat them. Nor did he mention the fact that the ambulance service is used to take terminally ill patients to hospices to spend the last painful hours or days of their lives.

The Secretary of State went on to talk about the structure of the service. He tried to divide up the ambulance service, saying that some staff are only drivers and others are crew. He should examine the career structure of ambulance men and women. When they enter the service, they have to learn how to drive the ambulances and qualify to drive them at speed. They also have to acquire the qualifications that he mentioned, which enable them to carry out emergency treatment. He should also remember the physical problems and the great stress that ambulance workers suffer because of their job. They have to scrape people off the motorways. They have to take care of dying children. They have to make an effort to resuscitate people and save their lives. Those workers pay an enormous price in terms of their own health, and at times it is necessary for qualified workers to be transferred from the emergency services to the services that are not on the front line for health reasons or because of stress.

The Secretary of State mentioned his letter to health authority chairmen—it is a truly extraordinary letter—which I have read. He must make up his mind. Is he

interfering and directing the dispute? During his 55-minute speech he changed his mind several times about his role in it.

It is necessary to remind hon. Members—particularly the Secretary of State—of the contents of the letter, which is dated 3 January and which was circulated to hon. Members on that day. He said:

"No Secretary of State has ever settled the pay of any group of NHS workers".

In that case, why is he setting the absolute limit on the pot of money that is available to be negotiated? Is that not intervention? He continued:

"Moves of that kind would undermine the authority of NHS management".

The Government's action has shown that, unfortunately, the management of the National Health Service are Government puppets. They have done much to undermine the integrity of the management involved in the dispute.

Having said that he is not involved in decisions, the Secretary of State said:

"There are other very important policy reasons which make Duncan"—

he is referring to Duncan Nichol—

"and me, management and Government, quite determined to get the right result to the present dispute."

The Secretary of State told us this afternoon that he is not directly involved in the settlement of the claim, although he clearly has in mind the outcome to the dispute that he wishes to see. That is the hidden agenda.

What the Government are up to when they talk about the ambulance service of the 1990s is its privatisation. The Secretary of State announced two privatisations in November. My region in the south-west is undertaking a review of privatised services. It is linked to the concept of multicontract privatisation in the Health Service, which is how the process has had to evolve. It is necessary for the negotiation of multicontract privatisation that the ambulance service is split between what the Secretary of State euphemistically calls a taxi service, or professional drivers, and the emergency service.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is my hon. Friend aware that there are two private hospitals in the north-east, one of which is in my constituency and the other in Newcastle? Mr. Laurie Caple, who is the head of the Northumbria ambulance service in my area, has set aside a number of ambulances for people attending private hospitals. We in the north-east believe that that is a small step that will become a big step in the future.

Ms. Primarolo: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. The role of the Whitley council must be profoundly undermined now to pave the way for privatisation.

I am worried that we shall be faced with the grotesque scenes that are not uncommon in the United States, where private ambulance services rush to an accident and can be seen arguing about who got there first and who should therefore take the patient to hospital.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): My hon. Friend has been talking about privatisation. Does she accept that the dispute could have been solved with a tiny fraction of the money that the Government have thrown away on publicity, dodges and fees for the City in the £2 billion cost of privatisation?

Ms. Primarolo: I agree with my hon. Friend. The dispute could have been solved for a fraction of the £217 million that the Government will spend on the National Health Service reforms, which will mean its destruction. Rather than spend that money on so-called organisation, they should have spent it on services, pay and equipment. In his letter, the Secretary of State hints strongly that that is the future of the Health Service and of the ambulance service in particular. He says:

"The organisation of the ambulance service is likely to make much greater distinction in future between the emergency work and the routine patient transport services."

That is because privatisation and multicontracts will require the division of the service.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Does the hon. Lady agree that the word "privatisation" is an incorrect description of what may be a process involving competitive tendering for services, which has led to hundreds of millions of pounds worth of extra resources being available for patient care in the Health Service?

Ms. Primarolo: I should be delighted to debate the virtues of privatisation of the National Health Service, but that is not what we are discussing. So far, the contracts that have been negotiated, particularly for catering and laundry, show that three multinationals dominate—for profit and not out of public-mindedness—and that standards are dropping.

We should not be surprised that the true agenda is the privatisation of the ambulance service and that the pay claims of ambulance men and women have got in the way of that. The Secretary of State says in his letter:

"Pay negotiations for ambulance staff in future must allow for more . . . flexibility".

He later continues:

"It would be a disaster for the NHS if every year the Whitley Council pay round opened with a bench mark award to ambulance staff based on some generous formula of the kind that the police have."

It is obscene that the right hon. and learned Gentleman can say in a letter that he is not prepared to pay ambulance men and women the same as the police. What is wrong with being as generous to those men and women as he is to the police?

This is the gem of the letter. It says:

"We all know"—

the right hon. and learned Gentleman is referring to the people whom he identified—

"rather better than the general public, that hundreds of thousands of other NHS staff who work alongside ambulance men . . . do not regard ambulance men as any kind of 'special case.'"

All I can say is that if those thousands exist, which I doubt, they are not among the 80 per cent. of the public who are loudly telling the Secretary of State to pay up and shut up.

We are sick to death of the Government, particularly the Prime Minister, acting as some latter-day vampire, attending every disaster, saying how wonderful the emergency services are but then refusing to pay them a decent wage. Some people have considered carrying a card that says, "Should I be in an accident and be admitted to hospital, I do not wish to be visited by the Prime Minister."

Perhaps the Secretary of State can explain to us what convictions and principles are involved in saying to the ambulance men and women, "We must pay you less, and we must cut your pay now in preparation for privatisation". Perhaps the Secretary of State can explain why he has engaged in vicious union-bashing and why he advertised, with public money, to break the dispute.

[Ms. Primarolo]

Perhaps he can explain why he continues to use the inadequate services of the police and the Army and why he uses intimidation, such as suspension without pay. Can he explain, while he is doing all that, what happened to that famous offer to the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel—on which it was going to be balloted—which has disappeared into the mists of time, never to be mentioned again?

How much longer must his dispute be prolonged and at what cost to the public, and to ambulance men and women? It is about time that we said loudly and clearly that we have one of the best ambulance services in the world. If we intend to keep that service, we must pay the staff who work in it the money to which they are entitled. That is a decent principle and that is a decent conviction. I ask the Secretary of State to return to the negotiating table and to make those principles come to life.

6.20 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I hope that the House will exonerate me from attempting to reply to the many points made by the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), as I know that many hon. Members want to speak in the debate.

Personally, I regret that we are having this debate today. It will not help the necessary process of negotiation, which one hopes would lead to settlement, which is required urgently. Industrial disputes cannot be settled across the Floor of the House any more than in a television studio. They require the peace and seclusion of private discussion without the intrusion of cameras or of running commentaries, whether from below the Gangway or in a studio. However, the Opposition have decided to stage this debate, as is their right, so we must make the best of it. I hope that none of us will say anything that will make it harder to resolve this continuing and damaging dispute.

I scarcely need to remind the House that the dispute is now in its 18th week. It is doing no one any good and it is time that it was settled. The longer it goes on, the greater the hardship to the clients of the ambulance service because the deficiencies in the temporary arrangements will become increasingly apparent.

All credit to the Army and to the police for what they are doing, but they are not as well trained or as well equipped as the professional ambulance crews. The longer the dispute goes on, the greater will be the legacy of bitterness in the ambulance service after it is finally resolved. The longer it goes on, the deeper each side will dig itself in and the harder a settlement will become.

After 18 weeks, I find the prospect of prolonged trench warfare dismal. If we reject that prospect, as I suspect most hon. Members do—and certainly our constituents do—we have to accept that there must be compromise. I realise that "compromise" is a dirty word to some hon. Members, but I suggest to the House that a decent measure of compromise is the necessary lubricant of parliamentary democracy. It is certainly the lubricant of good industrial relations and, as the House knows, I had quite a bit of experience in years past in industrial relations. Rather than the macho aim of "winner takes all", we should follow the alternative aim of Lewis Caroll, who once wrote:

"Everybody has won, and all must have prizes."

In that spirit, I proposed some 10 days ago on "Newsnight" that an "honest broker" should be appointed to mediate privately between the two sides. I must explain that, although I gave an interview of about seven minutes in the studio, only one sentence finally appeared on television, such is the way of the cutters of programmes.

It was a jolly litle analogy—I was trying to lower the tension—in which I reminded viewers that Christmas was the season of pantomime and that it appeared to many of my constituents that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and Roger Poole were cast in the role of the ugly sisters while the public, the poor old Cinderella, was suffering as Cinderellas do in this world. It seemed that what was needed was a Prince Charming. I suggested that the Select Committee on Social Services or even the hon. Member for Eastleigh might fulfil that role. As a result, I found that my proposal was taken up by the trade union side.

I have had numerous discussions with the trade union side. I am satisfied that a settlement is conceptually possible if there is a genuine willingness on both sides to reach such a settlement. I shall resist the temptation to suggest to the House what the basis of such a settlement might be, because I shall adhere to my own rule of not attempting to negotiate across the Floor of the House.

The only advice that I offer the negotiators comes again from Lewis Carroll:

"Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves."

Let us not be distracted by the sounds!

There are some background features of the dispute that may not be wholly appreciated by all hon. Members, and certainly not by most of the public. First, this pay claim appertains to 1989 and not to 1990. It is the one unfulfilled claim in the public sector for last year. When settled, it will be backdated to April 1989, so fears about knock-on effects on other groups in the NHS are ill founded.

Secondly, the trade unions are now preparing themselves for the 1990 pay round, and there the most important single factor, as always, is the anticipated rate of inflation. I suggest to the House that what happens at Ford and, above all, what the mandarins in the Civil Service receive is far more likely to set the framework for public sector pay norms in 1990 than what may happen in the ambulance dispute, which is now old hat in terms of pay negotiations.

Thirdly, it is important for us all to recognise that the pay system in the NHS, with its 1 million staff, is not an elegant hierarchy of ascending reward for ascending qualifications, ascending work load or ascending responsibility, based on detailed job evaluation. On the contrary, it has grown up haphazardly over the years, and that haphazard character struck us on the Select Committee as a source of incoherence in the system.

The Select Committee produced a report last March on the Whitley system in the National Health Service. We said:

"In the course of this enquiry we have been struck by the complexity of the systems for negotiating and determining pay and conditions of service of NHS staff. There are, at present, three different mechanisms for the determination of pay in the NHS. Around 40 per cent. of staff have their pay and conditions of service negotiated in one of the functional Whitley Councils . . . Nurses, Midwives, Health Visitors, Professions Allied to Medicine and Doctors and Dentists are covered by Pay Review Bodies. The remainder (around one

per cent.) including general and senior managers, building operatives and maintenance staff, have their basic pay determined directly by the Secretary of State for Health."

For the 40 per cent. whose pay is determined by Whitley councils, there are six different functional Whitley councils in the NHS, of which the ambulance Whitley council is one. We also said:

"we received evidence indicating that the structure of the councils presents a number of obstacles to efficient and effective negotiation."

The most obvious criticism of the whole system was made by Lord McCarthy, when he pointed out that, despite the apparent existence of two sides in the negotiations, there are in fact three parties: management, staff and Government. The management and the Government representatives are combined in the management side, which consists of

"Employers who do not pay and paymasters who do not employ."

It is not surprising that the main criticism that is expressed by the staff side organisations is:

"although Management Side representatives are, in theory, free to negotiate with the staff sides of the Whitley Councils, in practice settlements can only be reached when there is prior approval from the Secretary of State or even the Treasury."

Roger Poole of NUPE gave us colourful evidence of what it was like to negotiate from the trade union side in a Whitley council. Time prevents me from quoting paragraph 40 of our report, but I commend it to the House.

This criticism is important in understanding the present dispute and why the trade unions wish to talk to my right hon. and learned Friend as well as with Mr. Duncan Nichol. I am convinced that the process could be assisted by the appointment of an honest broker if the two sides are reluctant to go straight into formal talks. In that context, it is worth remembering that no formal conciliation or arbitration system is presently available within the NHS. Last March, the Select Committee recommended that

"the Government take the initiative in getting discussions started between the Management and Staff sides with the purpose of developing a mutually agreed arbitration procedure. We suggest that arbitration should be a last resort and that a strict timetable should be established and adhered to for issues referred to arbitration."

Do we not now wish that the Government had adopted our recommendation? As they did not, I offer the House my Prince Charming approach, which is rather more appealing than the prospect of continuing trench warfare. As I remain available to act as a little lubricant upon the grinding wheels of negotiation, it would not be appropriate or me to cast a vote tonight. The Government may not see the need for any lubricant at the moment, but they will do so before the dispute is finally resolved. I am a patient man.

6.31 pm

Sir Cyril Smith (Rochdale): I have listened with great interest to the debate. The Secretary of State may have convinced himself, but, I am terribly sorry to say, he did not convince me. My colleagues and I will vote with the official Opposition this evening.

I agree with hon. Members who have said that it is a pity that this whole sorry business, to coin a phrase, has come to this. The Secretary of State did not want a debate and wishes that there were no debate, but matters have come to this for three reasons. First, the Government, Ministers or civil servants have been or are incapable of understanding the natural reaction of ordinary people. Secondly, with great respect to him, the Secretary of State may be an extremely able man in some respects, but he has demonstrated that he does not have a clue about how to conduct industrial relations. Thirdly, there is no doubt about whether the Secretary of State has much of a clue about how to conduct public relations.

When other people were getting 7 per cent., 7·5 per cent., 8·8 per cent., 9 per cent. and, in odd cases, more than 11 per cent., the Secretary of State said to the ambulance workers, "You must settle for 6·5 per cent. because that figure was talked about some months ago." Anybody who understands the reaction of ordinary people will understand that men will not accept 6·5 per cent. when other people are being offered greater increases. Anybody who thinks that they should accept 6·5 per cent. must be living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

A more realistic offer should have been made. That is how industrial relations are usually carried on—not with employers saying, "Tell us by how much you are prepared to reduce your claim before we meet you." Usually, both sides meet, and the employer says, "There is no way you will get 11 per cent." The unions then ask, "What will you offer us? 7 per cent.?" The employer then says, "I am not prepared to go to 7 per cent." Slowly but surely they reach a consensus. However, if one side says, "Unless you tell me by how much you are prepared to reduce your claim, I am not prepared to meet you to discuss it," there is no way in which progress will be made.

The Secretary of State has demonstrated that he does not have a clue about industrial relations. I find it difficult to understand to whom we should be speaking in this dispute. As the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) said, the Minister says, "It is nowt to do with me—it is up to some fellow called Nichol. He is doing the negotiations, not I." Within 24 hours he was on television saying, "If Nichol gives any more, he is not getting it from the Government." He went on to say, "He can give more, but it must come out of his existing budget. However, he must not give more, because it would create a precedent for national pay negotiations."

I am perplexed about whether I should criticise the absence of a statement by the Secretary of State or Mr. Nichol. We now have the Prime Minister sticking her oar in. She says, "We shall not give another penny." Who on earth is doing the negotiation? It is a clear demonstration that the Government are incapable of conducting good industrial relations and negotiations.

Over the weekend it appeared to be leaked that there was more money on the table or that more money was available if the parties could meet. On Monday, the Secretary of State said, "There is no more money. I never said that when I met the press reporters. They have got it wrong." That rings a bell. I am sure that I have heard that before in the past six months in relation to other matters. Ministers have secret meetings with reporters, and they then say, "I am speaking off the cuff, on a lobby basis." When their comments appear in the papers they say, "I never said that. I never meant to say that." That is a strange way to perform.

I was the managing director of a company—I am not now, thank God. It would not be tolerated in private industry if a managing director did the negotiating and the company chairman constantly made public statements about what the managing director was allowed to negotiate. The Government should not tolerate it, either.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman would be absolutely accurate in his description if his description were accurate, which it is not. If he had bothered to read the first edition of *The Sunday Correspondent,* he would have seen precisely what happened at the so-called meeting. It appears that a journalist from a newspaper—I shall not name it, to spare his blushes, but everyone knows the name—rolled up late, thought he had a good story, did not consult his colleagues, and splashed the story on the front page. All the other newspapers whose front-page stories were totally different rushed in like the Gadarene swine. That is how the confusion arose. It is not because of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State—convenient as it may be to blame him.

Sir Cyril Smith: I am not blaming the Secretary of State for the fact that that appeared in the paper. I am talking about what appeared in the paper. Such meetings take place. It is not the first time that we have heard of them. As soon as certain stories appear, Ministers say, "It was a private dinner. I did not say that." It is confusing. We do not know whether we are coming or going.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). I issued a press release this morning. One newspaper got it wrong and the other six followed.

On the serious point raised by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith), I have made repeated attempts to make clear the difference between the chairman and the managing director. The hon. Gentleman drew a good analogy. The managing director of the National Health Service, although we call him the chief executive, is Duncan Nichol. The negotiator of ambulance men's pay is Mr. David Rennie, the chairman of the Whitley council. He conducts negotiations on behalf of the management side, with the chief executive, Duncan Nichol, obviously being closely involved in the management side's view.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware, if he is conducting a serious discussion about good industrial relations, that one cannot have long negotiations and suddenly find the chairman intervening personally, pushing the managing director out of the way, saying that he intends to take over the negotiations and ordering everybody to pay more. That would create chaos. Some car companies used to do that in the 1970s and it destroyed the authority of their managements.

The problem is that some politicians such as the hon. Gentleman will not accept that and, because they can only question me, they insist on turning the whole thing into a political issue involving the Prime Minister and me, when the Prime Minister and I and my hon. Friends are supporting the management in its position because it is a sensible position for the National Health Service and its patients.

Sir Cyril Smith: I gather that the chairman is now somebody called Rennie and that a man named Nichol is the managing director. We are not sure where the Secretary of State fits into the jigsaw. The right hon. and learned Gentleman now appears to be saying, "I am merely making statements in support of what Messrs. Rennie and Nichol are saying." I did not get that impression from his remarks earlier in the debate. I thought that Messrs. Rennie and Nichol were being told by the Secretary of State how far they could go and that if they went further they would have to find the money from elsewhere. I understood the right hon. and learned Gentleman to be saying that that money was not available elsewhere because that would involve closing hospital beds, that a terrible situation would ensue and that the NHS would collapse—all for the sake of £5 million. I did not find that argument convincing.

Reference has been made to a union called APAP, the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel. In December 1988, the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and I led a deputation to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who was then the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. I am delighted to see her in her place. We appealed for the recognition of APAP. That appeal had been going on for three years. Prior to our visit, there had been various early-day motions on the subject.

We found the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South helpful and courteous and extremely knowledgeable about the subject under discussion. I had nothing but praise for her attitude during that discussion, and I wrote to the Prime Minister saying so, although I regret that it resulted in the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South having to resign.

The Government did not give the union recognition at a time when it would have been in a position to influence affairs. They waited until its members were in the midst of industrial action, and suddenly APAP was given recognition, presumably in the hope of that action splitting the unions. What did they expect the members of APAP to do in that situation? They were already out, working to rule. It was too late for recognition to be given. I mention that only to illustrate the Government's ineptitude in these matters. They recognised APAP in the middle of a dispute.

I have discussed the matter this week with representatives of APAP. I accept that APAP has lost some members, but nothing like 50 per cent. of its membership. It has also recruited some members during the dispute. I am assured that, come the end of the dispute, its membership will be about what it was at the beginning, although there will be some change in its constitution.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I first met deputations from APAP about six years ago. Ministers have always wanted to recognise APAP. I am delighted to hear that, as I should have expected, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) dealt with the hon. Gentleman's deputation sympathetically. We did not recognise APAP earlier because NUPE, COHSE and the others were bitterly opposed to it. Industrial action was threatened. The hon. Gentleman will recall the time when they used to ask the management to sack ambulance staff who went about wearing APAP pin stickers, so much did they disapprove of the trade union.

The position was reached when obviously we could not regard the objections of NUPE and COHSE, when the Whitley council at that stage could not even meet because they would not attend meetings. I trust that the present position has not been a setback to APAP. It is up to the ambulance men and women themselves to decide what union they should join, and whatever union they choose to join should take part in the negotiating process.

Sir Cyril Smith: The timing of the recognition was a bit of a goggle in terms of industrial relations. Indeed, I wrote to the successor to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South, acquainting him with the discussions that had

taken place in December 1988. He replied saying that he was aware of them and that he saw no reason to disagree with what the hon. Lady had said at the meeting that we had with her. I have given an example of the Government's attitude to industrial relations and how not to conduct them.

We come to public relations and the Secretary of State's classic comment that ambulance personnel are professional drivers. Such a comment could be made only by somebody who did not know much about the ambulance service. This letter was written to me on 5 January by a lady in Rossendale:

"During his career to date my husband has been both physically and verbally abused by patients and members of the public, particularly when attending incidents late at night and in the early hours of the morning. He has been pursued by a man brandishing a pick-axe handle in the middle of the night while he was endeavouring to treat and transport the man's badly beaten wife to hospital; he has narrowly escaped a knife attack while treating a stabbed youth; he has delivered babies, climbed into vehicles after road traffic accidents, regardless of his personal safety, to treat and comfort trapped occupants, he has picked up victims' severed limbs from the roadway, comforted bereaved relatives and much, much more. He is not unique—he is merely a member of today's highly dedicated and skilled ambulance service . . . My last remaining remnants of hope for a satisfactory conclusion to this unnecessary dispute were torn asunder by Mr. Clarke's recent description of ambulance personnel as 'professional drivers'."

That is typical of the feeling of a large number of people, and I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman regrets expressing his view. He should now publicly withdraw the comment and apologise for making it.

Everything in that letter about that ambulance driver from Rossendale is absolutely true. I can say that because my brother was a member of the ambulance service for 14 years until he was invalided out about two years ago. He, too, picked up limbs and dead bodies from the motorway, delivered babies and dealt with cases of cardiac arrest. My brother was not a paramedic. Indeed, when he joined the ambulance service, there were no paramedics in this country. Initially the Government resisted the idea of having paramedics, as they were known in the United States but not in Britain. In my view, the argument about paramedics is a bit of a red herring.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose*——

Sir Cyril Smith: I shall give way, but I hope that Mr. Speaker has taken note of the many interventions in my speech. I am flattered by them, but I am anxious not to delay the House for too long.

Mr. Greenway: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that such medical qualifications are acquired by experience or that, as people have suggested to me at my surgery, ambulance drivers need to go on courses to obtain qualifications? If the latter, does he agree with the Minister that many more such courses are required?

Sir Cyril Smith: It takes 12 full weeks to train a paramedic. In other words, he must be seconded on to a course for that time. Many of the qualifications that paramedics have are acquired on local, rather than national, courses. Many people believe that the £500 being offered to paramedics applies to those who are nationally trained. There are 200 ambulance men in Lancashire who have been trained in specialist skills, but they have not been nationally trained. As the offer stands, not a single member of the Lancashire ambulance service—I checked this yesterday—will qualify for the £500 for paramedics, although they have done a great deal of training.

The four skills that a paramedic must have relate to the administration of some drugs, administering drip lines to patients, administering special airways to patients and—I mentioned this point in my earlier intervention—the ability to use defibrillators. However, defibrillators are not provided as standard equipment on ambulances anywhere in this country. Indeed, every defibrillator that has been provided so far has been provided either as a result of charity or as a result of the efforts of the ambulance men themselves, who have run dances, whist drives and concerts and done all the other things that people do to raise money. It is not on for the Secretary of State to hide behind the paramedic qualification at this stage of the argument.

I now refer to the future and in a moment shall therefore be more conciliatory about paramedics. The first thing that the Secretary of State must do is to be prepared to increase the offer of 6·5 per cent.——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Sir Cyril Smith: The Minister is shaking his head. I know what he is saying—he is saying that the offer is 9 per cent., but it is for 9 per cent. over 18 months, which is 6·5 per cent. over 12 months. The Secretary of State must not assume that because people work in the ambulance service they are idiots. Ambulance staff can and have worked all this out. They know the offer perfectly well. Quite honestly, the amount of money involved is very small.

I want to make it absolutely clear that I am not in favour of an 11 per cent. increase. I am not even in favour of a 10 per cent. increase. However, I believe that somewhere between 6·5 per cent and 10 per cent. there is a figure that could be negotiated and reached.

I refer now to the second thing that the Secretary of State must do. If he did them both, he would settle the dispute quickly. He must establish some sort of pay review body for the ambulance service. I agree with him again that it must not be a pay body that relates ambulance staff pay to the pay or increases of other services. However, pay review bodies are already in existence in the National Health Service. Both nurses and doctors have had their own pay review bodies for over six years. Making such a pay review body available to the ambulance service, together with a small movement in the pay offer, would settle the dispute and I urge the Secretary of State to think again.

The Secretary of State referred to the joint review that has already been agreed, of the 1986 salary structure. I appeal to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. There is a need to review the ambulance service, its structure and everything about it. Many things about the future of the ambulance service need to be discussed. However, I have to tell the Secretary of State—and I am sorry to have to do this—that one should not discuss basic changes to the service in the middle of a wage dispute. One should sit down and discuss them rationally and logically at quiet moments in history when both sides are looking for solutions that they can evolve together. One should not try to do it when both sides are around the table thinking that they are at loggerheads and have a dispute to sort out.

I believe that the principle that the Secretary of State has evolved about the future of the ambulance service is

[Sir Cyril Smith]

right. What is wrong is his timing. He must settle the dispute and then get down to sorting out the future of the ambulance service and the other things that have been mentioned, such as pay for overtime and for unsocial hours, and incremental pay rises for long service. All those things should be discussed in the context of a new concept for the ambulance service for the 1990s. However, the Secretary of State must get this dispute out of the way before sitting down to bring effect to the joint review that I am glad has already been agreed. I urge the Secretary of State to get the dispute out of the way because once he has he will find that he has a lot of constructive support within the House and the ambulance service.

I hope that the Secretary of State will press the ambulance negotiating body to come back to the table and to have another go, and when he has, I hope that he will shut up and let those concerned get on with the service. I hope that he will stop making public statements because it appears that every time he opens his mouth he exacerbates the position.

I am sorry that attitudes appear to have hardened in the Government. I regret that and advise the Government that they will, too. They must give a little in pay and in future review promises because the alternative is to try to batter the ambulance personnel into submission. If they do the former, it will be to their credit. If they do the latter, it will be to their discredit and shame because this service is second to none in its loyalty, skill, dedication, professionalism and concern for others. To batter that group of people into submission would mean an embittered service for many years to come. It might finish the present dispute and the ambulance personnel might go back to work, but they would go back with such bitterness in their soul that I believe that it would be felt for years throughout the Health Service. More than that, it would be both unfair and unjust.

I appeal to the Government and to the Secretary of State to see some sense now and to urge the negotiating body to sit down again around the table and to reach a settlement that will bring honour to both sides, with neither side winning and with each side earning respect.

6.56 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): First, may I offer my thanks to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) for his kind personal remarks about me? I hope that he will forgive me if I do not join him in the Opposition Lobby tonight, because I intend to give full support to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. However, the hon. Gentleman knows—and, like the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), he has heard me say in the House—that I admire the ambulance service very greatly.

The ambulance men and women in my own area of Derbyshire offer an outstanding service. I think that they are worth about £200 per week. Therefore, I looked up exactly what is on offer to the ambulance men and women in my area. This is what I found. The qualified and the leading ambulance men and women in my area are to be offered over £11,000 per year. That is the pay scale, and there is possibly overtime on top of that. I think that the unqualified staff—or rather the non-qualified staff, which is a less pejorative way of describing them—are worth at least £150 per week, and that is exactly what is on offer in my area. In my area, leading ambulance staff are being offered £228 per week basic, qualified ambulance staff are being offered £211 per week basic and non-qualified ambulance staff are being offered £153 per week. That is a great deal more than many other people in my constituency are living on. I repeat that that is the basic rate, and there is overtime on top of that.

I think the ambulance personnel are worth it, and that is why I urge them, in the interests both of themselves and of my other constituents, to accept that offer. Apart from anything else, that is the pay scale until September this year, and there will presumably be more money after that. I hope that they will accept it. In London, it is more. I have not mentioned paramedics. Like Staffordshire, we have hardly any in Derbyshire. However, those are the pay rates and the pay scales that are on offer to my constituents. There is well over £200 per week for those with qualifications. I hope that they will accept it.

The ambulance men are a proud part of the National Health Service. That is why they have attracted so much public support. However, most National Health Service staff have settled in large numbers for an increase of around 6·5 per cent. The nurses have settled for 6·8 per cent. I attended a meeting of the Derby branch of the Royal College of Nursing last week and asked at the end why nobody had spoken up for the ambulance men. The nurses said, "Because we settled for 6·8 per cent. and we feel that on the whole it is a reasonable settlement."

That is the settlement for the nurses after three years of gaining qualifications and of full-time study, and after their refusal to go on strike. I have a feeling that, if that is good enough for my nurses, it should be good enough for my ambulance men as well.

The hon. Member for Livingston made the comparison with the global figures for the public sector, but I must respectfully remind him that that figure includes large numbers of people working for local councils. It is precisely because large pay increases have been given by local councils recently that people in my constituency, in the remainder of Derbyshire, in Birmingham and in other areas are complaining bitterly about the community charge that is being set by those councils. We can pay people what we like, as long as we are prepared to foot the bill through community charges and business rates. Many of my constituents are now counting the cost and wondering whether that was wise.

Nor is it appropriate to make the comparison with the doctors and nurses review bodies' reports that are due shortly. That is next year's pay rise, and the ambulance men can negotiate another rise next year. To suggest that the pay rise to doctors, after a minimum of five years' full-time study, should be the same as the pay rise for ambulance people is taking equality to preposterous lengths. That is not right or acceptable.

I hear the demands from all sides for arbitration, independent review bodies and long-term linking. Some of those arguments are misplaced. As my distinguished colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said, we have had a Whitley council system for years, and it has been revised half a dozen times. As the hon. Member for Rochdale pointed out, if I had my way I would have had APAP on it as well. To accept some of the proposals for arbitration would drive a coach and horses through the Whitley council system.

Some of us might like the end of national collective bargaining for pay rates in a business as diverse as the Health Service, which covers the entire country. However, that is not the way to do it just yet. I invite the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), who will reply on behalf of the Opposition, to say whether the Labour party is in favour of the Whitley council system or wants to abolish it. If it wants to abolish it, what does it want to put in its place? Would the Opposition support local pay bargaining? I would, because some of my local people would do better under it than under national pay bargaining, which is based so heavily in London. That should be a matter of record.

We should be aware that if the Government give in on this dispute, NUPE, among other unions, has plenty of other groups lined up with demands that are just as deserving. I am not challenging the ambulance service as being undeserving. The case for those other groups will be just as slickly presented by Mr. Roger Poole. If we are talking about presentation and trying to give people nicknames, perhaps his nickname should be "Angel Face". He presents things in an immaculate way and makes a good case for his members. However, it is all presentation.

If Roger Poole or any of the other senior ambulance people went on television in my area and said, "I am being offered £228 per week basic and I do not think it is enough," some of the support expressed for them in areas such as mine, where many people are earning less than that, would fall away.

I have not heard anyone say what has been offered. If Mr. Poole and some of the others, who earnestly and honestly and quite rightly are arguing for big pay rises, told people what they are earning, some of the support would diminish. Mr. Poole and the other leaders say that the ambulance men are a special case. Butter would not melt in their mouths. I would not trust them as far as I could throw them.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman, who I understand is sponsored by NUPE.

Mr. Corbyn: I am happy to inform the House that I am sponsored by NUPE. I am proud of that, as it is an excellent union. While the hon. Lady is delivering her oration attacking the ambulance staff and their apparent greed, would she tell us what the comparative pay rates are for the police and fire services, which do equally valuable emergency work at the scene of accidents and save lives?

Mrs. Currie: The NHS, for which I once had a small amount of responsibility, is a major and important public service. The way that the comparisons are done is within the Health Service. Each group has its Whitley council. It is a fiendishly complicated, cumbersome and old-fashioned negotiating system. I would be delighted if it were banished and my local hospitals and health authorities were given the power to negotiate the pay deals that seem appropriate. Ministers have been pressed many times by hon. Members on both sides to make the link with the police and fire service. It is not appropriate or necessary and, in my view, it should not be done.

I am happy to call in aid a previous Labour party member. In 1979 I was a member of the Birmingham area health authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) will recall that the west midlands had a major dispute in the ambulance service. There was also a major dispute in London at the same time. I looked up the discussions in the House at that time. On 22 January 1979, in response to a private notice question by the then Member for Reading, East, Sir Gerard Vaughan—a Conservative party spokesman—the then Secretary of State for Social Services—now the noble Lord Ennals—was obliged to put down his point of view. Just as now, there was "widespread disruption" and "no emergency cover" available in various places. The London service was the "most serious example" and it had "refused to cover emergencies". He announced that he had

"authorised the use of Army ambulances".

My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull will remember that the west midlands was also an area where the ambulance crews had refused to provide an emergency service. The then Secretary of State said that that service would be

"provided by the police and voluntary organisations."

He said:

"The ambulance men have put their case . . . It will not be strengthened by some of them adopting what will be seen as a callous attitude to the lives and health of their fellow men . . . Enough is enough. Only the innocent will suffer if Health Service workers allow their anger to run out of control. They have made their point . . . There can be no point now in taking it out on the injured, the sick, the old and others who depend on the health service."

Amen to that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I am conscious of the 10-minute rule on speeches.

It is almost 10 years to the day that the then Secretary of State said:

"I must make it clear to the House that this Government cannot and will not abdicate their responsibility and let wages rip. That is the road to disaster. The only results would be a return to mounting inflation, . . . cuts in public services, high taxes . . . and more on the dole. Those who will suffer most from all this will be the low paid and those on fixed incomes, such as pensioners. This is the law of the pay jungle."—[*Official Report*, 22 January 1979; Vol. 961, c. 28-9.]

I rest my case. I support the Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House of Mr. Speaker's announcement at the beginning of the debate that there is a 10 minute limit on speeches.

7.9 pm

Mr Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): For 18 weeks there has been one of the most serious national industrial disputes that this country has ever witnessed. Despite 18 weeks of lies, abuse and attacks, the resolve of the ambulance workers—those brave and heroic men and women—has not been broken by the Government. Their attempts to force those workers to take a pay cut, both as a direct attack on their own living standards and, as has been made clear tonight, as a preface to the attack on other public workers, should be resisted by all working people.

The only point of contact between myself and Conservative Members—notably Department of Health Ministers—is our mutual recognition that a victory for the ambulance workers would lift the hopes, aspirations and spirits of millions of workers in this country. It would show that the Government are not invincible. In their own terms and in the wider context, the ambulance workers

[Mr Dave Nellist]

deserve our support. In 1986 they were supposed to get parity with the fire fighters, but there is a £60 gap between their pay.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) could not give the figures, so I shall give them for her. An ambulance worker starts on £147 a week and after 10 years, when fully qualified, gets £202. A fire fighter gets £210 to £262 and a police constable, £194 to £302. I do not have time to give all the examples, but ambulance workers are equally deserving as emergency service workers. They are not the third among equals, but deserve parity in treatment with fire fighters and police.

No two disputes are the same. One factor which marks out this dispute is the willingness of ambulance workers to take everything that is thrown at them and not, until today, take strike action. It was only today in West Sussex that their frustration finally boiled over and the first strike action of the ambulance service took place. In the rest of the country there is not a strike—that is a lie which we must nail—but a lockout.

The substitution of insufficiently trained police and Army officers with inadequately equipped police vans and Army jeeps for ambulance workers and ambulances has cost lives. We raised that issue in previous debates on the ambulance service. I did not ask the Minister to take my word for it then and I do not do so now. He should listen to David Williams from St. Thomas's hospital across the water, who stated in *The Independent* on 5 January that there had been a 30 per cent. increase in the number of deaths in St. Thomas's hospital alone since the substitution of the police and Army for the professional ambulance crews. Over a period of eight weeks, 36 people —eight more than in the same period last year—died in his casualty department. The Government are costing lives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) raised a number of points which he and I have tried to raise in previous debates. Time prevents me from stressing them this evening. However, one or two need a quick mention. The Secretary of State repeated tonight that, if more money is to be given to the ambulance workers, it must come out of patient services, training and equipment. What a despicable trade off it is to say to the working people in this country, "Lengthen your hospital waiting lists, wait a few minutes more for a life-saving ambulance so that we can pay a decent wage to ambulance workers".

It did not worry the Secretary of State, Ministers and Tory Members when, in July 1987, I forced a Division on the pay-linking system for Members of Parliament pay. The Secretary of State went through the Aye Lobby and voted for an £80-a-week increase for 1988, a £30-a-week increase for 1989 and a £50-a-week increase from the end of this month for himself and other Members. A £160-a-week increase in 24 months is more than the gross pay of someone who works for a week in the ambulance service. That is hypocrisy—the same sort of hypocrisy that sees the Prime Minister chasing ambulances to Clapham and King's Cross, praising all the emergency services, then singling out the ambulance workers for attack as the Government have done this past 18 weeks.

If time permitted, I could state what is happening in these non-professional services. I have here a police ambulance report form completed just before Christmas. Under "injuries suffered", it states: "high temperature". For the treatment given it gives the van's call sign. What good is that to a hospital? Compare that to the detailed and proper report forms that professionally trained crews take to hospitals, then understand why people are dying in casualty departments: it is because they are not receiving the treatment they so richly deserve.

We have witnessed the contemptible moral blackmail of insurance cover being withdrawn, first, unsuccessfully, in London, then and tragically successfully—in the west midlands. That forced the crews to decide between going out and saving lives with no insurance cover or following the diktat of regional health officials. That is industrial sabotage. Such escalation of the dispute is entirely at the behest of the Secretary of State, no matter how he tries to wriggle out of it tonight.

It is not often that I can come to the Chamber and claim without fear of contradiction to be speaking on behalf of 90 per cent. of the British people, but I can do so tonight because 90 per cent. of the population want the dispute solved, with the ambulance workers getting a decent rate of pay and a living wage. Therefore, there is no need for me to spend my last three or four minutes stressing that. Instead, I shall state how the dispute should be won.

During the past 18 weeks, I have spent much time at rallies and individual and group meetings, discussing the dispute with ambulance workers. Time and time again I have told them that I, as a Socialist—and I suspect all Labour Members—would never ask ambulance workers to go out on indefinite strike. We, as ordinary working people, rely on the emergency service and the essential service that they provide. It is not their job alone to defend their wages and conditions or the services which they provide, but the job of all working people. After 18 weeks, it is about time to move towards that.

On Saturday, there will be a rally in Trafalgar square, London, of tens of thousands of people. On 30 January, there will be a national day of action. I appeal to working people throughout the country to support that, because it is to be welcomed. At noon on 30 January, there is to be a 15-minute action of national solidarity. Millions of people will take the opportunity to poke two fingers up at the Government's treatment of ambulance workers and the NHS in general.

If we are to have successful collective rallies, demonstrations and meetings, we shall need more than 15 minutes: we shall need a whole day. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston brought the largest petition—4·5 million signatures—to the House that we have seen this century. Staggering amounts of money have been collected on the streets—thousands of pounds a day are collected in Coventry to keep families going. Opinion polls and the public generally support the ambulance workers. However, despite those facts, I cannot imagine that, if we all come on to the pavements for 15 minutes on 30 January and think about the three essential services, particularly the ambulance service, we shall, through mass telepathy, get a message through to the Prime Minister. She just does not listen; she disregards people's opinions.

A few days ago an article in *The Independent* suggested that the main failing of the dispute was that the ambulance workers had no economic power. On 30 January, those with economic power must use it. The Confederation of British Industry, the chambers of commerce and the Institute of Directors should be forced to phone up No. 10 to say that their profits and stocks and shares are being hit by the dispute, and that therefore the Government must

settle and sort out the Secretary of State. That is all that Tory Members understand. When the dispute affects their money, their stocks and shares, we shall see real pressure placed on the Government.

But even if I were wrong and, for only 15 minutes on Tuesday 30 January, every bus and train in the country stopped, every shop closed, every school, pit, factory and office stood still and every dock was idle, that would demonstrate that, without the ordinary people of this country, society in Britain does not tick. Would that not give the same feeling, albeit encapsulated in a short space of time, as that expressed in Leipzig, Prague, Bucharest and Budapest—that, when working people are organised, they have the power to shift Governments? If Governments can be shifted over there, one or two people might get the idea that we can shift them over here, and that would not be such a bad thing.

I ask all workers to make official at least that demonstration of 15 mintues on 30 January. As the council workers of NALGO did yesterday in Coventry, I also ask other workers to extend the action they have planned for half a day. Those who support the Secretary of State do not include the whole Cabinet, his right hon. and hon. Friends or all the press. The Government's isolation on this issue is almost total. If we can tip that support over the edge on 30 January, the ambulance workers' justifiable claim can be met. The Secretary of State is finally reaching the stage when his position is "unassailable"; perhaps, after 30 January we can help him on his way.

7.18 pm

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): The British people would be well advised to take careful note of the words of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and the manner in which he delivered his remarks this evening.

Mr. Cryer: First rate.

Mr. Kirkhope: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are also being described as first rate and excellent by other Opposition Members. Pity help the people of this country if the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues ever again have power over them.

I speak in this debate because I have, and always have had, a genuine interest in ambulances. I was a member of the Northumbria ambulance service committee for several years during the important time when it was being restructured under the able leadership of the chief officer, Laurie Caple, to whom my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred. I do not apologise for referring to that service. It has shown the way to other services and shows how sterile and out of date are the remarks of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). It also shows how out of touch with reality are the views and attitudes of the Opposition on the ambulance services and their development.

We have heard about training. When I was on the committee to which I referred, one of the things that I most enjoyed was attending the occasions when members of staff received certificates for higher qualifications which they had achieved through hard work and effort. They were deeply proud of their achievements and those of us who were involved in the service were equally proud. They received pieces of paper bearing their accreditations. However, they could not and still cannot receive the other form of paper—financial reward for their work and the qualifications that they achieved. We all know the reason for that. It is the inflexibility and intransigence of the trade unions who claim to serve some of the staff. I deeply regret that.

Several hon. Members referred to the Whitley council. It is a form of straitjacket, as we all know. However, both management and employees willingly entered into that straitjacket. The terms and conditions were clear for all to see. When the council brought benefits to the unions, the unions were happy to accept them. It is no wonder that when the unions turned down the settlement negotiated by their leaders through the Whitley council and tried to obtain a better reward outside it, they were referred to the terms and conditions and told that it was not possible to go outside the council. Why should they be allowed to take the good and leave the bad? Their leaders found the offer and the proposals acceptable, They were good, not bad. The offer was in line with other National Health Service settlements for people who also work with and give emergency assistance to those who are ill. They include the nurses, who accepted a 6·8 per cent. pay rise.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I intervene only because of what the hon. Gentleman said about Northumbria. Will he explain to the House whether the intransigence of members of the ambulance service in Northumbria has brought about the problems there? If so why is the position so different in Durham, Cleveland and Cumbria, where a 999 service continues to be provided? I can tell him the difference. We have a manager in Northumbria who is irresponsible and does not care about the future of the service. He has brought the service to a halt.

Mr. Kirkhope: It is sad that the hon. Lady is completely out of touch with reality and does not appreciate that many other services look to the example set by Northumbria in its plans to produce a better service for patients, better control and better morale among staff. Does she not realise that when the present chief officer to whom she was so unkind came to Northumbria, £3,500 per annum was being spent on staff training? Now, after a few years, £120,000 has been spent on training within that service and many other services come to Northumbria to find out how that has been done. That proves that good leadership in an ambulance service produces results for the patients and for everyone. That is something that we should consider. I hope that in my own area of west Yorkshire we can achieve something similar. Whether Opposition Members like it or not, that is the direction in which services are moving.

Several hon. Members have spoken about what ambulance workers do. Everyone knows that there has always been an emergency and a non-emergency ambulance service. In rural areas, a non-emergency service has often been provided, using motor cars or minibuses, not ambulances. What is so wrong with that?

The hon. Member for Livingston said that 25 per cent. of calls, or one in four, in London were emergency calls. The official figures for Northumbria show that 7 per cent. of the workload is emergency calls. The figures for the rest of the country are between 5 and 15 per cent. It is clear that what the Secretary of State has said is true. It is backed up by the statistics and it is no good arguing otherwise to help the ambulance workers' case.

[Mr. Kirkhope]

I hope that the dispute will be settled before long. Any settlement must be based on a realistic assessment of the future of the service. The dispute cannot be settled simply by beating the management or, as some union leaders seem to want, by beating the Government. That is not what the future of the ambulance service is about. We want what is good for the service, for patients, for good health care and for the expansion and financial strength of the ambulance service. We want pay differentials for different skills. The unions must concede that. If they continue to insist on flat rate increases across the board, what will be the reward for excellence and hard work? No one runs a business that pays everyone exactly the same basic wage.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kirkhope: No. I have about one minute to go and I wish to finish what I have to say. The hon. Gentleman may then have a chance to take his turn.

The ambulance workers do a job which the public view with sympathy. That works two ways. First, it makes it difficult for management to argue about a wage claim. It also places an immense responsibility on ambulance workers not to use or abuse their position in order to obtain an award that is not justified. If they argue and settle their case in other ways and on the basis of their skills, I shall fully support whatever settlement is arrived at. The claim must be settled in such a way that there is a positive return to the Health Service and to those who enjoy the services that it provides.

The ambulance service is regarded in an especially good light by the public and by patients. Even this dispute has not changed that. So far, those who claim to lead the ambulance staff have not persuaded their members of the merits of the award that they have negotiated. They have their work cut out to show that they really can lead the ambulance staff. They have failed to do so and to show where the return will come from.

7.28 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The failure to settle this dispute is appalling. It is a disgrace and a scandal to allow the disruption of an emergency service to continue into its fifth month. This afternoon we have seen that the Secretary of State's attitude is a triumph of pigheadedness over reason and common sense. He has no support in the country among the public. A majority of Conservative voters are opposed to his policy. We know that there is no full-hearted support for him in the House because we have heard the disagreement and opposition of Conservative Back-Bench Members this evening.

There is also disquiet in the Cabinet, if only because of the political damage that the dispute is doing. At one time it seemed that the Secretary of State had a promising political career. I suspect that that is no longer the case. His bluff and cheery manner is suitable for some matters, but his behaviour and attitude since he has been Secretary of State for Health have alienated almost everyone in the National Health Service. He has not endeared himself to the country and his cavalier attitude has made him heartily disliked throughout Britain. He has completely misjudged the position.

As we saw this afternoon, the Secretary of State's approach is to tough it out, to seek to humiliate the ambulance crews and to drive them into the dust. But the right hon. and learned Gentleman has misjudged the depth of the ambulance crews' grievance and the feelings of the British public. The public want him to give some ground to settle the dispute. In doing so, he might lose face, but that is better than losing lives as the dispute continues.

This tragedy should not be dealt with by banter across the Chamber. The dispute has already claimed lives. It is killing people. In an emergency the police and the Army can step in for a couple of days, but they cannot provide an emergency service month after month. They are inadequately trained and they have inadequately equipped vehicles which have already been involved in accidents. The police are unhappy doing the job that they have been called upon to do and the chairman of the Police Federation has confirmed that.

Many of our constituents are placed at risk every day. We hear of police and Army ambulances turning up late and of crews without the skills to do the job. That is no criticism of the police or the Army. They have not been trained to do the work. The dispute is costing lives and hon. Members should have a sense of responsibility.

The Secretary of State has also misjudged the British people's basic sense of fairness. At the time of the King's Cross and Clapham emergencies and the Brighton bombing statements made in the House praised the emergency services. The Prime Minister usually takes advantage of such occasions for a photo opportunity. But when it comes to pay, it is a different matter. The pay of ambulance crews has slipped behind comparable groups. Fire fighters are paid £60 a week more and the police are paid £110 a week more. In those circumstances, a pay offer that is less than the rate of inflation, in effect asking them to take a pay cut, is not realistic.

Ambulance men are not being stirred up by agitators. The union negotiators were willing to settle at a lower figure, but the matter went to a vote and the crews turned down their recommendation. We have heard the Government's rhetoric about the need for ballots, but when a ballot goes against them, no one takes any notice of what the members say, despite all the talk of handing the unions back to the members.

The ambulance crews have a deep grievance and the Secretary of State must now regret his remark about their being just professional drivers. It would help if he apologised for such an insulting remark.

Mr. Corbyn: He is not even here.

Mr. Leighton: No, he is not. It would not be so bad if ambulance men were paid the going rate for drivers, but they are not.

We know that things are not well in the ambulance service. We know that London is several hundred ambulance men short and that there is a high staff turnover. The ambulance service is underfunded and underequipped and staff morale has been undermined. The Government want a two-tier ambulance service. They want to privatise most of the ambulance service and that has undermined morale. But now the ambulance men are fighting back, and with great dignity. They have not gone on strike; they have been locked out. They are anxious to deal with emergency calls, but often those calls are diverted

and they are prevented from doing so. They have been told that their vehicles are uninsured and that they will be prosecuted if they take their vehicles out.

The Government and the Secretary of State have misjudged the British public's support for the ambulance men. Are the Government not interested in what the public think? The petition has been signed by nearly 5 million people, and in every opinion poll 80 per cent. demonstrate their continued support after almost five months of the dispute. They want the Government to stop the intimidation and their hostility to the ambulance crews.

At some stage the dispute will have to be ended by negotiation, but this afternoon the Secretary of State said that he will talk only if the union announces its surrender beforehand. Before it reaches the negotiating table, it must write letters explaining what it will give way on. Unless it does that, he is not willing to talk, nor is he willing to accept arbitration or any independent view.

Even if the Secretary of State could not look behind and see the looks on the faces of Conservative Back Benchers as he was making his speech, it must be obvious that the Government have got this wrong and have misjudged the situation. Before more lives are lost and more damage is done to the ambulance service, the British public want the Government to give some ground and sit down to negotiate an end to the dispute.

7.36 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): We have heard a number of views about the Government's approach to the ambulance dispute, and the Government have been chastised for not spending what was claimed to be a budget surplus of about £14 billion. But it is the very use of that budget surplus to repay past debt and so reduce the Government's liability to interest payments that has enabled more money to be spent on the NHS.

I and my hon. Friends who represent the north-west of England have fought a bitter campaign which, I am glad to say, has been ably rewarded by the Department of Health giving the North Western regional health authority extra money, over and above planning assumptions that were put before the public last August. I am sure that I and my hon. Friends do not wish our efforts in campaigning for the good health of the north-west to be hijacked as a result of the industrial dispute.

The last major group of Health Service workers in the north-west and elsewhere are using their industrial muscle to try to secure a pay award above those agreed to by other groups in the Health Service. Is it right that they should win that extra money, to the detriment not only of other Health Service workers who did not push their cause but of patients who would inevitably suffer as budgets would have to be adjusted? I and my hon. Friends have received many representations from our constituents on the subject of Health Service finance and I shall not let them down tonight by removing those patient services from our hospitals.

The Independent has been quoted a number of times and I, too, have sought solace in its pages. Peter Jenkins comes to the nub of what the dispute is about when he says:

"The point is that the Government cannot allow 22,000 ambulancemen to set an inflationary pay norm for more than a million NHS employees. That is what the dispute is about."

In the present circumstances, I have great sympathy with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the NHS. Like them, I was once responsible for negotiating wage claims before I entered Parliament. Duncan Nichol has a proud record in the Health Service. He was the general manager of the Mersey regional health authority and I had the pleasure of serving with him on that authority. By good management, he made it one of the most rapidly developing health authorities in the country. He understands the human dimensions of the dispute and the difficulty of reaching a pay agreement in which a line has to be drawn. He acknowledges, too, his overriding responsibility to all the patients of the National Health Service for whom resources must be made available.

The most difficult decision to take in any dispute is to draw the line. In the case of the Ford dispute, one final offer is replaced by another final offer. How can anyone involved know the true situation and how much the management can, and cannot, afford? At least the ambulance management had the courage of their convictions and said in the last pay round, "No more. So far, and no further."

I sought first-hand information about the dispute from those directly involved, by talking to a number of the staff on duty at my local ambulance station. I place on record my praise for ambulance workers in west Lancashire who, despite differences of opinion with their managements, are working as well as they can to provide good accident and emergency service. I praise, too, the management, who worked closely with the unions in a difficult situation to provide a high level of cover.

I was struck by the ambulance workers' sincerity and listened carefully to their views. The Government's offer might have greater credibility if the issue of the resources available for skills training were properly addressed. Ambulance workers have far greater commitment to, and a pride in, the service and quality of care that they provide than is generally realised. They state categorically that they never dream of going on strike. When I spoke to them about the provision of defibrillation equipment, for example, I found myself sympathising with their point of view. Perhaps there is a case for re-examining the way in which the Health Service pays for special skills in the ambulance service. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State fully appreciates the importance of skills training, but it is important also to be sensitive to the way in which that aspect is presented to ambulance staff. They may say to their health authorities, "We have been offered extra money, but can we really obtain the training and equipment that will be required? Do you have the resources to provide them?"

Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health will look again at the resourcing of skills training. If there are adequate opportunities to achieve higher qualifications, response from ambulance workers may be much more positive and light could be glimpsed at the end of the tunnel in respect of the negotiations.

The ambulance men have embarked upon a bitter dispute, and, understandably, they are supported by the general public—many of whom, like myself, have received excellent service from that sector of the Health Service. But perhaps the ambulance staff and their union should reconsider their action in the light of the information that in London in the new year the service received 60 per cent. fewer calls as a consequence of announcements about the lack of availability of ambulances.

That calls into question what should be the precise nature of the service. I suspect that many members of the

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public pick up a telephone and call for an ambulance even when they do not really need one. When the dispute is over, the service will be subject to close scrutiny, and it will never be the same again. I wonder whether the union appreciates what sort of Pandora's box it has opened by taking the stand that it has.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) raised the issue of privatisation. Whenever an effort is made to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a part of the Health Service, privatisation is mentioned. There is probably a good case for examining the provision of non-emergency ambulance services and for putting that element out to tendering, perhaps within the ambulance service itself. Such a development would require the unions to re-establish their relationship with management if they are to win those in-house tenders. In any event, the union may come to regret its action in having pushed the dispute to the brink.

One should pay attention to calls for comparability with the police. Ambulance staff tell me that police officers involved in a particularly traumatic accident are allowed to stand down for a couple of hours to regain their composure, but ambulance crews are not. I wonder how many other aspects of ambulance crews' terms and conditions of service could be improved in a package that would add to the credibility of the cash offers that my right hon. and hon. Friends support.

My message to ambulance staff is, "Thank you for continuing to provide an accident and emergency service, but look again closely at the advice that you have been given. It may not lead where you hope that it will."

7.46 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I speak not only on behalf of Plaid Cymru but for the Scottish National party, which is very concerned that this totally unnecessary dispute is being prolonged by a Government who seem to have lost all sense of justice.

The public in my constituency and elsewhere cannot understand why the Secretary of State for Health has allowed himself and his colleagues to become embroiled in a dispute that they cannot win. The ambulance service has the overwhelming support of the public, who will not allow the Government to treat their personnel in a callous and insensitive way.

I have experience of the high regard in which ambulance men and women are held by my constituents. The caring, dedicated, efficient and unsparing way in which crews undertake their duties is rewarded by a level of support that is rarely matched by any other profession.

Ambulance personnel from Holyhead in my constituency wrote to me saying:

"The ambulance services throughout Great Britain have striven,"—

this is the most important part of the letter—

"through increasing Tory party degradation, to maintain a decent level of accident and emergency cover, in many cases by suspended non-paid ambulance crews, which, judging by the overwhelming public support, is well appreciated. There were over 4·5 million signatories showing support for the ambulance staff, and we therefore think it is high time that the Government listened to the electorate and resolved the 4-month dispute."

My constituents do not like members of the Government suggesting that ambulance crews are nothing more than professional drivers or taxi drivers in uniforms. Such phraseology is hurtful to ambulance staff, and I deplore it. When the Minister for Health responds, I urge her to confirm that the Government withdraw those statements.

Some years ago, Gwynedd health authority proposed drastic cuts, which at worst would have meant the closure of two ambulance stations in my constituency and a third ceasing to provide 24-hour cover. That led to a campaign against the cuts. I was aware then of the general public's support for ambulance personnel and the work of ambulance stations. Petitions attracted thousands of signatures and public meetings were extremely well attended. The size of the public response forced Gwynedd health authority to withdraw the proposals and I believe that public support will eventually lead to the Government increasing their offer to ambulance personnel to achieve an honourable settlement.

I also know the difficult circumstances under which ambulance personnel work. In my area I know of ambulance crews operating old vehicles, which have run up extremely high mileages and should have been replaced long ago.

Having listened to the debate and to ambulance personnel, I ask myself why the public are behind the ambulance men's claim. Essentially, they do not accept that ambulance personnel should be paid less than others working in the emergency services. They believe that they should be paid the same because they are committed to providing an emergency service. That is an extremely powerful argument and the Government are wrong to deny its force.

The wage claim should be seen in its proper context. The current basic pay of an ambulance man or woman is £7,340 on entry. That is 30 per cent. less than that of an equivalent police constable and 40 per cent. less than that of an equivalent fireman. The average weekly wage of an ambulance man or woman is £141. One cannot stay in London's Dorchester hotel for even one night at £141. The perversity of that comparison illustrates my point perfectly. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said that £150 was a decent wage for ambulance men. I wonder what she would make of that comparison.

The present rates of pay of ambulance men are substantially below those of their colleagues in other emergency services, and they would fall even further behind those colleagues if they accepted the 6·25 per cent. that is currently on offer. In September 1989, the police received a 9·25 per cent. increase and firefighters settled for 8·6 per cent. Where, in the name of humanity, is the justice in that? How can the current offer be considered fair when average earnings increased by 8·75 per cent. in the year to August 1989?

It seems to me that in this, as in so many other areas of policy, the Government are now completely out of touch not only with current pay settlements but with public opinion. The Secretary of State seems to be more beleaguered by the hour as he vainly struggles, even today, to advocate a weak—indeed a lost—cause.

The Secretary of State should also accept the need for an independent formula similar to the formula under which the pay of hon. Members is fixed. That would end the need for industrial disputes. It would also restore some dignity to the whole affair, and we should not have this unseemly public wrangling, which becomes more acrimonious by the day.

It is highly significant that both the Police Federation and the Fire Brigades Union are seeking to persuade the Secretary of State to institute parity and a pay mechanism for ambulance crews. They know—they should because they are also part of the emergency services—that the present disparity is inherently unfair and that they want their colleagues to be treated fairly. They believe that the Government are being intransigent and stubborn.

Ambulance men and women have chosen their career so that they can be of service to the community. That is why they are not out on full-time strike as a result of the dispute. They have shown their devotion to duty time after time, disaster after disaster. They have been hailed as heroes by the Prime Minister and others. They have been championed for their courage. I have seen their human responses to tragedy and death and watched them carry out their task with dignity. The Government should now match that dignity by paying them a decent wage and setting up machinery to ensure that this kind of dispute never has to happen again.

7.55 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I very much regret that we are having this debate at all. It does nothing to add to the sum total of human knowledge and, as a very distinguished Labour Employment Minister said, debates in the House of Commons on industrial disputes only tend to lengthen those disputes.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): That is not what you said in 1979; the Opposition were asking for a debate every day.

Mr. Hayes: The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) intervenes from a sedentary position. As he is a Privy Councillor and bound to be called in a moment, perhaps he will do me the courtesy of keeping quiet, even if he will not listen. He is not helping matters at all.

I regret that we are having this debate, because it gives people the opportunity to enter into petty party-political arguments. That is precisely what we have had tonight. It does not help ordinary men and women who are desperately frightened to dial 999 for fear of what will happen to them, and it will not help the unions. At the unions' invitation, I have had almost daily contact with their representatives over the past seven weeks or so, and I know that they want an honourable settlement. This debate will not help them to make up their mind about the next step forward.

One of the great hurdles in the way of a speedy settlement of the dispute is that the wrong signals have been given out by both sides. It has become a political, rather than an industrial, dispute and that is most regrettable. We have had megaphone diplomacy and trial by television, in which Ministers and trade union leaders have been put on the spot and have made off-the-cuff remarks. That has precluded sensible negotiation.

Over the past few weeks, some of us have been trying —perhaps not terribly successfully—to feel our way through the morass of mistrust and misunderstanding on both sides. Trust has to be restored; otherwise, we shall not achieve a speedy end to the dispute. *[Interruption.]* I hope that Opposition Members are listening.

In my contact with the unions, I have discovered that they fully appreciate the political realities of the dispute. They realise that the Government and management want a speedy and honourable end to the dispute, but not at the risk of a public sector wage explosion or of encouraging other trade unionists to pursue wage claims by industrial action. That is absolutely clear. The unions accept that in good faith.

As I said, one of the great tragedies of the dispute has been that the wrong signals have gone out. Look at what happened as a result of one sloppy piece of reporting in a Sunday newspaper last week. The unions were led to believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was giving a nod and a wink not to new money but to old money in the National Health Service budget. That is nonsense, and we know it. So, where do we go from here?

I believe that a window of opportunity has opened. The next few days are crucial, and it is vital that my right hon. and hon. Friends, in particular the ministerial team, and the management and union negotiators put themselves into a state of purdah. They should not try to conduct negotiations over the airways, because that has failed so miserably in the past. Sometimes talks which were close to settlement have failed as a result.

The window will only be open, I suspect, for a matter of days. There is a basis for negotiation, and there is common ground, if only both sides could see it. There have been concessions from the management side—or effectively from the Government—of an extra £6 million —*[Interruption.]* It makes no difference; at the end of the day, that is where the money comes from—the Government. The Secretary of State has put an extra £6 million on the table. I believe that the first part of the dispute can be settled by reshuffling that £6 million.

The unions have made two significant concessions publicly in the past two days. It is worth paying some attention to those concessions, because the press have not. Roger Poole made it quite clear that he would not be pressing for the full 11·5 per cent. We seem to be negotiating downwards—perhaps down to the rate of inflation for this year, but I do not know. I do not speak for him, or for the Government, but it is worth negotiating about.

During a BBC programme the other day, Roger Poole said that he would not be pressing for linkage with the emergency services. We are not talking about linkage, arbitration or pay review bodies. We are talking about an honourable settlement. We are talking about a mechanism that will protect the value of that settlement, so that we never have this sort of dispute again. A dispute that involves ordinary people, which is what the ambulance men and women are, will be taken out of the political arena.

I understand that the Government and the Health Service management may have some reservations about an across-the-board pay mechanism, but there is no reason why there cannot be parity if it is a parity weighted in favour of those people who work on emergencies. Public sympathy, quite rightly, lies with those people who scrape bodies off the road, and help heart attack victims. We should encourage people who deal with emergencies, and we should pay them well. We want a highly trained, highly motivated and well paid emergency service.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hayes: My hon. Friend has only just come into the Chamber and he will have the opportunity to speak in a moment. However, as he is a dear friend and can buy me a drink in a moment, I shall give way.

Mr. Budgen: I know that my hon. Friend has taken a great deal of interest in the details of the dispute. Has he given any thought to who might chair the review body? Perhaps he has Professor Clegg in mind for the job.

Mr. Hayes: I regret that my hon. Friend, uncharacteristically, has not been listening. I said that a review body and linkage to the emergency services should be ruled out. I suspect that a pay mechanism could be a basis for discussion and negotiation, but not if it is across-the-board, or could be inflationary, as has been suggested in the Government's amendment—and I shall support that amendment tonight. We need a mechanism that will help emergency workers in particular.

Some of my hon. Friends have mentioned the deplorable state of some of the emergency services, and the number of paramedics. I was horrified to learn that there are only eight paramedics in the London ambulance service, whereas Essex, which is a good deal smaller, has 30. The number depends on the dedication of chief officers in the service. I hope that once the dispute is settled there will be an initiative to encourage the training of paramedics. When one looks at the situation in other parts of the country, for example Yorkshire and Essex, one sees that it can be done if there is the will.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: I am sorry, but I am running short of time.

There has been a lot of criticism of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, and I regret that. During the dispute, he has been in an impossible position, because there has been so much media hype. We all know that he cares deeply and passionately about the Health Service. He is like a man on a tightrope: we see him walking across; we wish him well; we hope that he does not fall; but none of us wants to be there with him. The best way to move towards an honourable settlement is not to crush one side to the ground. There should be no victory for either side. I support the amendment tonight, but I wish to encourage the Government to be flexible, as I have suggested in my speech.

8.5 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): At present, we are in an unbelievable situation in Britain, if one cares to step back and look at it. Trained, skilled ambulance crews are waiting in their stations, ready to work and prepared to deal with any emergency. They turned out the other night on the M25, and over Christmas for every emergency.

The police are trying to operate an ambulance service in police vehicles that are not equipped or safe for the job. They are no more than freight vehicles but they are carrying people around in them. The police do not know what they are doing, and they would be the first to admit that they are frightened by that.

When ordinary people ask a police station, or the 999 service, if they can have the telephone number of the local ambulance station to get an ambulance to come to the scene of an accident, they are denied that information. The police have been instructed not to give it out.

Army vehicles, with all-terrain and all-weather tyres, are skidding around the greasy roads in London, and that is very dangerous. They have ill-experienced crews and no equipment, and they are completely incapable of doing the job. They would also be the first to admit that. Young soldiers, policemen and women are scared out of their wits every night when they are sent out on 999 calls. However, skilled crews are waiting in every ambulance station who are ready, able and willing, and they are prepared to do the job.

Who is putting people's safety at risk? Is it the ambulance crews, who are in their stations ready to go out and deal with any emergency? I think not. I think that the person responsible is the Secretary of State and there is no point his hiding behind Duncan Nichol and everybody else.

If I were a psychiatrist, I should say that the last 20 minutes of the Secretary of State's speech showed some counselling angst. He was saying that nobody understood him. He was saying that there is a conspiracy among newspaper journalists and television reporters to misrepresent what the Government are saying. It comes ill from the Tory party to say that, when it has the support of 95 per cent. of the newspapers in Britain.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): *The Guardian* and *The Sun*?

Mr. Corbyn: Readership of *The Guardian* is about 400,000. Tragically, sales of *The Sun* reach 4 million every day. That is a big difference, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not very good at arithmetic and cannot work it out.

The Government are on a hook of their own making. They thought that the ambulance workers were not serious about their claim. They were serious about their initial pay claim, and they are serious about it now, because they care about the service. Many highly skilled and trained ambulance workers can no longer afford to stay in the service.

Hon. Members should ask London ambulance workers about their position. They cannot afford to buy housing in London because their salaries are so low, and they cannot obtain council accommodation because there is none to be had and none on offer to them. They would like to look forward to a lifetime in a service that they love, doing a job that they enjoy, but they cannot afford to stay in it.

The ambulance men have presented a reasonable claim: they want parity with the fire and police services. Is the ambulance worker who arrives at the scene of an accident really worth £60 a week less than a fireman—and an even larger amount less than a police person who is directing traffic, among other things? No: all those workers are equally valuable and equally necessary in their own way. Why are the ambulance workers being treated so badly?

Conservative Members are always paying tribute to the ambulance service—and I readily join them in that, for I have witnessed and experienced their work—but have Conservative Members considered the trauma involved in pulling children out of car crashes? Has any of them imagined what it was like to pull people out of the Clapham disaster, and all the other disasters that we have seen, and then, a few hours later, to be back on the job not knowing what the next task would be? Have Conservative Members considered the abuse that ambulance men receive—for instance, on a Saturday night, when they pick

up drunks who may take a swing at them? And, after all that, they are told by the Secretary of State that they are no better than qualified drivers.

I do not wish to be disrespectful to qualified drivers; they too do a valuable job. An ambulance worker, however, does a much more valuable job than merely driving a vehicle. This is not a taxi service or a freight service, but an emergency service that is the envy of many other countries.

The Government thought that they could face out the ambulance workers and win the dispute. They thought that they could make it go away by means of their usual tactic of smearing the union leaders and workers concerned—saying that they do not care, and that they are hasty, greedy, brutal and brutish. Then they discovered that the majority of people simply did not believe any of that, because they have some experience of the ambulance service.

It is no accident that a petition expressing support for the ambulance workers contained nearly 5 million signatures. It was the biggest petition ever presented to the House, certainly in the past 150 years. Every day there are queues of people in the Holloway road in my constituency, waiting to sign petitions and to put money into the collecting buckets. They want the ambulance men to win and to be paid decently, because they want the security of knowing that there is a proper ambulance service.

The Government's con trick has failed. They are now pleading that that is because Roger Poole is so good on television. Compared to the Secretary of State, Roger Poole is very good on television, but I know that he would not mind my saying that the public support for the ambulance men is not just because of him: it is due to the public's perception of the service, and of the justice of the men's claim.

The Secretary of State ought to realise what is going to happen. He is a long way into the dispute. He keeps saying that it is nothing to do with him, that he cannot afford it, that Duncan Nichol is doing the negotiation and that conceding the men's claim would unleash a spate of further NHS pay claims. There are several points there. First, Duncan Nichol is now earning some £70,000 a year, following an increase in his performance-related pay, while heaping abuse on the ambulance workers. The Secretary of State, like most hon. Members, has a guaranteed annual pay rise because of the linkage arrangements, although I understand that he has not managed to obtain quite the same pay increase in his role as a Cabinet Minister; we shall pass the hat around for him if he is hard up. Is he really in a position to lecture the ambulance workers about their perfectly reasonable pay claim? Of course he is not.

The Secretary of State keeps saying that accepting the claim might lead to other demands in the Health Service. What he fears is that it would lead to a public examination of the low pay received by many Health Service workers. We treat our health workers scandalously. They are threatened with privatisation if they ask for a pay rise, and, if they ask for one, they are told first it would have a knock-on effect on another sector, and then that it would affect patient care. What is affecting patient care is the obsession of central Government with creating a market economy within the NHS. The reason why 140 hospital beds have been taken out of use in the Islington health authority area is not the greed of health workers, but the meanness of the Government who have underfunded the authority.

The Government's long-term objective—which, I think, is behind the dispute—is the breaking up of national negotiations and the privatisation of the ambulance service. They know perfectly well that, if they succeed in privatising any service, the power of workers to negotiate pay rises is reduced, because they are subjected to the competition of the unemployment queue.

Tonight's debate is very timely. Millions of people will have heard what the Secretary of State really said, and will have observed the meanness of his attitude. Those people will again demonstrate their support by signing petitions, collecting money and taking part in the stoppage on 30 January, and at some point in the not too distant future we shall see that same Secretary of State, at that same Dispatch Box, announce a settlement—and a big rise in the ambulance workers' pay.

8.15 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I was surprised to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes)—who has just left his seat—say that he regretted that we were having this debate tonight, because he seemed to have been having a continuous debate on the subject for many weeks. My hon. Friend felt that tonight's debate would not add to our understanding of the position. I, too, feel sorry that we are having the debate in such circumstances, but I believe that it has enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the dispute. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), who said that it had opened a Pandora's box, and that the management of the ambulance service will be different in the future because of the greater knowledge and understanding that has emerged.

I dislike all disputes, but surely this dispute is the best possible example of the need for reforms in the National Health Service. I dislike disputes in the Health Service most of all because the service is far too important to be fought over in this way. I am, however, surprised at the extent to which those who are committed to its success have been able to maintain it. I have not received a single letter concerning a specific failure to provide patient care, nor have any of my colleagues to whom I have spoken. That is a remarkable tribute to National Health Service workers' determination to maintain standards, and to look after the vulnerable members of society—especially the elderly and the mentally ill—who rely so much on the non-accident and non-emergency aspects of the service.

Any attempt to resolve the dispute through a return to the old days of beer and sandwiches at Downing street would be entirely the wrong approach, and I must differ with Opposition Members who feel that that is the way in which to treat the Health Service. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that we treat our health workers scandalously, and that it is wrong for the Government to look to market-economy measures. I say that it is scandalous to treat health workers as Opposition Members would like to treat them, with collective bargaining systems that are entirely unresponsive to the need for extra skills. Ambulance workers need more training, and the way to provide for that is to allow them local negotiation.

I was appalled by the remarks of the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), who attacked the

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general manager of the ambulance service in Northumbria. Let me quote some of what I have read in the Sunday press. *The Sunday Telegraph* tells us:

"The Northumbria Ambulance Service has drawn up plans to become self-managing under the Government's Health Service reforms."

If ever there was an example of the need for those reforms, it is the current dispute. The report continues:

"If it does opt out in 1991, it will become a model for the future. Already health officials in Newcastle upon Tyne are planning for a future in which ambulance drivers will receive £3,000 a year more than today—with no strikes."

That is what we should aim for. I understand that the service also intends that every driver of every ambulance should be fully skilled as a paramedic.

The article continues:

"Northumbria is an outstandingly efficient service. Skilled management has brought big savings and the service has started selling its expertise to the private sector. Northumbria's free enterprise includes a radio-paging service, ambulances, vehicle maintenance and first-aid training. This is the thin end of the wedge for the Health Service and local government, where an end to national bargaining would appear to have great awards."

The Sunday Correspondent also carried an article on Northumberland's example to the rest of the Health Service. It says:

"There the service was re-organised in the mid-1980s: five ambulance stations, 73 vehicles and 79 staff were cut. The transporting of elderly people to day hospitals was hived off to a separate service, still run by the health authority. But the rest of the work (43 per cent. of the total journeys) carrying out-patients, is now contracted out to private companies which run taxis and minibuses.

The result, according to Laurie Caple, the director, has been improved emergency response times (from 83 per cent. answered within 14 minutes to 98 per cent.) and shorter waiting times for out-patients."

Amazingly, with this better service,

"he is also saving £2·6 million a year on a total budget of £10 million. Mr. Caple would like the freedom of local pay bargaining: and he would increase the pay of the paramedics. That ambition . . . has until now been anathema to the ambulance staff and their unions. It explains the duration of the dispute—and the increasing frustration of those responsible for prosecuting it."

I received in my post today a letter from Mr. Bob Abberley, the parliamentary officer for the five ambulance unions. He gives me his mobile, his home and his office telephone numbers. Enclosed with the letter is the briefing material on the ambulance dispute, as the unions see it. It contains a most extraordinary statement. The briefing paper says that the NHS chief executive

"has refused to hold further talks unless the unions reveal their . . . position before a meeting is called. The unions cannot do this because they believe that would undermine the whole bargaining process."

That is a most extraordinary statement. The unions are undermining the whole bargaining process. They have the Whitley council, although it is not much better than the old Burnham council. The unions are undermining that process by trying to reach an agreement here.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that he thought that the unions would settle for 50 per cent. less than their claim. What grounds does he have for making that statement? Is he trying to reach a settlement across the Floor of the House? What an absurd way to try to manage the National Health Service. It has to work within the cash limits that were introduced by a Labour Government. The NHS has to live within the cash limits discipline.

My message to the unions is that they should work within that discipline. That is what Mr. Nichol is trying to do, that is what he is paid to do, and that is what everybody else has to do. We have to seek a flexible method of local pay bargaining that will reward skills and provide us with a much more highly skilled ambulance service than we have now and a far more satisfied and much better motivated work force. Ambulance personnel will then be rewarded for their additional skills and their dedication. I commend Northumberland for setting an example that I hope the rest of the country will follow. We should provide the flexible pay bargaining structure that the ambulance men so obviously need.

8.23 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): The Secretary of State's arrogance and conceit are matched only by the Government's arrogance and conceit and that of the vast majority of Conservative Members. A few Conservative Members have referred to the need for a settlement. The two sides must be brought together. The debate will not have helped to bring them together. Those Conservative Members have obviously been looking at their parliamentary majorities and the opinion polls, which show strong support for the ambulance men.

I pay tribute to the marvellous work that ambulance men do. I am a former HGV 1 driver, right at the top of the list of professional drivers. If I were to be involved in an accident, I should prefer ambulance men to come to my aid rather than an HGV 1 driver, because their skills are completely different. The ambulance man does not deserve to be called a professional driver; he is far more than that. The Secretary of State should spend a little time with ambulance men during the night and on emergencies if he wants fully to appreciate the duties that they perform on behalf of the public.

The Secretary of State is not speaking on behalf of the Health Service. If he were, we should not be here this evening. He said that a 1 per cent. increase in pay would cost about £340 million. It was the most significant statement that he made. It was a clear message that the Government are deliberately seeking to keep down Health Service costs. The Secretary of State referred to the fact that 70 per cent. of costs are due to wages. He should have said that in no circumstances will the Government link Health Service workers to the wages structure of any other workers.

People work in the National Health Service because they want to serve the public. They are the Cinderellas; they put patients before wages. They have not been prepared to take industrial action and put people's lives at risk, so their wages have gradually been eroded. We should all be ashamed. The vast majority of people of this country are prepared to pay, either through their taxes or through their national insurance stamp, for an adequate Health Service.

All this tinkering round the edges is designed to bring about privatisation. The Government want to split up the NHS, but privatisation does not lead to El Dorado and all kinds of wonderful benefits. It gives an increase to the few, but after privatisation the vast majority have to suffer wage cuts. The Secretary of State for Transport should be here. He is not afraid to give wage increases above 6, 8 or 10 per cent. He gave a huge wage increase to the head of British Rail, Bob Reid.

The Prime Minister talks about Victorian values. In Victorian times the worker had to doff his cap to the management. The Prime Minister wants us to return to such Victorian values. I do not. Management and employees should be part of the team and should provide a service. The Secretary of State has put himself into a trap of his own making, and he does not have the gumption or the courage to admit that he is wrong.

The work of ambulance men cannot be compared with other jobs. Of course ambulance men perform a job different from that of nurses. The Secretary of State really should get off his backside and resolve the nurses' outstanding wage claims. Many cases have been waiting for two years to be resolved. Ambulance men are different from the police and the fire brigade, but they perform a similar function.

Job evaluation is also important. The unions are prepared to talk, but it would appear that management is not. I used to be on the Whitley council. Nichol can only work within the terms set down by you and the Government. If you want to resolve the dispute, you should not keep sending letters through the post and sending Nichol back to the negotiating table, because he has no power. Get off your backside, get back to the table and get negotiating. You are setting the terms; it is not Nichol. You say that industrial action is putting patients at risk, but it is not the ambulance men; it is the fact that you are refusing to budge.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): He is not "you"; he is the Minister.

Mr. Redmond: I apologise. I was referring to the Government, the Secretary of State and the Minister. I could think of something else to call him.

We really want to resolve the dispute. For Christ's sake let us get the two sides round the table negotiating because they cannot negotiate through the media or by letter. They have to get round the table and discuss it. There is a whole range of possible options, but I know the biggest stumbling block. I have been involved with management before and only a stupid management creates disputes. The reason why there is no early result is that no one wants to lose face. People are dying and a little loss of face would not go amiss in saving lives.

8.31 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I begin by paying tribute to the ambulance men. Many years ago I trained as a Royal Life Saving Society instructor and examiner. I spent some time in my teens teaching first aid and I was involved with the emergency services. I have also been a member of the Thames rescue service, so I know what a fully-trained ambulance man can do in an emergency. We all owe them a great debt of honour for the fine service that they provide throughout the country.

The dispute turns on one issue—whether there should be a formula for the settlement of future pay disputes in the ambulance service. That is not a new question. I was interested to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) draw attention to the ambulance dispute of 1979. On that occasion the former Minister of Health, now Lord Ennals, was refused access to a hospital because a shop steward, I think representing NUPE, said that he was not genuinely ill. That was rather distressing for all involved.

I also read the debate in the House on 21 February 1979 about the ambulance service industrial dispute. It was a goldmine of remarks from the Labour party. I was trying to discover what the Opposition propose and their attitude to these matters. Perhaps I can draw attention to column 427 where a Mr. Pavitt—I do not know who he was—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, I understand that he died last week. I am a new Member, and I did not know that. Mr. Pavitt said:

"In the longer term, is not a revision of the whole of the Whitley Council machinery within the National Health Service overdue?"

He asked that question referring specifically to the ambulance service. Lord Ennals, the then Labour Minister, replied:

"On the second question, the important report that was produced by Lord McCarthy was carefully studied. It led to considerable changes. It may very well be that other changes may be proposed. Certainly the Government are ready to look at them. We have already had a careful look at the way in which the Whitley Council system works. Basically it works well."

That was the attitude of the Labour party then and it does not appear that there is any good reason for it to have changed since.

In the next column, Mr. Arthur Lewis asked:

"Is the Minister aware that ambulance workers, rightly I think, claim that as they have always been allied to the life-saving services, such as the police and the firemen, they should be treated like them?"

The Labour Minister of Health replied:

"However, it must be recognised that only 10 per cent. of the time and duties of ambulance men is spent dealing with emergencies. The rest is spent dealing with non-emergencies. Therefore, that emergency 10 per cent. is an important part of their task."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1979; Vol. 963, c. 427-28.]

The Labour Government then asked Professor Clegg for his proposals.

On 14 September 1989 *The Times* reported that the ambulance men

"should be seen as part of the emergency arm of the health service rather than the health arm of the emergency service. They cannot realistically be considered in isolation from other staff in the health service, some of whom are no less essential in meeting the immediate needs of accident victims and other urgent cases".

This year, 94 per cent. of NHS staff settled their pay without recourse to industrial action. The vast majority of them have settled at around 6·5 per cent. Almost 500,000 nurses, for example, received a 6·8 per cent. increase. It would be manifestly unfair to those workers to give additional rises to ambulance staff simply because they have taken industrial action. Moreover, it would be disastrous if every year the NHS pay round opened with a benchmark award to ambulance staff based on some generous formula similar to that of the police. For the reasons that I have just given, the two services are not strictly comparable, although 10 per cent. of them might be. I pay tribute to those 10 per cent. who have paramedical skills. However, 90 per cent. of the work is routine. *The Independent* reported on 1 November that 12 per cent. of the work undertaken in the average county involves those skills.

I draw attention to a newspaper which I know has the sympathy of many Opposition Members. On 18 September 1989 *The Guardian* reported that one

"option which would be opposed by the Unions would be to separate emergency from non-emergency work. Much non-emergency work is no more difficult than mini-cab driving."

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was accused of being callous because of his alleged remarks—if I could I would underscore the word "alleged" in *Hansard*, as that is not strictly what he said.

My hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) referred to the service adopted by Northumbria where such a two-tier system works extremely well. Private contractors deal with 40 per cent. of non-urgent cases and the two-tier system that has been working for some years has generated savings of £2·6 million on a budget of £10 million. That money has been invested in improved services such as defibrillator machines and greater training for emergency crews. Overall, the response times in Northumbria, which is one of the largest ambulance regions in the country, have improved. One third of the 370 dedicated accident crews have full paramedic training and basic training is given to the drivers of private line buses.

Wiltshire is another county that uses trained crews only for emergencies or where specialist crews are needed. Its system is backed up by a plethora of different initiatives, some of which are voluntary and some private taxi arrangements, for people who need to attend outpatient departments or hospital for other reasons. One of the chief complaints that hon. Members occasionally hear is when people have had to wait for an ambulance. Usually they are not serious cases, such as people who have been run down by a car or involved in an accident, but they have been told that an ambulance will pick them up from their sheltered accommodation at, say, 11 am but have had to wait two or three hours. I am aware of someone who had to wait eight hours. The reason for the delay, which they all understand and accept, is usually that the ambulance had been called away to an emergency, had returned to the station and as it was about to collect them had been called out to another emergency.

Northumbria and Wiltshire set out to improve the system for patients who merely needed transport. As a result of reorganisation, Wiltshire was able to increase its number of paramedics because it diverted the money that it saved into further training. Fifty per cent. of all ambulance crews in Wiltshire have full paramedical training, which is a major improvement for patients. We heard earlier in the debate that there are only eight paramedically trained people in London, and my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) said that there are 30 in Essex. The national average is 12 per cent.

Mr. Holt: There are six in Cleveland.

Mr. Devlin: My hon. Friend informs me that there are six in Cleveland. Last year, the county of Wiltshire responded to 13,500 emergency calls, 61 per cent. of which were attended within eight minutes—the Department of Health target is 50 per cent—and 98 per cent. within 20 minutes, for which the Department's target is 95 per cent. The savings made have gone into extra cover, new vehicles and equipment.

Perhaps we should take the opportunity of this debate not to discuss the dispute—many hon. Members agree that the debate will not advance the resolution of the dispute—but to say what sort of service we want in the future: a faster-responding, higher-qualified and better-paid service.

8.42 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I am delighted to put on record the views of the people of the west midlands about the provocative way in which the dispute is being conducted by Sir James Ackers, who is chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

I should also like to deplore some of the comments that the Secretary of State has made during the dispute, such as his sneers about taxi drivers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howell: It is no good the Secretary of State shaking his head, because we all know that those comments are on record.

I have taken the trouble to find out about the earnings of taxi drivers. The London taxi drivers association tells me that the average wage in London is £15,000, and in Birmingham it is £14,000.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Howell: I cannot give way, because I have only 10 minutes.

Mr. Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howell: I did not say that the Secretary of State had called them taxi drivers; I said that they had been called taxi drivers. The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to them as drivers, but taxi drivers were referred to.

It is clear that in the west midlands we are engaged in trench warfare. A most disgraceful letter, the like of which I have never seen in all my public life, was sent by the regional general manager of the West Midlands regional health authority to ambulance workers, who have been locked out. The facilities to provide the same service as throughout the rest of the country have been withdrawn. Telephone lines have been cut. Yesterday, I saw people waiting to work but not being allowed to receive telephone calls. That is being done at the behest of the Secretary of State and the regional chairman, who sits on the National Health Service Policy Board and is in part responsible for this dispute. He has returned to the west midlands to conduct trench warfare, which no other regional chairman has done.

When the chairman wrote that provocative letter, I promptly took action on behalf of six Birmingham Members of Parliament, including two Privy Councillors, and asked for a meeting, which was refused. I got in touch with the Secretary of State's office, but he took no action. It is only because this debate is being held that we have been offered a meeting tomorrow, which we shall attend. I shall tell the chairman, in terms that I cannot use here, what I think of him for telling six Members of Parliament that they have no right of audience. He is paid to run a public service, and the Secretary of State should remind him of that. If membership of Parliament, parliamentary accountability and the right of our constituents to be heard mean anything, the Secretary of State should get rid of that chairman at once for refusing that basic right.

On 18 December, the regional general manager, Mr. K. F. Bales, wrote a letter to each ambulance man. He told

them that if they use their ambulance they will be liable to prosecution for driving an uninsured vehicle, for driving a vehicle without road tax and—this is the most important—that any passenger whom they carry may be prosecuted under section 12 of the Theft Act 1968.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Passengers?

Mr. Howell: Passengers—what a ludicrous proposition! If we had a disaster on the M6 near Birmingham such as that which recently occurred on the M25, ambulance men could not turn out because of that written notice.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howell: It is no good the Secretary of State shaking his head. If people are told that they may be prosecuted under the Theft Act, they would be foolish to turn out unless they had a letter telling them that the notice had been rescinded. One could imagine the havoc on the motorway while all that is going on. Ambulance men would say, "Although we should like to attend, we cannot do so until the notice has been withdrawn."

Can hon. Members imagine what would happen if they turned out to tend to people who were seriously ill? A policeman may get into an ambulance and say, "Before you drive your ambulance, I must warn you that under the Theft Act 1968 you are liable to be prosecuted and that anything you say may be taken down and used in a subsequent criminal investigation." The Secretary of State is laughing.

Mr. Clarke: I am laughing at the right hon. Gentleman's ludicrous description.

Mr. Howell: Will the Secretary of State have that notice withdrawn?

Mr. Clarke: I should like to respond to the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion, which might be taken seriously in the west midlands. If ambulance crews turned out in response to a control room, as they did on the M25, what the right hon. Gentleman has said would not apply. It is not true, and when he has time I shall explain to him why.

Mr. Howell: It is true. I visited the control room at the ambulance station in Henrietta street in my constituency, which is the largest ambulance station in Europe. The controller was not present because he had had to go somewhere else. As the Secretary of State has had all the telephones cut off, how will controllers convey messages? That is the state that the Secretary of State has got the service into in the west midlands. I beg him to look into it. Like everyone else, I want the dispute to be resolved, but we do not want it conducted in the west midlands on the basis of trench warfare, with elected representatives being refused meetings and ambulance men's telephones being cut off. That is a disgraceful way to handle any industrial dispute.

I was president of a trade union for 12 years, and I am a consensus man. I say with respect to the Secretary of State that one should never go into an industrial dispute unless one knows the way out of it. That is what the Secretary of State does not know. He has not asked himself how we get out of this dispute—which is what we want. We shall get out of it by asking a simple question, which he has not asked himself: what is the worth of an ambulance driver? We have been told that, if we give some ambulance drivers more, others in the ambulance service will have less. The reason why the Secretary of State will not go to arbitration or to ACAS is that arbitration would address the question that he will not address: what is the worth of an ambulance driver compared to anyone else, not only in the Health Service? That question must be answered at some time in this dispute, and it is the question that every trade unionist and every employer has to ask himself at some point.

When Ford workers are being offered 10 per cent., when we read that people in the Health Service will be offered considerable sums and when the Secretary of State, I and other hon. Members have part of our salary fixed by reference to some Civil Service machinery to avoid future disputes, it is no good the Secretary of State saying that what is good for the Civil Service, the police, the armed services, Members of Parliament, doctors and nurses is not good for ambulance men. That is a fundamental contradiction in logic and in fairness.

The reason why the Secretary of State has the whole population against him is that they believe in fairness, whatever their political views, and they do not see the treatment of the ambulance service as fair and just.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): On the question of what the ambulance men are worth, my right hon. Friend will recall that in 1977, at the time of the Ford strike when the Ford company broke through the Callaghan pay lines and paid 18 per cent., the present Prime Minister said that people should be paid what they were worth.

Mr. Howell: The Secretary of State complains about this debate. I was a member of the Cabinet wages committee at that time. Not a week went by when the Opposition, who were led then by the present Prime Minister, did not have a debate in this Chamber, so let us not have these crocodile tears.

I want to congratulate Sandwell and other local authorities. If the Secretary of State will not provide an ambulance service for our people, the local authorities must do it themselves. Sandwell tells me that it has dealt with 93 emergency cases in the eight days since it set up its service, which it says is higher than average. Calls are overwhelmingly coming in from doctors. I am glad to know that that service has been provided, and if there is to be no movement in the dispute, there is an obligation on us all to provide a service for our constituents. I am not interested in the course of the dispute and this debate should not concern that, but it should be about the right of British citizens to a decent ambulance service, which it is the statutory responsibility of the Secretary of State to provide.

The Army is doing excellent work, but it cannot provide that service. I heard that only the other day three policemen impeding Army ambulances had been knocked down because the ambulances could not stop in time at the crossing. That is typical of what is happening. We must get this matter right. We must get people to sit round the table and to negotiate. My plea to the Secretary of State is for him to stop the provocative action and to start talking. Let us have a civilised solution to this problem.

8.53 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is clear that the time has come for both sides to sit round the table, to be locked in a room, if necessary, to stay there until a solution is found and to accept that there must be give on both sides until a solution is found. That is what is required by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, the whole House and the nation.

I speak as one who has been affected by the dispute. A member of my own family needed an ambulance a few days ago and was picked up by the Army, who did a notably good job in the circumstances. The whole dispute has been brought home to me in a big way. A few weeks ago, I was sitting on a London Underground train and saw a lady opposite me being taken very ill. I immediately found someone to support her and I walked up and down the compartment to find a doctor. I found a nurse who gave the lady artificial respiration and I stopped the train at the next station where the ambulance service was summoned. The ambulance men did a notably good job in getting the lady fit to leave the train. I heard that she died a little while afterwards, although it was not for want of anything that the ambulance men could have done. It was an impressive sight to see the ambulance men working with everything that they had to revive a lady who was obviously dying. They did a fine job and I remember that.

My remarks will fall into two parts. First, I shall comment on the medical side of the ambulance drivers' work and, secondly, I shall comment on other aspects of their work. I shall base my remarks on discussions with ambulance drivers in my own constituency with whom I have kept in contact. I had a long talk with them not long ago, on the emergency services and what some call the non-emergency services. The emergency services staff said —and I do not know whether their figures are right—that there are 2,000 ambulance drivers in London, of whom 200 are medically well qualified. They went on to say that there are only eight paramedics in the whole of London, and that figure has already been quoted to the House. They also said that only 20 people a year could become medically qualified as ambulance drivers—not to paramedic level, but to an advanced level.

I was glad when I heard my right hon. and learned Friend say this afternoon that he did not think that there were enough courses for ambulance drivers to improve their qualifications and knowledge. He obviously means that there will be more and, indeed, there must be more. It would be unsatisfactory and unfair if 2,000 ambulance drivers in London—less the 200 who are already well qualified medically—wanted to become qualified and could do so only at the rate of 20 a year. I know by his immediate response in the debate that my right hon. and learned Friend does not intend that. However, I draw the matter to his attention because it is an important factor in the morale of the ambulance drivers and in their representations to him about future qualifications.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend and I are broadly in accord. It is not necessary in any ambulance service for everyone to have that high level of training, but it is desirable that a much higher proportion should. I agree that the way to that should be paved, probably by local flexibility and productivity agreements, to release the resources to pay for it, as has happened in Northumbria and Wiltshire—as my hon. Friends the Members for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) have already said.

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that clarification, which brings me to the second part of my remarks, which concern the non-emergency ambulance service. That is also important. It arranges for the collection of patients to take them for treatment and for their collection from hospital or place of treatment after they have been treated. It has been very unsatisfactory in London for a long time. Now is the time to tackle it. It must be a problem for management rather than for ambulance drivers.

Day after day, I receive letters and representations from constituents saying that, in advanced age, they have sat at home and waited for an ambulance to come at the appointed hour of 9 am. By 4 o'clock it has not arrived, and by 5 o'clock they give up. That is unsatisfactory. Sometimes, the ambulance picks them up on time and gets them to hospital, but they must wait for up to eight hours for the ambulance to take them home. That is damaging for patients' morale. There must be many occasions when the treatment for which they have been taken to hospital is undone by the long, damaging and hungry wait. They get no food, and there is no one to talk to. They must sit and wait. I look to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to improve the non-emergency service across London and the rest of the country.

The present dispute touches the hearts and families of everyone. No one can say with certainty that he or she will never require the aid of an ambulance driver or worker. Therefore, there is natural sympathy for that fine body of people. I know them well in my constituency, and I regard them highly. There is a discipline upon everyone—hon. Members, the ambulance men and those who employ them —to see that their conditions of employment are always fair. They must give, management must give, but a solution must be found, and found soon.

9 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): There is general agreement among hon. Members that we must look for a long-term settlement and not just a short-term ceasefire in the dispute. The problem is not just to solve the current pay element but to make sure that we never face this problem again. It is clear that both management and unions are increasingly desperate for a face-saving formula, but a marginal pay increase and a vague commitment to a future review body are just not enough. We do not want any more accidents.

There are many underlying causes of the dispute. It goes much deeper and further back than current pay levels. There is a deep-seated morale crisis in the ambulance service, and it is based on several factors. The lack of recognition of their status and the language used throughout the dispute have not helped. There is a clear lack of training opportunities. Again, that has been fundamental to ambulance personnels' response to the offer of increased pay for paramedics. There is an absence of any meaningful reward for being trained. Although a remedy has been offered, it is limited by the lack of training. There is resentment at the lack of overtime pay. Many people would be surprised to know that ambulance

workers' overtime is paid not at time-and-a-quarter, time-and-a-half or double-time rates, but at ordinary rates.

There is no acknowledgement of the experience and expertise that are acquired after several years' service. An ambulance worker who has been employed for 10, 20 or 30 years gets only three extra days' holiday in recognition of that experience. Many hon. Members know that if one needs an emergency ambulance and one is attended to by someone with 10 or 20 years' experience, one's chances of survival are much higher than if one is attended to by a new but enthusiastic recruit who has not yet learnt to use all the tools of the trade.

The debate has revolved around whether the ambulance service is an emergency service. Most members of the public know that, in an emergency, one dials 999 if one needs a fire engine, police car or an ambulance. Enormous relief, gratitude and respect are accorded to ambulance personnel when they answer such calls.

Yesterday, on the 5 o'clock programme on Radio 4, a letter was read out from the mother of a girl who had been critically injured in a road accident. When her daughter was on the way to a good recovery, the mother sought out the hospital consultant under whose care her daughter had been to thank him for his dedication and expertise. He said that she should thank the ambulance people who delivered her daughter alive to the hospital. Without that expertise a life would not have been saved.

Whether we are talking about 999 calls or people visiting hospital for chemotherapy, radiotheraphy or dialysis, they are all seen as life or death matters. It was stated in a recent radio programme about London that on a typical Saturday night the fire brigade received 140 999 calls, whereas there were 2,000 calls for ambulances. Those figures must be seen in the context of what the fire brigade and the police do. For example, much of their work is routine, and all fire brigade calls are 999 calls.

When firemen are not on active service, they are not doing other more routine work. Generally speaking, they are training to ensure that they keep fit. They do that in their various fire stations, and to many people that is thought of as leisure activity. I am not knocking that, but compare it with ambulance workers who undertake their emergency work in addition to their other duties.

The Secretary of State may not have seen the justice of the ambulance men and women's cause, but the overwhelming majority of the public have. They recognise the emergency nature of their work. The 6·5 per cent. offer is frequently compared with the 6·5 per cent. accepted by the nurses, but the nurses accepted that settlement before inflation was as high as it is today. Further, the nurses' settlement followed a substantial, exceptional and wholly deserved increase in 1988, when the Government were forced to respond to a public outcry over the level of nurses' wages. There is now a similar public outcry on behalf of ambulance workers.

There must be an independent review body. The dispute must be settled by a binding pendular arbitration process, and it would be fair to expect a no-strike agreement in return for a commitment on the part of management to submit offers and claims to binding arbitration in the event of disagreement.

It has been said time and again in the debate that there are inadequate facilities for training paramedics. It is clear that the ambulance personnel will set themselves adamantly against allowing the Government to take the paramedic route, as it were, out of the dispute without giving a clear commitment about access to that type of training. If paramedic and general skills training for ambulance personnel is to be made more widely available, so that ambulance workers will have the opportunity to upgrade their skills and salaries and embark on more of a career structure, that course may be reconsidered. At present, so few ambulance workers have access to such training that they feel that, in fairness to their colleagues, they cannot accept it.

We need a long-term formula to solve the dispute. Nothing short term will do. It must involve an independent pay review body, binding pendular arbitration and probably a no-strike agreement. It must include more and better paramedic training and an acknowledgement of the status of ambulance personnel and their emergency role. Above all, Britain's ambulance personnal must be acknowledged as fulfilling that vital emergency service on which all of us may at some stage depend.

9.8 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I agree with the Secretary of State and others who have said that there can be few more inappropriate places to try to make progress in resolving the dispute than a debate in the House of Commons. But at least it gives us the oportunity rationally, if not calmly, to consider some of the longer-term problems—which the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) outlined—of the ambulance service, its public perceptions and its principal characteristics.

It is not surprising that, although the public may be ignorant of the details of the dispute—particularly the fact that the ambulance workers have received an offer of 6·5 per cent., which has been accepted by 94 per cent. of other National Health Service workers—they have a great deal of sympathy for the ambulance workers' case.

One of the first things that I did when I heard that the dispute was in train was to talk to the local ambulance workers in my constituency of Kidderminster. I pay tribute to those people. They are loyal, hard-working and sensible people who obviously have a great commitment to their service. Their rate of staff turnover, if that exhibits loyalty, is extremely low. On the other hand, they did not have a clear definition of what was required of them. Their job was not particularly well-structured and there was no real incentive to improve their professional qualifications.

In short, they are imprisoned inside a salary structure that is inappropriate to their different abilities and qualifications to the extent that a leading ambulance man with 15 years' experience and with paramedic qualifications, who has spent no fewer than five months on off-the-job training to gain those qualifications, is paid only £3,000 more than a new recruit who has possibly only two weeks' training in first aid and has good driving skills. That lack of differentiation across the ambulance service is wrong and is possibly perpetuated by the way in which the service is organised.

People's perception is that old people or out-patients are transported in ambulances that to all intents and purposes are appropriate to the highest kind of ambulance care, and they perceive that use as not necessarily appropriate. Again, it is not appreciated by the public that, although 15,000 of our 22,000 ambulance staff have qualified training and between 12 and 18 months relevant

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

experience, in most cases—except for the paramedics—those qualifications amount to nowhere near the skills levels of senior nurses who are paid £12,000, which is only £500 more than the wage offer that has recently been made to leading ambulance men in the current pay negotiations.

Under those circumstances, irrespective of comparability and the effect of any wage increases on public sector pay, irrespective of the possibility that a large pay increase will undermine management and the Whitley structure, and irrespective of the fact that a large pay increase would lead to a fall in patient services or even to a decline in morale among other NHS staff who have not decided to take industrial action in prosecuting their pay claims, surely, on a true skill basis alone, across-the-board increases irrespective of the degree of skill, the local geography and the local labour markets would be totally unjustified in terms of the long-term good of the ambulance service. The Government are therefore right to resist them.

However, that is not to say that the ambulance service does not have a case for restructuring or for higher pay. Indeed it does, but that should be achieved within the framework of changes to the 1986 agreement and in the pay and conditions of ambulance staff.

I shall outline four elements that such an agreement should contain. First, subject to national guidelines on standards of service, the ambulance service should be as decentralised as possible, because then decisions could be more responsive to the needs of the local labour market and to what the local community needs. As long as the national negotiations confirm a pay package that protects the real value of ambulance workers' pay, questions of relative pay, merit pay and skill differentials should be decided as locally as possible.

Secondly, the organisation of the service should be as local as possible. We have already heard that, in Northumberland and Avon, 43 per cent. of the cases for which the ambulance service is used to provide transport for the elderly are covered by a separate service—albeit one that is county council funded. The out-patient services are farmed out to local taxi firms and 10 per cent. of accident and emergency resources are concentrated on that service, which is increasingly a paramedical service.

That sort of organisation would have a number of advantages. Staff would be deployed more appropriately according to their skill, and vehicles and capital equipment would be used more effectively. Also, savings would be available to be ploughed into a better quality service, and, possibly most importantly, the professionalism that the ambulance workers possess could be better rewarded through a clearer idea of the tasks demanded of them.

Thirdly, there should be greater incentives for paramedical qualifications in the ambulance service. A £500 increase to gain qualifications that take between five and eight months off-the-job training is not significant. That should be considered without delay to improve the professional qualifications and the drive of the ambulance men.

Fourthly, if the ambulance service were divided so that 10 per cent. was primarily orientated towards accident and emergency and staffed with people with better qualifications, we could ensure that capital spending was primarily orientated towards that service. Defibrillators and other capital equipment that are supplied to ambulance services in my area and other areas only through voluntary subscription could be provided through Government or local authorities. Obviously, that would improve the quality of the newly specialised accident and emergency service.

Those should be some of the goals in the long term. In the meantime, the Government are right to hold the line on the dispute, while offering to consider the structure, pay and conditions of the ambulance service in the medium term.

9.16 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Every hon. Member who has attended the debate will be left with three overriding impressions. The first will be the clear, overwhelming public support for the ambulance service in its dispute with the Government, and its dispute is with the Government alone. The second will be the genuine desire among almost all hon. Members for a settlement to the dispute.

Sadly, the third impression is a new one from tonight's debate. It is absurd for Conservative Members to suggest that it is inappropriate for the House to discuss a dispute that is now in its 18th week. We cannot settle the dispute across this Table, but it has to be settled across a table in the end. We should discuss the issues and consider which way forward is appropriate.

The sad and new impression that comes from tonight's debate is the total intransigence of the Government's position. Many Conservative Members have told the Government that they cannot take an intransigent and entrenched position and expect to negotiate from it. It has been conceded by many Conservative Members that the union position is flexible on the amount of the settlement and on the mechanism by which it might be reached. That is clear and undeniable. If the Secretary of State—as he has indicated by shaking his head on several occasions, whenever those issues have been raised—does not believe it, he should put it to the test. He cannot put it to the test if he says in advance of entering into negotiations—which is his present position—that there can be no movement on the terms of the wage settlement or the indexing arrangement. One cannot negotiate on that basis.

The debate is an accident that he has created because he was initially complacent about it. Subsequently he has moved from insensitivity to condescension. If I may offer the Secretary of State some advice in a friendly spirit across the Floor, he should get himself off the screen and confine himself to the negotiating room. That is where the dispute must be settled, and quickly. It cannot be settled on a take it or leave it, total surrender offer of 6·5 per cent. The dispute started in 1989 and if it had been settled some time ago it may have been possible to settle near that figure. I have no intention of advising any of the parties to this dispute about where to settle. Further, it is clear that, in present circumstances, that offer is no longer viable. It is no way forward for the Secretary of State now to say, "Take it or leave it".

The Secretary of State must remove the other obstacle to settlement: the Prime Minister. In recent months, the dispute and pay claim have been turned by the Prime Minister into a test about wages policy for the whole of the public sector and the country. That is the ultimate logjam which the Secretary of State must have the courage to face

up to. He must also have the courage to lose face—if that is how he sees it. I assure him, as other hon. Members have already, that he will gain much respect if he is prepared to reconsider his position, return to the Cabinet, persuade his colleagues to accept his views, bring the proposals back, sit round a table and hammer out a settlement in the short time available. In his heart, he knows that such a settlement can be reached.

The ambulance workers are a dedicated, hard-working and skilled group of people. They are committed to improving the service and hate the dispute as much as hon. Members do—in fact, they want a settlement even more than we do. There are two blockages to a settlement and I urge the Secretary of State to find the courage, dignity and statesmanship to remove them, sit down at the table and find a settlement.

9.22 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): If I were to pick out one word from the speech of the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), it would be "settlement", which we all seek. The Government, ambulance men and the National Health Service all seek that elusive settlement. If I were to sing a duet with the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes), who has levitated up the stairs a little, it would be to reflect on one of her last words —to call for an element of pendulum bargaining as a way forward for the dispute and the service. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State might reflect on that for the future.

I start, as many hon. Members have done, with a salute to the ambulance service and its personnel. I have always had a high regard for those who work in the ambulance service. If I needed reminding, I was given a reminder one morning just over a year ago when there was a train crash at Clapham junction in my constituency. I saw the ambulance workers at first hand and was there alongside them as they battled to save lives and did so, and then battled to remove the dead. Theirs was a fairly gruesome and awesome task that morning and underlined the sort of work that many ambulance men face day by day. That is why we have a great feeling for the ambulance men and it is right for that feeling to be reflected in speeches from both sides of the House.

During this sad dispute I have talked to ambulance men and women from my area. It is clear that they do not like being in dispute and want to find a way out. The paradox is that it was started by union action. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) referred to entering a dispute and finding a way out; I hope that that was in union members' minds when they entered the dispute. It is important to find a way out that is fair and affordable. Sadly, when in dispute, it is not always possible to find a way out that contains both factors. Therefore, we must look for that element of compromise to end this problem.

My message to the Health Service management is to keep looking for solutions and keep explaining in simple and clear terms what they are offering. It is clear from talking to my ambulance men that they do not always understand precisely what is on offer. When the offer was increased from 6·5 per cent. to between 9 and 16 per cent. over 18 months, they immediately took the figure on an annual basis and came up with a figure of 6 per cent. They thought that they were being offered an overall reduction. They did not understand that it was backdated to April and that pay in the pocket now is not a straight sum. The management of the NHS must get that message across.

The ambulance men and their union leaders must bear it in mind that perhaps the country and the Health Service cannot afford the solution that they seek. It is a fact that excessive—or perhaps I should say high—pay settlements can trigger inflationary spirals in the economy and could trigger a spiral in the Health Service. It is unrealistic to think that, while the ambulance service is within the Health Service, there will be no knock-on effect if the ambulance men receive a high pay reward. That may be sad, but it is a fact.

The effect of a high wage settlement in the Health Service now can be only a reduced service. A letter of 10 January from the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority to London Members of Parliament said that 75 per cent. of NHS costs are pay-related. That means that high pay awards above the budget that has been prepared can result only in closures of beds and wards, postponed operations and delays in improving the Health Service. I beg the ambulance men and women to reflect on that when they seek a way out of the dispute. I hope that both sides will come together soon to find a solution. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will play his part in looking ahead to the future. If the British people express one view, it is that they want such a dispute never to occur again.

We must consider the structure of the negotiation procedures. Discussions with my ambulance men and women lead me to believe that they would be willing to consider a no-strike agreement for the future in return for some sort of assured settlement. If they do not achieve parity with other emergency services, they will seek some structure linked to a no-strike agreement or possibly alternative ambulance services. I believe that that is the way forward. The people working in the ambulance service do not want the strike to continue. I hope that they and the management will come together to ensure that patients do not suffer from the dispute and that the ambulance men return to work to provide the service which we know that they provide so well.

9.27 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I shall take only a short time to support what my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) said about the conduct of the dispute in the west midlands. I sincerely believe that the action of Sir James Ackers was reckless in the extreme. He put people's lives at risk by locking up ambulances and removing insurance cover and the road fund licence. He did so of his own accord without the authority of the regional health authority. He did that purely as an executive action. It was an example of Ramboesque management, simply to prove his credentials to the Secretary of State as a member of the executive health board. It is not on for public officials to conduct themselves in that way and then refuse to meet Members of Parliament to discuss what has happened. Our constituents' lives were at risk and we are as much entitled to put our case here as we are to put it to the Minister's officials in the west midlands. That is what a devolved health authority is all about. Sir James Ackers refused access until he knew about the debate today.

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

In the meantime, local authorities have taken action in the west midlands. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) talked about making the ambulance service local. It was perfectly OK when it was run by the local authorities. People got a decent 999 service from the local authorities before and that is the way forward, not a privatised local service.

Everybody knows that there has to be a solution, and the sooner it is found, the better for all concerned. There will have to be give and take and above all the solution will have to include a negotiating mechanism that will guarantee that this vital group of workers will never again have to take such action. The Government cannot escape their responsibility in achieving that.

9.30 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): We are in the 18th week of a dispute of great seriousness, yet today the Secretary of State has told us nothing new, nothing positive, nothing to suggest that he has any clear idea of the way forward from here.

The Secretary of State's speech will fill the public with deep dismay. People are concerned that a vital emergency service has been suspended and that ambulance crews have been subjected by the Government to a campaign aimed at belittling and undermining them, and people are concerned about the huge sums of public money that the Government have squandered in their conduct of the dispute.

It is costing £23,000 every day for the police to provide cover in the west midlands; £26,000 every day for police cover in south Yorkshire; £10,000 every day for police cover in west Yorkshire; and £60,000 every day for police cover in London. The bill for that and for other police and Army work will be sent to hard-pressed district health authorities that are already closing beds and wards in an attempt to meet their budget deadline by the end of the year without going into deficit.

The money spent on continuing the dispute would easily have met the ambulance men's pay claim in full. The Secretary of State uses public money to prolong the dispute, but says that he cannot use public money to do what the public really want, and that is to settle the dispute.

The reason why there is a dispute at all is that the Government offered ambulance crews a wage increase below the level of inflation—in effect, a wage cut. That would have been unwelcome to any group of workers, but it is particularly unwelcome to ambulance workers, who have seen a comparative decline in their pay over recent years.

In 1986 ambulance crews' earnings were 6 per cent. below average male earnings. That gap has now widened, so that their earnings are 16 per cent. below. In 1986 ambulance crews had parity of earnings with fire fighters. Now they have fallen behind by £60 a week. Ambulance workers' pay is now so low that many have to claim housing benefit and family credit to make ends meet. Yet it is that group of public employees who have been asked to see their standard of living cut.

It is not that a decent pay award to the ambulance crews would set some sort of dangerous precedent, as the Secretary of State would have us believe. Other groups of public workers have won increases above the rate of inflation. For example, the police have won more than 9 per cent., fire fighters 8·8 per cent. and, as has been mentioned, senior civil servants and Members of Parliament nearly 11 per cent. Now the newspapers are full of stories that the Secretary of State's front man in this sorry affair, the NHS chief executive, Duncan Nichol, is about to receive a pay rise that is worth more than 50 per cent. of what an ambulance worker earns in an entire year.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Has my hon. Friend noticed the newspaper coverage of the fact that Conservative councillors in some areas have supported the ambulance workers? Has she heard today of the strange events in Stirling, where Mr. Alan Hogarth, personal assistant to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), and Mr. Peter Finnie, the Conservative party agent in that area, were caught red-handed secretly tape recording the district council's discussions on the dispute?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but I emphasise that her remarks must be relevant to the debate.

Mrs. Fyfe: Can my hon. Friend imagine what was the intention of the Stirling Securitate behind that bizarre behaviour?

Ms. Harman: Whatever may have been the intention, the public will not be browbeaten into withdrawing their support. The Secretary of State has also tried to browbeat ambulance crews into accepting an inadequate pay offer by delivering a series of smears and insults, while refusing to meet ambulance staff representatives face to face for discussions or negotiations.

Despite the Secretary of State's intransigence, ambulance staff took the softest possible industrial action available to them. They withdrew from performing routine duties, but they continued to provide accident, emergency and other vital services. Clearly, that was not the outcome that the Secretary of State wanted, so he quickly escalated the dispute by suspending crews and then calling in the police and Army. Although those services gave of their best, it soon became apparent that they were inadequate for the task. The Secretary of State chooses to ignore that aspect and the views shared by those whose opinions ought to carry some weight with him.

Dr. David Williams, president of the Casualty Surgeons Association, told ITN that the emergency system is confused, which leads to delays, and that police and Army personnel have neither the training nor the equipment to deal with all casualties. That sentiment was echoed by Dr. Pamela Nash, head of accident and emergency services at Hillingdon hospital, who commented that the dispute was having a serious effect on patients. For all those reasons, the public continue to call on ambulance crews to provide emergency services, even though they have been suspended without pay.

Despite being provoked, accident crews are responding with dignity, restraint and an overriding sense of responsibility. The Government's response, by contrast, has been disgraceful. In Coventry, 'phone lines to the voluntary ambulance stations were cut, and those to the crews' social club were also disconnected, so that, no matter what the emergency, members of the public were

unable to call on the speedy and expert assistance of trained ambulance men and women rather than contact the police or Army.

In London, police officers refused to divulge the telephone number of volunteer ambulance crews to people seeking urgent assistance for a man who had fallen from a ladder and broken his spine, arm, leg, rib and pelvis. The police officer said that instructions had been received on the highest authority not to disclose that telephone number. As a consequence, the injured man lay on the ground without receiving assistance for more than two hours.

In Birmingham, a private company, Racal, provided Motorola 'phones and other equipment to allow volunteer emergency crews to provide the city with adequate coverage. Almost immediately, letters were sent to Birmingham ambulance crews informing them that their vehicles were no longer taxed or insured and that crews and their passengers—that is patients—risked committing the criminal offence of using a vehicle without its owner's consent.

This week, within hours of ambulance crews working without pay to provide essential services after the M25 crash, ambulances in London were immobilised by management to ensure that crews would be unable to provide vital services again. I do not say that those and similar actions by management were undertaken on the direct orders of the Government, but no one can fail to detect that a guiding hand is at work.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does my hon. Friend recall that when miners who took part in industrial action during the 1984-85 strike were alleged to have engaged in actions of the type that she has just described they were put in gaol?

Ms. Harman: The Government have systematically sought to escalate the dispute in the cynical hope that if and when disaster strikes ambulance workers will finally forfeit public support and be forced to give up. As we know, the public have not been deceived. The petition in support of the ambulance workers is the largest ever presented and, as a result, the Government's handling of the dispute will find its way into "The Guinness Book of Records". The signatures and the money given so freely in collections all over the country are more than mere tokens of support. They are the public expression of the shame that is felt by the British people at the shoddy treatment meted out to the heroes of Lockerbie and King's Cross.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): The hon. Lady is trying to mislead the House into believing that the dispute is entirely the responsibility of the Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is."] In fact, the ambulance crews are responsible in very large measure for the denial of facilities to patients in need. They are just as much to blame, if not more so. In Staffordshire, crews were offering to work only 50 per cent. of the time. Is the hon. Lady suggesting that management should rely on a 50 per cent. service?

Ms. Harman: The question for the House tonight is not who caused the dispute but whether the Government have the political will to solve it. People have been genuinely distressed to hear Ministers declare and imply that the ambulance service is not really an emergency service. It appears to be the only non-emergency service equipped with blue flashing lights and sirens. People were sickened and embarrassed to hear the Secretary of State describe ambulance crews in the following terms:

"They are professional drivers, a worthwhile job—but not an exceptional one."

Does the Secretary of State wish us to believe that skills such as emergency resuscitation, assisting emergency childbirth, dealing with haemorrhages and immobilising fractures are learnt from the highway code? Does he think that he will be able to persuade his colleague, Sir Leon Brittan, who congratulated and thanked the ambulance crews after the Brighton bombing, or his right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), the former Secretary of State for Transport, who congratulated ambulance workers after the British Midland air crash? The right hon. and learned Gentleman's handling of the dispute has failed to persuade a number of his own Back-Bench colleagues from whom we have heard tonight.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: What is the hon. Lady's motive for inventing insults that no one ever made? Is it to inflame reluctant ambulance men into joining industrial action that they do not wish to take?

Ms. Harman: Our overwhelming concern tonight is that the Secretary of State should show that he will take the initiative to solve the dispute. He has failed to persuade many of his own Back Benchers. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) expressed concern. The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) expressed concern. The hon. Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) and even for Fylde (Mr. Jack) have all expressed concern tonight.

The Secretary of State has not even been able to get support for his handling of the dispute from the sections of the press that the Tory party has usually been able to count on. *The Sun* says:

"Settle 999 row. How much longer, says the Sun, are the Government going to let the whole sorry business drag on?"

The *Daily Mail* says:

"It is time for Mr. Clarke to pay Santa not Scrooge and to do what most men and women down every high street in the land are cheerfully doing—put his percentage into the ambulancemen's bucket."

The *Daily Express* says:

"It should not be beyond the wit of Ministers to make concessions that would end the dispute without triggering claims elsewhere."

The Secretary of State cannot even claim that the unions have forced him into the stance that he has taken. The unions have said that they are willing to negotiate on local pay flexibility and on their 11·4 per cent. claim. They have said that they are willing to negotiate on a formula. They are not insisting on the fire service formula. But what they rightly insist is that there should be a pay mechanism for the future, so that a dispute such as this can never happen again.

The Government's plan to browbeat the ambulance crews back to work has backfired, and has served only to increase public support for the ambulance men. It seems that the Government have no strategy and they have descended into a shambles. Last Friday, the Secretary of State briefed the Sunday papers that more money might be available. By Sunday he was denying it. Last Tuesday, the Prime Minister said that no more money was available, and at the No. 10 briefing on Wednesday they said that there might be.

[Ms. Harman]

The public's rejection of the Government's approach has left the Government bewildered. It is clear from listening to the Secretary of State in the debate that he has not decided whether to tough it out, or whether, as he no doubt sees it, he should cut his losses.

When the Government lose their way, it becomes the responsibility of the House to point them in the right direction. Tonight's vote offers that opportunity to hon. Members on both sides of the House. It offers the opportunity to bring this unfortunate dispute to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion.

9.45 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Beginning with the Secretary of State, all hon. Members have paid fulsome tribute to the important work undertaken by ambulance men and women in Britain. We share a pride in their work, and we want them to return to normal working at the earliest opportunity.

I shall not respond in kind to the remarks of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). Perhaps it is hard for her to recall that, when the Opposition were in power, the pay of most National Health Service workers dropped in value. Since the Government have been in power there are more workers in the Health Service than ever before, their pay has risen and they are treating more patients. The Secretary of State spoke of his passionate commitment to the National Health Service. All of us, when we see the record sums being spent, and the record number of patients being treated, know that his commitment is working out in practice—they are not just idle words.

I stress our appreciation for ambulance men and women, for the police, for the Army and for the voluntary services who are maintaining the emergency services, often in difficult circumstances.

This dispute is a tragedy partly because it is needless. All hon. Members agree that ambulance men and women preform an important function within the National Health Service but they are NHS workers, not local authority workers, like fire fighters, or Home Office workers, like the police. They work for the NHS, along with millions of other employees, and we have to consider their financial rewards alongside those of the other people who work in the service.

We want ambulance crews to be well-qualified and well-trained and to provide the service that we all look to them to perform. This offer, which was originally 6·5 per cent., was recommended by trade union leaders, and 84 per cent. of NHS employees have accepted something in that region. I am pleased to say that 97 per cent. of NHS employees have accepted agreements without resorting to industrial action, which sacrifices and jeopardises patients, and is no friend of the Health Service.

Few hon. Members can look at the increasing threat, and the disruption and the difficulties caused to the provision of emergency services, with anything but profound concern. Hon. Members have mentioned the importance of emergency services. Ambulance men and women perform valuable work on the emergency side, but nine out of 10 miles travelled are for non-emergencies. That is equally valuable work, and it is important to the frail, vulnerable people throughout Britain who are unable currently to receive the care that they need because of the industrial action, which jeopardises them.

There has been a great deal of misinformation about the final offer, which is for salary increases of between 9 and 16 per cent. over the next 18 months, depending on the location and extent of paramedical training. Those higher salaries include an extra payment of £500 a year for staff with full paramedical training. The back pay involved by the end of December was between £680 and £1,450. In London the new rates would result in increases of between 10·9 and 16·3 per cent., and increases of up to 22 per cent. in overtime rates.

An undertaking has also been given to agree a national framework for staff with intermediate paramedical skills, with payments backdated to April last year. It is important to spell out precisely what the offer means, because of the problem of misrepresentation. Equally important, however, is the joint review of the 1986 salary structure, to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred. That improved the status and recognised the professional nature of the ambulance workers' job. There is a wide agenda, which should include flexible local arrangements to deal with problems of recruitment and retention, overtime and improved productivity.

We reject the concept of comparability. The Labour party rejected it when it was in power, Clegg rejected it and this Government certainly reject it—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say this to the whole House. I am not taking one side or the other, but may we have a halt to these private conversations?

Mrs. Bottomley: Let me deal with some of the points that have been made. Many hon. Members talked about the importance of training, including my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). The hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) also mentioned the importance of paramedical staff who are not nationally trained and are not covered by the management's offer.

The fourth paragraph of the management's final offer, to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred, makes an explicit commitment to set up a review so that staff trained either locally to standards other than those of the NHS training authority, or partially to those standards, can be considered. It suggests that the review should be completed by the end of February.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister has moved away from what is, in her words, the "final offer". Will she make it clear that the Government seek the total surrender of the ambulance workers, and that in no circumstances will they be prepared to shift one iota from their present position? Is that how the debate will be left?

Mrs. Bottomley: Let me make it clear that the Government have already offered substantially more than they did originally. Another £6 million must be found this year—the equivalent of cataract operations, coronary artery bypass operations and hip replacement operations. It is not, as Opposition Members imagine, a question of thinking of a figure and doubling it; the money must be found from limited resources, and it is patient care that stands to suffer. When people who work for the National Health Service hear language such as that used by the hon.

Gentleman—if I may call him that—they cannot feel confident about their welfare and wellbeing should his party ever return to government.

I pay tribute to the contributions of several of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) spoke, as ever, eloquently and effectively about the importance of the service. My hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) and for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) both made particular mention of Northumbria, and I am pleased to have the opportunity of putting on record my appreciation of the efforts of Laurie Caple, who has made the Northumbria ambulance service more efficient and better able to provide an effective service for patients. We welcome the fact that they are preparing plans that will provide them with the freedom to determine their own pay rates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) referred to the need to improve non-emergency ambulance services. I endorse his appreciation of the work that ambulance staff do. I share his concern about the development of the non-emergency side of the work of ambulance staff.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) referred to the need for local flexibility in pay determination—*[Interruption.]* We fully endorse his remarks and the direction in which—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady again, but I appeal to the House to give her a fair hearing. It is very difficult to hear what is being said at this end of the Chamber.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) referred to the arbitration procedure that has been recommended by the Social Services Committee. The Government believe that unilateral access to arbitration would be unhelpful in NHS pay negotiations. The management must ensure that pay awards do not divert resources away from patient care. That is the crucial point. NHS resources, secured by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, are at a record level. The Government have to consider the needs of patients. They do not have trade unions to act on their behalf. They look to the Government to protect their interests and to secure their wellbeing.

A number of Opposition Members referred to the service that is being provided by the police and the Army. It is an effective and competent service, but all of us would prefer ambulance men and women to return to work. That is what we shall seek to achieve. In the meantime, the police and the Army are providing a dedicated and, in many cases, an experienced and skilled service. I went to Chelsea barracks to meet an Army ambulance crew. I was most impressed by their competence and skill in responding to the task that they have been asked to fulfil.

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: No.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred to the willingness of crews to be available for work. Union leaders made that commitment, but today n crews in West Sussex have walked out. They are also refusing calls in Oxfordshire, Cheshire, London, Essex and Surrey. That makes the commitment to provide an accident and emergency service sound fairly hollow.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) referred to the letter that he had received from the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority. I am pleased that my hon. Friend referred to that letter, in which the regional health authority's chairman made three points. She said that to increase the management side's offer was no answer to the present dispute. She also made the important point that her authority supports efforts only to make pay awards that can be afforded. That is a crucial task within the National Health Service.

During the past two years, an additonal £5 billion has been spent on the NHS. There have been record achievements by the NHS and it employs 1 million workers. The Government have made effective and clear commitments. Few of us can have confidence in the innuendoes and allegations of the Labour party, which so clearly demonstrated its inability to run the NHS adequately when it was in power.

We very much hope that this needless and sad dispute will shortly be over. Ambulance men and women are an essential part of the NHS. We hope that they will soon return to work. They provide a skilled, qualified and admirable front-line service for the people of this country. It is important that they should recognise that they are valued by the Government.

We hope that the Government will be successful in an early resolution of the dispute. I urge right hon. and hon. Members to well and truly reject the motion, which does nothing to help the ambulance men but only stirs up misunderstanding, misinformation and hostility.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You had to call for less noise in the Chamber twice during the wind-up speeches. With respect, the noise was not very great, but the amplification is virtually non-existent. My colleagues and I were unable to hear although the Minister was speaking perfectly adequately. Further to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) this afternoon, it is very important that the equipment should be replaced as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman has said. I have a preliminary report on the amplification here and I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the matter is being looked into.

The House having divided: Ayes 223, Noes 303.

Division No. 34] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*

Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John Battle.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, Jam[illegible]
Hind, Kenneth
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Question on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

'That this House recognises the important contribution made by the skilled and dedicated service of ambulance staff; regrets that some have seen fit to take action against patients in furtherance of a pay dispute; appreciates the work of the police and Army in maintaining an adequate emergency service; supports the Secretary of State for Health and the National Health Service Chief Executive on their handling of the dispute; and urges them not to give way to demands for a higher inflationary pay settlement or any formula or other arrangement that would automatically trigger future pay increases which could only have an adverse effect on patient services.'.

PETITION

NHS Reform

10.15 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition which has been signed by 17,000 of my constituents. It expresses the deep concern within my constituency about the implications of the Government's Health Service proposals and draws attention to the widespread opposition among doctors, nurses and other NHS personnel to the Government's proposals, and also concern among patients who use the Health Service. My constituents ask that the Government take full account of their views.

To lie upon the Table.

Party Conferences (Police Costs)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The issue that I raise is of importance to Bournemouth, Brighton and Blackpool and the three respective counties. Those three resorts are the only ones that can provide adequate facilities for the two main party annual conferences. Although, for obvious reasons, most of the detail in my speech will concentrate on Blackpool and Lancashire, the same points apply equally to Brighton and Bournemouth.

I have received several messages of support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. Like me, they are concerned about the costs of policing those annual conferences falling on ratepayers. The poll tax will make the situation even worse. The method of gearing will make that additional spending—if the Government deem it part of a total overspending—will cause an unacceptable increase in poll tax. My case is simple. Those costs should be funded 100 per cent. from national resources.

In Tuesday's *Lancashire Evening Telegraph,* my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is quoted as saying in a letter to the Home Secretary:

"County councillors felt a 'sense of injustice' that the county should get no special help with the cost of policing the conference."

That is also the feeling of ratepayers in Lancashire.

I make it clear that I am not opposed to security arrangements being made. It is regrettable that terrorism has made increased security necessary in so many aspects of our lives over recent years. The tragic events in Brighton in October 1984 all too clearly remind hon. Members of the problem. I do not believe that terrorism or violence helps the cause for which people are fighting, and it often does exactly the reverse. It is important to make it clear that I do not regard the debate as party political. A reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 10 November 1989, at column No. 805 of *Hansard,* shows that this year's additional costs were £4,000 in Sussex for the Labour conference at Brighton, and £1·08 million in Lancashire for the Conservatives' conference at Blackpool.

Those figures will be reversed when the Labour party is in government. I could argue that there will not be a complete reversal—that the Labour party's figure may not go as high as that of the Conservatives or that the figure for the Conservatives will not go as low as the present Labour party figure—but that would be a hypothetical point and I do not want to be sidetracked from the main case that I am making. I appreciate that whichever party is in government or in opposition, however regrettable it may be, we must continue to provide security to avoid a repeat of the tragic events of 1984.

The *Official Report* shows that, since 1985, I have raised this issue on various occasions and in various ways. I have not been alone in doing so, although I have perhaps been the most persistent. The record shows that the issue has been pursued from both sides of the House; it is important to recognise that. I have also pursued the matter in correspondence with the Home Office and with the Department of the Environment.

Lancashire county council has taken up the matter by letter and by way of delegations. The issue has also been raised in the other House—for example, on 1 November last when it was raised by my noble Friend Lord Taylor of Blackburn. The exchange appears at columns 78 to 80 of the *Official Report* of the other place. The Minister's final comment in that exchange was "Bad luck." Bad luck it is for Lancashire, Dorset and Sussex, but the Government must think again and do something to rectify the position.

The last letter that I received from the Minister of State, Home Office, Lord Ferrers, was dated 6 December 1989 and he enclosed a copy of a letter to Brian Hill, the chief executive of Lancashire county council. The crux of the response was that no progress had been made, and he added:

"the Home Secretary and I have further considered the position but consider that the normal police funding arrangements should be retained in this instance."

That is why I have initiated tonight's debate. Giving the matter further consideration is not good enough. We want a change of policy and a fair deal for our ratepayers, who should not have to pick up the tab for policing the conferences.

This year's Conservative party conference will be at Bournemouth, and the estimated cost is £2 million. It is early days and it is pointless at this stage to consider the detail of that figure. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), who supports the case that I am making tonight, has also pursued the issue over the years. He, too, received a letter from Lord Ferrers, dated 22 December 1989, in which the Minister said that he had agreed to meet Dorset county council representatives about this year's conference. While the letter contained some sympathetic words, the Minister ended by saying yet again:

"we see no grounds for departing from normal police funding arrangements in this case."

Before giving more details about Lancashire, and to avoid leaving Brighton too much on one side, I should mention that column *200* of the *Official Report* for 14 April 1988 contains a written answer to a question from me about additional policing costs for the 1988 Conservative party conference at Brighton of £1·4 million. Sussex, too, is right to be concerned about this matter, as I know it is.

Lancashire county council representatives met the Home Secretary in London in December 1985. They met another Minister in Blackpool in October 1987. Both meetings were unsuccessful. Requests in November 1987 and February 1988 to meet the Home Secretary were rejected. In July of last year, they met the Minister of State, Lord Ferrers. There was a negative response at that meeting, and subsequent correspondence was reported to the Lancashire police committee only early today.

In addition to being concerned about the financial implications, the county police committee is also worried about the policing effects on the rest of the county. That must also be a matter of concern to hon. Members. After all, the conference reduced police numbers in the rest of Lancashire. The committee made that point clearly to the Home Office in a letter dated 24 October last:

"In the run up to, and during the Conference, policing levels in areas outside Blackpool are seriously depleted. In view of their duty to secure the maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force, the Committee are concerned at this falling off in manning levels and the way in which the ratepayers are deprived of an adequate police service which they have paid for through the rates. Thus the ratepayer is not receiving the service that has been paid for, and in addition is expected to find more money to meet the cost of protecting the Government".

I must emphasise again that this is not a political point. Indeed, the final part of the letter states that that protection is necessary irrespective of the party in government at the time.

Some people will argue that the resorts get the benefit of holding the conference in terms of full hotels, bar takings and the other income that arises from spending during conference week. I shall leave that point aside for the moment, but even if it is true, it certainly does not benefit Burnley, Accrington, Nelson or Blackburn, for example, but we also have to pay an additional rate and from this year an extra amount in poll tax to meet that cost. I am sure that the Minister will accept that the areas in the further parts of the county do not benefit from the conference being held at Blackpool.

To return to the resorts themselves, Blackpool could certainly argue that, with its lights and other attractions, it would be full in any event, without the conference being held there. I am sure that the same could be argued for Bournemouth and Brighton. There is therefore no advantage——

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): May I confirm that the view in Bournemouth is that we certainly lose money as a result of a Government conference? We do not gain money—quite the reverse is true. The hon. Gentleman quoted a figure of £2 million, but may I advise him that £2·7 million is being provided by the county council for this year's conference?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman has supported my case. Indeed, it could be argued that a disadvantage arises from the police and security arrangements that are necessary and from the disruption that arises. I am all too aware of the difficulties of getting through Blackpool when the roads are sealed off. I know that those problems cause friction to residents and visitors alike because of the heavy policing and security arrangements during the conference period. Therefore, it could be argued that rather than the conferences being an advantage, we have reached the stage where they are becoming a disadvantage.

In 1985, when the Labour conference was held in Bournemouth, a large car park and swimming pool adjacent to the conference centre were closed because of the security arrangements. I know that that was not popular in Bournemouth. We should not fall into the trap of believing that those resorts will for ever have open arms in welcoming our conferences. I should stress that, although the figures involved are considered large at local level, in terms of Government spending they are small. We are not asking for much. A concession on this matter would remove one small thorn from the Government's side—and it is a small thorn in relation to the many large and real problems that they have at present.

I turn to some of the details of the costs involved. Security at the Winter Gardens and the conference centre hotel in Blackpool cost £560,000 in overtime; overtime in the rest of the county cost £187,000 as the police tried to make up their minimum policing level across the county and planning overtime cost £56,500. There were also various other costs, including £10,000 for the hire of a helicopter for security from the Metropolitan police. All those costs were included in a supplementary estimate, and I believe that the Government do not like local authorities to have supplementary estimates.

Lancashire, Dorset and Sussex have a valid case. I hope that the Minister will be prepared to give some real thought to making a change in policy and giving a fair deal to the ratepayers of those counties. I hope that he will undertake to meet those costs in full in future years.

10.28 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) for allowing me to speak briefly in his Adjournment debate. I am speaking on behalf of my hon. Friends the Members for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and for Wyre (Mr. Mans), for my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell), and for my hon. Friends the Members for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), who are all in their places.

Lancashire folk are not mean. On the contrary, they are very generous. They do not want "summat for nowt", as we say locally, but they want fair play. My constituents believe, as I do, that there are now strong reasons why there should be an increased contribution from central Government towards the cost of policing the party conference of the governing party.

The cost of security is now out of all proportion to any benefits that staging such a major event might bring to such an area. There are certainly no benefits to ratepayers outside the immediate area of the conference, which itself might benefit from additional visitors. Even Blackpool residents might argue that, while the conference brings some additional trade, the sheer size of the security operation deters visitors who might otherwise have visited the resort. The position is aggravated by the fact that ratepayers have less police coverage during the conference. They are paying more to get less.

Many of my constituents are facing financial problems. They are unhappy with the Government for introducing the community charge and with the Labour county council for overspending by £11 million, thereby making the community charge so much higher than it should be—£250 instead of £181. Many of them will face real difficulties in paying that bill. If the Minister were to accept our arguments tonight and allow fairness to prevail, that would give at least a little help to my constituents and give a signal that we understand the problems that they face.

10.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) have drawn attention to the considerable costs of providing security at conferences of political parties, especially of the party in government. That concern is shared by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) and my hon. Friends the Members for Wyre (Mr. Mans), for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), all of whom are here this evening but who, because of time constraints, cannot intervene in the debate.

The costs arise from the increased risk during recent years of terrorist attack. The hon. Member for Burnley suggested that additional financial assistance should be made available to the police authorities of the counties

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

concerned. As he has clearly and ably explained, he believes that it is unreasonable to expect individual police authorities to meet costs on that scale. He also believes that the costs are national rather than local in origin.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the Government have considered the position carefully on a number of occasions. I am sure that, although he will be disappointed, he will not be surprised when I say that the Government remain of the view that normal police funding arrangements should continue to apply.

In recent years we have received a number of representations from local councils and hon. Members—not least from the hon. Gentleman, who I know feels strongly about the matter and has pursued it with persistence. Those representations have concerned, in particular, the conferences held by the Government party. Local authorities, with the support of hon. Members, have asked that the additional costs of policing party conferences be met from Government funds. The most recent representations have been made to my right hon. Friend on behalf of Lancashire, where the Conservative party conference was held last year, and of Dorset, where the conference will be held next year.

The cost of policing party conferences has risen considerably during recent years, especially with the conferences of the party that is in government. As the hon. Gentleman appreciates, that is because the level of threat has particularly increased for members of the Government. However, other parties' conference policing costs have also grown. The load is spread to some degree by the fact that the Conservative conference is held at different venues from year to year, but as the number of places with suitable conference facilities is limited, the burden does fall upon a small number of police authorities.

As matters presently stand, in considering applications from police authorities for additional financial assistance, the Home Secretary must take account of the financial and constitutional arrangements that apply to policing in England and Wales. The Government pay the police specific grant—currently at the rate of 51 per cent.—on all expenditure by police authorities for a police purpose. The remaining 49 per cent. is partly contributed by the ratepayer—or the community charge payer as it will be from 1 April 1990. But here too central Government may make a major contribution through block grant.

Block grant varies from area to area and from year to year because it is based on need. It is not hypothecated to particular functions; local authorities are free to decide how to allocate their resources between services. Taken together, police specific grant and block grant make a substantial contribution to policing costs from central Government funds.

These generous arrangements are designed to cover the whole range of policing. Occasionally, additional payments have been made. That has occurred only in cases where the costs have been both exceptional and unforeseen: exceptional, because expenditure has been so excessive that the efficiency of the force is threatened by the scale of the costs involved; unforeseen in the sense that the police authority was not able to budget for the expenditure. Those factors, however, clearly do not apply in the case of the additional costs of policing party conferences; those costs are foreseeable and can be planned for.

The police authorities concerned argue that local communities should not have to contribute financially to an event which falls to their area by chance and is really only of national interest. I understand, and to some extent sympathise with, that line of reasoning. Party conferences are, however, far from being the only events which could be claimed as primarily national in significance. Most police authorities might make similar claims in other circumstances.

This can happen, for example, in relation to protection of members of the royal family, protection of Ministers, policing of one-off but regularly recurring events such as the Stonehenge summer solstice, and certain types of police activity such as prevention of terrorism, controls at ports, which are expensive, or investigation of drugs-related offences or other major crimes.

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): What will happen if Bournemouth, Blackpool and Brighton simply say that it is not worthwhile? Will the Government simply say that we cannot have conferences there?

Mr. Lloyd: Due to the way that the police grant provides for them, those particular towns will not say that they cannot hold the conferences. More than half of it comes directly from central Government and up to 49 per cent. is spread over the whole of the county and is not met by the town. Therefore, the town's interest or otherwise in having the conference—which is entirely a matter for its residents—cannot be primarily determined by where police costs are paid.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my hon. Friend accept that by no means all the costs incurred are police costs? For example, in Bournemouth we face substantial costs for lifting manholes so that they can be inspected and then sealed, providing barriers, closing down facilities which are owned by the local authority and sometimes closing down shops and adjoining hotels for long periods. Those are not police costs, are not covered by the police grant or, in relation to local authority expenditure, by our standard spending assessments. In the two boroughs that I represent our SSA has fallen substantially.

Mr. Lloyd: I understand that line of reasoning, but many costs, not merely those associated with party conferences, fall to particular authorities at certain times. It could well be argued that those costs could be borne nationally if the same arguments used by my hon. Friend were employed in those cases.

It is a fundamental principle of our present policing arrangements that central and local government share responsibility for the police service and its costs. They do this not by separating out particular functional areas, but by sharing all costs, whether supposedly national or supposedly local. Thus, while the ratepayer may contribute to the costs of some things which could be argued to be national, the Exchequer contributes 51 per cent. at least—more if any block grant is involved—to police costs, even when it could be argued that those were local in origin.

It would be impractical to attempt to determine case by case which costs are local and which national. To single

out a few cases, such as party conferences and the associated expenses would be less than fair. But to attempt to define all costs as either local or national would necessitate a complex and costly bureucratic mechanism. It would also mean potentially fundamental changes to our present policing structure under the Police Act 1964.

The level of central assistance with police costs generally was stepped up in 1986. In that year, police specific grant was increased from 50 per cent. to 51 per cent. That was done in recognition of the increasing burdens faced by police authorities and police forces, including those arising from terrorism. The measure has had a significant impact on police authorities. It has enabled them to recruit up to establishment and to meet rising costs.

The additional costs of policing the Conservative party conference in Blackpool in 1989 were—I understand—estimated by the police authority at £1·1 million. That was around 1·6 per cent. of the police budget of £96·8 million as notified to the Home Office for grant purposes. It compares with the costs of the conference in 1987, which were £829,000, or around 1 per cent. of the police budget. Lancashire has received some £3·4 million in additional police grant since 1986 arising from the increase in the rate of grant in that year, while its conference policing costs since then have added up to around £1·9 million.

The additional costs of policing the conference held at Brighton in 1988 were some £1 million, about 2 per cent. of the Sussex police budget for 1988-89. The additional police grant received by Sussex resulting from the increase to 51 per cent. has added up to about £2·1 million between 1986 and the end of the last financial year.

The additional costs of policing the Conservative party conference held in Bournemouth in 1986 were estimated at around £700,000, which was around 2 per cent. of the Dorset police budget for that year. The additional police grant received by Dorset, since the increase to 51 per cent. in 1986, has been around £1·4 million to date.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves *rose*——

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Pike *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I have very little time and I wish to make a few more remarks so, if my hon. Friends and the hon. Gentleman will excuse me, I shall carry on.

I accept that the costs of increased security at party conferences, particularly those of the Government party, represent an additional burden on the police resources of the areas concerned. As I have explained, however, there has been an improvement in the police grant position, which helps the authorities concerned with increased costs of this nature.

I know that there is also concern about the effects which an event of this kind has on manpower levels in the area concerned. Police officers deployed to policing the conference cannot be on duty elsewhere in the force area. This, however, would be the case with any major demand which fell on any police force. The chief constable has to decide how best to deploy his officers so as to provide the best practicable cover throughout his force area.

Party conferences are central to the well-being of our democracy. It could not possibly be argued that they should be cancelled in order to reduce the burden on our police. That would be unacceptable, and would be seen as a victory for terrorism.

We have several times considered the suggestion that the Government should provide additional assistance from central funds for policing party conferences. For the reasons that I have given, we do not believe that these costs should be treated differently from other police costs.

There probably remain three or four minutes—I am checking with my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick)—so there is time for me to give way to at least one of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend talked about increased police funding. That is greatly appreciated, and we all accept that it helps to keep our county of Lancashire well ordered. However, all other police authorities receive the same additional funding. We spend our additional funding on policing not only the Conservative conference every two years but the Labour party conference, too, as the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said. We are faced with additional costs more frequently than every other year: it happens every year. Therefore, the costs are more devastating to us in Lancashire. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to think again.

Mr. Lloyd: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says—it is an extra cost for the police authority in his area—but if he thinks about it, he will see that every police authority could make substantial claims for exceptional costs, whether it be, as I mentioned earlier, the cost of ports or of a particular drug problem. There are particular additional expenses that different police authorities must bear. In most cases, they would claim that they stem not just from local concerns but from ones that have a national significance as well.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Can my hon. Friend point out one event that another police authority has to bear every year, or every other year, of the same financial magnitude as the party conference at Blackpool?

Mr. Lloyd: I have pointed out some that create a similar regular problem, but I cannot approximate costs on the spur of the moment at the Dispatch Box. However, some of those that I have mentioned are extremely expensive and I would be happy to give my hon. Friend some figures in due course.

We recognise that policing is the responsibility of central and local government and the Home Office meets the larger percentage of police authority expenditure through the police grant. That was increased in 1986, so it is more now that it was several years ago.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Burnley and to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn and others who have intervened for raising the issue, which I know is important to them and to their local authority, and for giving me the opportunity to restate the Government's position.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 12 January 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Student Loans

9.34 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I beg to present a petition signed by Mr. David Bond, deputy president of Bradford college student union, and by 1,000 students and other citizens, which calls for rejection of the government's proposed student loans scheme.

The petitioners submit that any proposal to introduce the payment by students of tuition fees, either partially or in full, with student loans will further limit access to higher education and increase student poverty. The petitioners include students who, because of accommodation shortages, are forced to take lectures in corridors and to sit on the floor. They hoped that, following the boycott by the big banks of the student loans scheme, it would be scrapped. They still hope that the Government will decide to abandon it, and call upon the House to reject any proposal to introduce the payment by students of tuition fees and of student loans.

To lie upon the Table.

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

9.36 am

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I beg to present my first petition since being elected a Member of this House, on behalf of Mr. Hampton, of Freshwater, who is the Isle of Wight's project director for the deaf. The petition is signed by 186 of my constituents.

There is no fate worse than death for a politician other than that of knowing that he cannot be heard. The petition asks the Government to include in the Broadcasting Bill proper provision for the deaf in television broadcasts. It must be possible with today's technology to make available a special channel carrying teletext subtitles, to help increase the viewing pleasure of the deaf. The petition reads:

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that your House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date."

To lie upon the Table.

NHS Reform

9.37 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I beg to present a petition signed by many of my constituents, relating to the Government's proposals for the future of the National Health Service. A number of the signatures were collected at meetings at which considerable concern was expressed about those proposals, not least in respect of the future of the Health Service—which should be free to all, irrespective of income.

The petition urges the Secretary of State for Health to drop the proposals contained in the White Paper and in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, which it is feared will do nothing to improve the provision of health and care services at the level that we have come to enjoy and value.

To lie upon the Table.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Speaker: In view of the large number of hon. Members who have indicated that they wish to participate in the debate, I propose placing a 10-minute limit on speeches made between 11.30 am and 1 pm. I hope that all hon. Members who are called between those times will bear that limit in mind in the interest of other hon. Members.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Points of Order

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to inquire whether you have received an application from a Government Department to make a statement about the serious case of rabies which has been discovered in northern France at Rouen, close to the coast. I raise this matter because it is proposed that barriers are removed in 1992. The nation wants to know that we will be protected from the spread of this serious disease. Britain is one of only two countries in the Common Market that are rabies free.

Mr. Speaker: I have not been told that there will be a statement, and I probably will not be informed about it before 10 o'clock.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am aware that a problem with the acoustics in the House has been drawn to your attention. I just presented a petition on behalf of the deaf and I had great difficulty in following last night's debate. Before Christmas constituents drew my attention to the fact that the background babble that was all too evident in the radio broadcasts of our proceedings seemed to have completely disappeared from the television broadcasts. Since the introduction of television to the House something must have happened to the general acoustics in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know about that. If the hon. Member feels that that has happened, he should draw that matter to the attention of the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House. The sound from the microphones at the back of the seats was raised with me last night. There appears to be some diminution, and I am having the matter investigated.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was extremely difficult to hear yesterday. I know that there is a babble of background noise, but I noticed that when I listened to a Minister on the radio this morning, her voice came over much more clearly than it would have done in the House. That is wrong. We cannot wait until the completion of the television experiment before the microphones are looked at, because we cannot do our work properly.

Mr. Speaker: This matter was raised yesterday with the Leader of the House and it is certainly being investigated.

The Future of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement

9.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): It is a sign of the importance that the House attaches to the textile industry and to the multi-fibre arrangement that we have had seven debates in 21 months on this industry. It has produced a pile of paper, and I have here the *Hansard* record of those seven debates in xerox form. Many good points have been made in those debates by Members of Parliament either representing their constituency interests or taking the wider view of the importance of a good textile industry to this country and the European Community.

Two of the debates have been on the multi-fibre arrangment. One, on 9 December 1988, was a full five-hour debate—as this one will be today—and, more recently on 9 November 1989, my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) made some valuable points on an Adjournment motion. I set out at some length the Government's position on the negotiations in the European Community on the MFA. Unfortunately, no Opposition Members were present. I am delighted today to see a good attendance on both sides of the House for this important debate.

In the debate on 9 December 1988, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) laid particular stress on the need to have a competitive exchange rate. He returned to that point repeatedly and made it the focus of his conclusion. I hope that he will therefore welcome today the fact that we are meeting against the background of a level of sterling that is 10 per cent. lower or thereabouts than we were talking about in that debate.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me and with the Government's position, that the most vital need now is control of costs, especially wage costs, that the priority given to counter-inflation policy is most important and that the current exchange rate gives the industry every conceivable opportunity to compete successfully and well in the markets of the world, which is what I hope both sides of the House wish it to do.

Mr. Cryer: Surely the Minister will not criticise the textile industry for wage rates. It has a long record of co-operation in changes in working practices and in low wage rates compared with retail and manufacturing industries.

Mr. Redwood: I did not say a word of criticism of the industry—indeed, I am going to praise it. I said that I hoped that both sides of the House would agree that the most important thing for British industry—the textile and other industries—is good control of all costs, especially wage costs because they happen to be an important part of costs. I am not saying that I want low wages; I am saying that I want high wages and high productivity, and that wage increases must be earned by increases in productivity.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): People in Halifax, for example, who face the second highest poll tax outside London, will have all these extra costs to meet. Is the hon.

Gentleman saying that, if inflation continues to rise, it is up to these reasonably low-paid workers to make a sacrifice?

Mr. Redwood: I am saying that I am seeking political agreement about the priority of bringing down inflation, which is the best guarantee we all have that our living standards might rise rather than fall. I hope that the hon. Lady agrees that wage increases should be earned by improvements in productivity. One of the welcome features of the industry's performance to which I wanted to refer was the fact that, in the past 10 years, the industry has increased its productivity by an estimated 45 per cent. on industry figures. That welcome improvement increases the industry's chances of competing successfully in the world economy. The world economy does not stand still —productivity is rising among our competitors as well. We want higher wages paid for by higher productivity.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Leaving aside the important issue of wage rates, the Minister said, before that little series of exchanges, that he thought that the exchange rate level was a matter of some satisfaction. Irrespective of any given level at any given time, one of the most difficult features that the industry faces is the fluctuation in short-term exchange rates. Do the Government have plans—for example, in contemplating the exchange rate mechanism—to stabilise exchange rate levels?

Mr. Redwood: I said that I hoped that the present exchange rate gave some comfort and pleasure to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North, who urged a lower exchange rate during the previous debate. Of course the Government wish to see general economic stability. They are giving priority to their counter-inflation policy, which depends upon firm monetary control and all the disciplines which are well known. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have clearly set out the conditions for prospective entry into the exchange rate mechanism. I have nothing to add to or subtract from their statements.

The industry employs some 480,000 people—about 2 per cent. of total employment—so it is important.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): How many did it employ a year ago?

Mr. Redwood: If the hon. and learned Gentleman cares to contain himself a little, I shall come to the issue of job changes. The industry is also an important exporter, exporting some £3·6 billion of goods in 1988, and there have been further improvements in 1989, according to the figures that we have seen to date. I welcome that, and I welcome the recent statement of the director of the National Wool Textile Export Corporation, who said:

"We can start 1990 with something to celebrate"—

I hope that we will hear about that in this debate—

"and will maintain our efforts to ensure export earnings continue to rise".

I welcome that statement. I am sure that there are many in the industry who see the broadening export opportunities in a variety of markets and who will pursue them in their interests and those of the economy at large.

The industry is doing many important things. I welcome its approaches to improving and expanding training, the way in which it is welcoming and embracing new technology and its development of new products. These are all essential to successful manufacturing industry, as any of us who have worked in it know only too well. I welcome the progress being made. These things will be the cornerstone of continuing and improved industrial success in textiles, concentration on good management, design, innovation, new techniques and new technologies.

We have been living with the multi-fibre arrangements since 1974. I know that some hon. Members will think that only the MFA provides any protection against job losses; yet since 1974, employment in the industry has halved. There is no evidence, therefore, from the current figures that the MFA of itself has successfully protected employment. The industry went through a major reduction in employment in the 1970s because of difficulties largely created by Labour's economic policies.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The figures that have been supplied by the Department of Employment show that, over the past 10 years under this Government, one job has been lost every hour in the textile industry. Is the Minister saying that, if the multi-fibre arrangement were abolished, the decline in jobs would be arrested? Or will he accept the views of industry that the reasons why we have had one job loss every hour under this Government are the high level of interest rates and the Government's failure to support the industry exactly as other Governments in other countries have supported their textile industries?

Mr. Redwood: This Government have given a great deal of support to the industry in the past five years. It has been support such as the Opposition most value, which is regional support and aid. The Government have given over £300 million. However, the factors that I have already described this morning are far more important for the preservation and growth of employment opportunities. The important factors are competitiveness, product design, innovation and exporting.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Does my hon. Friend accept that the multi-fibre arrangement has made it easier for companies to go through a transition to recapitalise? Although they have suffered losses, those losses would have been far greater had the arrangement not been in place. That is the case for continuing with this measure, which is giving the industry a real chance to break into the future.

Mr. Redwood: I should be interested to see evidence to prove that case. There has been a major reduction in jobs since 1974, and the House should remember that under the patterns of trade in textiles, two thirds of all imports of textiles come not from MFA countries, but from developed countries and especially from other member states of the European Community. This Government have represented the industry strongly against unfair trading practices, against dumping and against other practices that the industry has brought to our notice. I can reassure my hon. Friend that the Government will continue to do so within the EC and general agreement on tariffs and trade rules, as he would expect me to say, and as he would expect the Government to do.

The MFA has resulted in bilateral restraint agreements with 23 low-cost countries, where quotas have been imposed. I remind the House that it is the European Community which is the participant in the multi-fibre arrangement, and it is the European Community and the Commission which handle the GATT negotiations, so the

[Mr. Redwood]

whole of our debate today must be about the actions of negotiators who are working on behalf of all 12 member countries in the MFA and GATT.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Well, get stuck in.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend asks me to get stuck in. Stuck in to what? The point of this debate is for the House to have a chance to express its views and I am sure that my hon. Friend will not be backward in coming forward to express his views and those of his constituents to the Commission, which will be handling for this country these important negotiations in GATT. I welcome the opportunity that this debate affords for all my hon. Friends and Opposition Members to make their points strongly and forcefully on behalf of the industry, and I hope that some hon. Members will also remember the consumer, so that this debate can be seen in the Commission before it handles the negotiations.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): We are here to make the points very forcefully. There is much concern in the industry about the Minister's rather languid approach which we have seen here today, and anxiety that sufficiently forceful representations will not be made within the European Community and then within the GATT negotiations. Will the Minister tell us specifically what action he has taken in response to the South Koreans giving £2·5 billion—$4 billion—to their textile industry? If we are to compete on an even playing field, such matters must be taken up vigorously, not in the languid way in which the Minister is presenting the case today.

Mr. Redwood: There is nothing languid about my dislike of restrictive practices in foreign countries if they are messing up our domestic industries. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall fight like a tiger for British industry if I think that it is being damaged by malpractices elsewhere. We are investigating that point at present in relation to the Korean subsidy, because it would be damaging if state aids of the wrong kind were being given in Korea to compete against industries in the European Community, which has a self-denying ordinance.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, we are not allowed under EC rules to undertake any state subsidy or programme of subsidy for individual industrial sectors. That is right, and it is also right that we need to ensure that similar rules apply throughout the world trading system. An important part of the GATT round is to make just such points. This country will urge EC negotiators to ensure that market opening is done on a multilateral basis and that it takes into account not just quotas or tariffs, but state aid and other methods of market higgling which are being practised in some countries.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister knows as well as I do that a number of countries have applied to join the European Community and that some of those countries are dumping here like hell. Why do the Government not get round the ports and do something about it? The Minister has responsibility for British industry, and that is why we are clobbering him today. He must do something about it.

Mr. Redwood: I did not quite hear those remarks because they were not at the hon. Gentleman's characteristic volume, but I noticed that he was referring to Turkey. He is right to believe that the Commission negotiations are considering whether the Turks are making sufficient progress in opening their own market in return for the offerings being made by the European Commission. I can assure the House that Ministers are vitally concerned that there should be fair, reciprocal measures of market opening in those countries to which privileges are being extended by the European Community. We are interested in broadening trade across the world, and there must be give and take in the negotiations.

The history of the GATT negotiations in the Uruguay round and the run-up to that will be familiar to many hon. Members who were in the House for the previous debate. I want to remind hon. Members of what was said at the ministerial meeting at Punta del Este, which has become the famous text in all this, and which was read out to the House from the Dispatch Box by my predecessor, the then Minister of Trade in 1988. He said that it had been agreed to formulate "modalities" and would permit eventual integration of the textile sector

"into GATT on the basis of strengthened GATT rules and disciplines."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 588.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) had a little difficulty in getting his tongue round that phrase and I think that the House had a little difficulty in interpreting it on first listening or on first reading. The idea is that the GATT round is concerned with trying to bring the textile industry, along with other industries, within the GATT rules and procedures. That is a balanced process. It means not only market opening measures, but strengthened disciplines against those who do not play by the rules.

The Government believe that we need a stronger GATT. The successive GATT rounds have kept open much of the world's trading system and have enabled the world to avoid plunging into protection such as destroyed jobs, incomes, hope and prosperity in the 1920s and 1930s. It is important that GATT rounds succeed and continue to open the world trading system rather than shutting it down or damaging it.

In the GATT round, the European Commission is seeking first a reduction in barriers to European Community exports. That is an important task and I am sure that the textile industry above all would agree with me in saying that there are still many barriers to exports around the world that our textile producers would like to see reduced. This Government are encouraging the European Community to do just that in the negotiations.

Secondly, the European Community seeks effective defences against the damaging imports to which several hon. Members have already referred and which, I suspect, will be mentioned at great length in the subsequent debate. The Government welcome any evidence that can be brought to their attention of malpractices in the world trading system, which can then be routed on to the appropriate authorities.

Thirdly, the general aim of the European Community, along with the other GATT participants, is to expand GATT negotiations to cover new areas. This GATT round is especially ambitious, because it is trying to bring into

play both agriculture and services, and there are many potential gains for British trade if we can achieve the right balance of results in these difficult GATT negotiations.

The lesser developed countries, which obviously need to agree to the whole GATT package—just as the European Community needs to agree to it—are majoring on the importance to them of the multi-fibre arrangement. We, in our turn, are saying that other safeguards and provisions need to be written into the resulting negotiations to make a success of the GATT round as a whole.

The European Community has set out a number of objectives on textiles. It is seeking a more efficient safeguard mechanism, better disciplines on unfair trade, the sensible protection of intellectual property, equitable access to raw materials and much more market opening by all countries, including the lesser developed countries. If those countries wish us to remove our protection, it is only fair that we should expect them to reciprocate and allow access to their markets.

We must also address the question of transition and the wider issues arising from the round as a whole, which the European Commission will have to judge nearer to the termination of the negotiations to establish whether the package makes sense to the European Community's trade patterns as a whole.

The specific points on which I would welcome comment, and which are relevant to the negotiations are, first, the way in which any phasing out of the multi-fibre arrangement would be conducted. Would it be on the basis of the existing restrictions? The European position is yes; the American position is no.

Secondly, what arrangements would be necessary for any possible phase-out of the multi-fibre arrangement? We must take account of the relative sensitivity of individual sectors and the impact on employment, as well as the effect on customers and on the general economic good.

Thirdly, how long should any transitional period be? That is a subject on which we still have a chance to influence the European Community's position. Fourthly, what kind of link should there be to stronger GATT disciplines as a whole, and how should those disciplines be developed? Fifthly, how far should the European Community go in demanding market opening by others?

The Government commissioned the Silberston report to give an independent view of the impact of changes in the textile sector. I am sure that hon. Members will have read that report and it would therefore be wrong to go into detail concerning its conclusions, but I can tell the House that we are now looking at consultation replies. Some of the conclusions of the report are important. It suggests, for example, that prices of textile products would fall by about 5 per cent. and that, although the fall in yarn prices might be a little lower, that would benefit some textile producers, as yarn buyers. The total gain to consumers is estimated in 1988 prices as about £980 million, and the figure would be more than £1 billion now. That would have a particularly beneficial impact on low-income consumers who spend proportionately more of their income on textile products.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does not my hon. Friend agree that the central thrust of that report is that the MFA, with all its faults, is better than no MFA with no international agreement on safeguards? I have to tell my hon. Friend that in many of our constituencies it would not be politically acceptable if it were thought that the Government were ready to sacrifice a major regional industry and the sort of people employed in it for the hypothetical calculation and theoretical conjecture of the Silberston speculation on price wars.

Mr. Redwood: I hoped that I had already assured my hon. Friend that the European Community negotiating objectives include safeguards and protections against unfair trading practices of exactly the kind to which he refers. That must be an important part of the negotiations. Silberston concludes that there would be a net gain to the economy from a phased withdrawal of the MFA.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): We have all read the report carefully. The House and the country must be aware that, although there would be a net gain to consumers, it is no help to a household to have a reduction in its outgoings if the head of the household has lost his job.

Mr. Redwood: I agree that, in the long term, job losses in the textile industry have been a terrible thing, and I would not wish matters to get worse, but I have already explained that job opportunities depend on competitiveness in the widest sense. It is important to job prospects in the textile industry that we should get decent access to a wide variety of overseas markets for the high-quality products that we now produce. That can be achieved through market opening measures in GATT. There is therefore an offsetting gain if the right kind of negotiation in GATT results in the right kind of deal. Other gains would also accrue, given the increased purchasing power in the economy from the £1 billion reduction that Silberston says would be available.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Professor Silberston suggests that there should be a trade-off for these consumer benefits and gives a figure of 33,000 textile jobs. Does the Minister accept that that is a realistic estimate, because many of us believe that Professor Silberston's estimates of the consumer benefits are much exaggerated while his estimates of job losses are extremely optimistic?

Mr. Redwood: Professor Silberston gives a range of figures from 16,000 to 33,000 and makes no calculation of offsetting job gains from the considerations that I have mentioned. We are talking about forecasts in a very uncertain world, and in practice the outcome would be influenced by a wide variety of other factors connected with the industry's competitiveness, growth rates in the world and so on, which would make the resolution of that question extremely difficult.

A variety of consumer groups have written in or made public statements to the effect that they favour the abolition of the MFA. The Consumers Association seeks "a decent burial" for it. The Consumers in the European Community Group thinks that we are paying too high a price for protection, and the Retail Consortium is in favour of liberalised procurement to give more choice to customers. Manufacturers naturally have opposite concerns, and I am conscious of the need to press on, because I know that my hon. Friends will want to put the manufacturers' case to me in representing their constituencies.

I must refer to the European Community textiles and clothing agreement with Russia, which has been tagged to the debate. It is not part of the MFA but is a response by the European Community to the dramatic changes that

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are taking place in Russia and eastern Europe. It is part of the policy of the British Government and the European Economic Community to encourage moves to democracy and liberalisation in eastern Europe and Russia by making some changes in the restrictive trade arrangements that currently apply.

The European Community has negotiated a measure allowing market opening on both sides, although still limited by restraints. That provides a number of export opportunities, which I hope the British textile industry will not only welcome but will wish to exploit. Similar considerations may soon apply in the case of Poland and Hungary, and I am open to hearing views on that question during the debate.

The House may remember that, at the end of the last long debate on the MFA in 1988, the then Minister for Trade, who is now the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, said clearly that he would not be the Minister to announce the ending of the MFA without the necessary protection and safeguards. That is certainly true, because my hon. Friend is no longer Minister for Trade, the post is now held by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Trefgarne. The Government's position remains the same. Transitional arrangements must be clear and negotiated satisfactorily, and to discuss that question is the purpose of our debate.

10.8 am

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I echo the Minister's words. The number of hon. Members present this morning gives us a good idea of the importance of the multi-fibre arrangement to hon. Members on both sides of the House who represent constituencies throughout the country. The Opposition welcome the debate because it gives us the opportunity to put the strong views of our constituents on many aspects of the issue. It gives us the opportunity to monitor and, it is to be hoped, to influence the Government's involvement in the EEC and GATT talks on the multi-fibre arrangement and related items.

The debate also gives hon. Members the opportunity to examine the Government's record in defending and promoting the interests of a great industry that has been central to the industrial development of many regions in this country for more than two centuries. I become angry when I hear from some sections of the business community, and often from those sections that seek to provide finance rather than make things, that textiles and clothing is an obsolete and dying industry. Those of us here today who represent textile areas will be aware that the textile industry is neither obsolete nor dying and that, given the right climate and the right support, it could be very competitive.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that the success of the textile industry depends also on the Government wanting to represent the industry's interests in the councils in Europe and on their playing their part in reducing interest rates to help the industry to modernise and become more efficient when it encounters foreign competitors who often receive more support from their Governments?

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising those points and I wholeheartedly agree with the general direction of his comments.

The workers and managers in the textile and clothing industry are aware that in many areas they have adopted the most modern and efficient equipment available. Those methods were adopted with the understanding of the work force and through consultations and negotiations. That is a great credit to the work force. It has happened at a time when many thousands of jobs have been displaced.

The industry is the fifth largest industrial sector in the country. It has an annual output, together with footwear, of more than £5·6 billion per annum. Annual investment in 1988 was £479 million. The industry still employs, as the Minister said, more than 480,000 people, often in regions with high unemployment—areas such as Scotland, the north-west, parts of Yorkshire and, increasingly, the east midlands where there are many problems.

Job losses in the industry have now reached an unacceptable level. In textiles and clothing, 22,000 jobs were lost in the 12 months to September 1989. When I visited the Scottish Borders yesterday, I was told that even at the high value end of the market, there are many difficulties, jobs have been lost and there is much short-time working.

There has been a steady stream of job losses in Yorkshire and Lancashire in companies such as Courtaulds, Coats Viyella, Smith and Nephew and Hunsworth Dyeing. In the east midlands, the knitwear industry is heavily dependent on the outcome of the negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement. That area has perhaps suffered more from job losses in the past 12 months than any other area in the United Kingdom. More than 5,000 jobs were lost between June 1988 and June 1989. Since then, the hosiery workers union in that area has noted further job losses in famous and important companies such as T. W. Kemptons.

Mr. Vaz: My hon. Friend will know from his recent successful visit to Leicester, where he met leaders of the hosiery and knitwear workers, of the grave concern in Leicestershire about the decline in employment in the industry. Does he agree that one of the most effective ways in which the Government can help the industry is to give Leicester assisted area status? Does he join me in rejecting the arguments put forward by the Minister for Industry in a Leicestershire debate a few weeks ago, when he said that he was not prepared to alter the maps of assisted area status and that he did not believe that the level of unemployment in Leicestershire justified that status?

Mr. Henderson: The Opposition Front-Bench team is reviewing what happens to an area that has a heavy concentration of a particular industry, but is not currently within an assisted area. That issue will be reviewed as part of an overall review of regional policy.

Mr. Janner: Is my hon. Friend aware that this week the Government announced that they will introduce a research programme centred in Leicester for £7·3 million, stretching over three to five years? Does he agree that while that is welcome, it is extremely late, and by the time the research produces results there will scarcely be an industry left to take advantage of them? How can that fit in with the plans that my hon. Friend is discussing with his Front-Bench colleagues?

Mr. Henderson: When I visited Leicester some months ago, that point was made to me by workers and managers in the industry, and that matter is under review by the Opposition Front Bench. We welcome the announcement made by the Government earlier in the week, but it comes very late and is too little.

The trade deficit in textiles, to which reference has been made, is a key issue. That deficit has become increasingly alarming. It amounted to nearly £4 billion in the 11 months to November 1989 and it constitutes one fifth of our deficit in manufactured goods. Our ability to control our deficit in textiles is a major part of the overall problem of controlling the deficit in manufactured products. The deficit should not only be a concern of those who work in the textile industry or who live in areas that are heavily dependent on textiles. We should all be concerned about the deficit and it should certainly be the concern of the Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Our overall economic situation has greatly damaged the industry. The Apparel, Knitting and Textile Alliance which represents a broad range of interests in the industry, has stated:

"High interest rates are leading to a cutback in capital investment. The industries have, at the same time, been adversely affected by currency instability, not least the after-effects of the excessively high level of sterling up to mid-1989."

When I visited Bradford earlier this year, the Yorkshire Wool and Textile Association complained about the same dangers. Courtaulds has also made representations about the damage that is being done to the industry in Lancashire and we have already heard about the representations that have been made by east midlands industrialists.

The overvalued pound from 1987 to the autumn of 1989, as I stressed in last year's debate on this subject, made the task of exporters particularly difficult. Many argued then, and many argue even more strongly now, that the problem is not just related to an overvaluation of the pound, and I note the Minister's earlier comments on that. If we consider the problem over 10 years, it is not simply one of overvaluation. The problem involves the rapidly fluctuating exchange rate, which makes forward pricing of exports very difficult and makes the cost of purchasing materials from abroad difficult to assess. Continuing high interest rates cause industrialists to postpone investment decisions because of the cost of borrowing and the impact on high street demand.

The Minister said that the main issue affecting the industry was costs. One of the most important cost factors for any industrialist in the textile and clothing industry is interest rates. Today, German textile manufacturers can borrow for 8 per cent. The Americans can borrow for 8 per cent., the French for 10 per cent., and the Italians for 12 per cent., but a textile manufacturer in the United Kingdom will not be able to borrow for less than 15 per cent. and that makes a huge difference to his cost profile.

Mr. Redwood: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is much better for the industry to have the economic background that we now enjoy, rather than the one that we experienced in the mid-1970s, when the Labour party tried a policy of runaway inflation and almost bankrupted the whole of British industry?

Mr. Henderson: I am surprised that the Minister raised that point. We have not only high interest rates but the highest inflation rate in Europe. That is the background that our manufacturers must face.

The multi-fibre arrangement was set up in 1974 to regulate trade expansion in textiles and clothing products between supplier countries in the developing world and consumer countries in the industrialised world. It was set up to combat anarchic trading patterns and a growth in protectionism. It was set up also to allow access to industrialised markets from the poorest developing countries such as Lesotho and Macau. We must never forget the importance of that. Those countries have argued that, without a multi-fibre arrangement, they would be excluded from markets by competition from other more industrialised developing countries such as Hong Kong and South Korea.

An interesting article in the *Financial Times* of 4 October 1989 states that within the past three years more than 20 companies, mostly textile operations, have moved to Lesotho, primarily to exploit the country's preferential access to international markets

'"We came here to trade internationally," said Mr. Steven Kluck, director of Morija Textiles, which is producing 3,000 articles of clothing a day, mostly for export to France, Italy and Britain. He said, "We looked at Mauritius and Swaziland, but we decided that Lesotho was more focused on a wide range of markets."'

I am not making a particular point about Lesotho. But many other countries, regardless of the political situation there, need access if they are to have any economic development. Clearly, they cannot do that unless they have assistance through the multi-fibre arrangement.

The arrangement was set up also to enable industrial countries to restructure in the face of stiff competition from newly industrialised countries. That is an extremely important issue for the United Kingdom. Other Common Market countries have made much more of the opportunity to restructure than we have. Between 1973, the year before the multi-fibre arangement was introduced, and 1987, Italy increased its trade balance in textiles from £255 million per year to £1,576 million per year, which is a six times increase in historic cash terms. The clothing figures show an increase in the Italian balance from £453 million to £4,383 million. Germany increased its trade balance in textiles, calculated on the same basis, from £119 million to £977 million. That is a nine times increase. Belgium-Luxembourg increased its trade balance in textiles from £274 million to £1,230 million, although a substantial proportion was in carpets, which is outside the multi-fibre arrangement.

The main point is that Britain fared the worst of all EEC countries. Our trade balance in 1973 was £75 million in surplus in textiles, but, by 1987, even with the protection that was granted by the multi-fibre arrangement, we had a deficit of £1,614 million. That does not prove that the multi-fibre arrangement does not work. It proves that other things are necessary to enforce it. In clothing, the deficit in 1973 was £154 million. By 1987, the deficit had reached £1,351 million.

Some sectors of the industry have responded to the changing world situation, but others have failed to respond, despite the multi-fibre arrangement. In many instances, the economic situation has not allowed them to make the necessary response, but all of them have welcomed the presence of the multi-fibre arrangement.

[Mr. Henderson]

Many companies believe that, even with the arrangement, there were too many loopholes and that quotas were too slack.

In 1984, Professor Silberston argued that the multi-fibre arrangement was damaging to Britain's overall trading interest. He said also that welfare in the country could be increased if the multi-fibre arrangement were abandoned. The textile and clothing industry was relieved when the professor's advice was set aside by the then Secretary of State. Since then, Professor Silberston has further reported on the multi-fibre arrangement.

Some people say that all professors are mad. Others say that only some professors are mad, and others say that only professors who are employed by the Government are mad. Professor Silberston has shown that, whatever the mental state of his profession, on occasions, even professors employed by the Department of Trade and Industry are prepared to take another look at the situation, consider more evidence, and make a conversion in their views. There are conflicting views within the industry on the extent to which Professor Silberston has converted his views. The Apparel, Knitting and Textile Alliance has acknowledged the professor's conversion and described his latest report as

"a balanced attempt to assess the impact of international trading policies in the UK economy."

Others have been more critical. The Scottish Knitwear Council described his work as

"a most unsatisfactory piece of work."

The professor was right to acknowledge that there is an important link between any changes in or abolition of the multi-fibre arrangement and the GATT talks that are currently taking place. However, I do not think that his evidence, or that of others which has been put forward to coincide with his evidence, has made out any case to end the multi-fibre arrangement. The professor was right that a strengthened GATT framework was crucial in the event of any multi-fibre arrangement, but no case was made out to abandon the existing situation.

If we had no regulation of trade in textiles and clothing, the inevitable consequence would be beggar-thy-neighbour policies of protectionism, trade disputes, trade disruption and, of course, disastrous consequences for the weakest supplying countries. The previous Minister, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) said:

"If it is of any consolation or comfort to the House, I can state that if the multi-fibre arrangement is to be discarded and if such an action is not accompanied by a satisfactory liberalisation and by a genuine strengthening of GATT rules and by proper discipline, I will not be the Minister who comes to the Dispatch Box and announces it."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1988; vol. 143, c. 620.]

Clearly the hon. Gentleman is not here today. I hope that his absence is a sign that he has gone on to other things—perhaps even better things. It is not a reflection that there is no comfort for the industry.

The present Minister has historically shown his hostility to intervention in trade matters. He will correct me if I am wrong. I expected him to have difficulty in defending the Government's position and in arguing for a strong renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. However, it seems that he has no great difficulty. Again, he will correct me if I am wrong, but I did not detect in his speech any great desire to continue to have a stronger multi-fibre arrangement. Hon. Members will want to explore exactly what the Government's position is in this business. An important starting point must be the dismal performance of our industry in competing for business overseas and in countering the flood of imports.

How can the relative failure of our industry be redressed? Is the Minister prepared to acknowledge that he carries a greater responsibility than his counterparts in Europe because of the particular and serious difficulties of our industry? Does the Minister recognise that it is our industry that has failed to restructure; that it is our industry that needs additional support and protection and is demanding that the Government bat firmly for the United Kingdom on the multi-fibre arrangement talks? It is our industry that will suffer if the quotas are too large. That's why it is demanding that in future years they should be based on increases in actual usage, not on increases in total quotas. Over the coming period the difference may be academic because, as hon. Members know, many of the quotas this year have been fully utilised?

Does the Minister also recognise that it is our industry that is worried about the abolition of internal quotas in the EC? The fact that our high street market place is dominated by five large retailers makes us far more vulnerable to be flooded with imports that were previously spread throughout the European Community. What is the Government's view on that? Will the Minister argue for the retention of internal quotas or will he seek a transitional agreement?

The industry has acknowledged the desire of many Governments eventually to integrate textile and clothing trade regulations into GATT. I understand that observation. If the Government support the same view, will the Minister confirm that he recognises the importance of the link between negotiations on GATT, which are satisfactory to the industry, and any major change in the multi-fibre arrangement? In the past the industry has argued that modifications to the multi-fibre arrangement are necessary, but does the Minister recognise that the MFA could eventually be replaced by GATT only if the many outstanding matters which have previously been discussed as part of the review of the MFA and which are currently being discussed in GATT are resolved to the satisfaction of the House and Europe?

Will the Minister give a firm commitment today that he will argue strongly in the medium term for a renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement unless there is a complete change in the current regulations on safeguard clauses under article 19 of GATT? Does the Minister recognise that action against dumping needs to be taken, and will he comment on how he proposes to outlaw that practice? Will he put any proposals to the EC for negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement or GATT?

The industry has expressed other concerns that must be raised at GATT. Will the Minister take up the matter of access to the developed markets of Australia and the United States and the question of possible access into South Korea, which has already been referred to this morning? What is the Minister's sticking point on that issue? What action does he propose to deal with non-tariff barriers that he knows affect trade in several countries, including Brazil? What action does he propose to outlaw the counterfeiting of designs and trademarks? He has said that he wants to outlaw that practice, but what action will he propose at GATT on that matter?

Other issues also have a serious impact on the industry. There is, for example, the question of assistance to eastern

Europe and to Poland and Hungary. The Minister is aware that the Polish Government have asked for a 44 per cent. increase in their quota and that the Hungarian Government have asked for a 16 per cent. increase in theirs. I am sure that all hon. Members want to support a programme of aid to develop the economies of those and other countries in that geographical area—

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: But not at the expense of our own.

Mr. Henderson: Yes, I am coming to that. However, the industry has put a valid point to me in the representations that it has made since those issues were first raised in October and November 1989. Why should the industry bear the economic cost of our political views? Is the Minister prepared to make compensatory arrangements to ensure that the industry does not carry the whole burden and that it does not lose out, so that the people who work in the industry in, for example, the east midlands, do not lose their employment? Is the Minister prepared to make firm proposals to balance his other statements on assistance for Hungary and Poland?

Many other issues could be raised in the debate, but I am concious that many other hon. Members wish to speak. I hope that hon. Members will raise the issue of the social clause. I am sure that that will be raised by Opposition Members. I hope that hon. Members will also mention the footwear industry, which is a closely linked industry that has had its own difficulties, many of which have followed from the Government's failure to reach an arrangement with other EC countries on this matter. Many questions have been and will be raised with the Minister in the debate, but a major question is undoubtedly whether the Government intend to support the renegotiation of the multi-fibre arrangement. Perhaps more important, and in many respects the key question, is whether the Government recognise that tightening the quotas and toughening the multi-fibre arrangement will not only help the industry in this country now, but will allow any preliminary talks on eventually bringing the textile and clothing trade into the GATT regulations to be conducted not from a position of weakness, but from a position of strength.

People in the industry, workers and managers alike, will be watching the debate closely to judge whether the Government are prepared to fight for the industry. They will look for a firm commitment from the Government to negotiate a new and tougher multi-fibre arrangement. They will be looking for a commitment to enter into negotiations on measures to stop low-cost products being dumped on our market. They will be looking for a commitment to support a social clause, which is essential if a level playing field is to be achieved. They will be looking for a commitment to draw up proposals to help the footwear industry, but perhaps above all, they will be looking for a comitment to show that the Department of Trade and Industry actually cares about industry and will make representations to the Chancellor, urging him to take measures to stabilise our currency and to reduce the crippling interest rates.

The debate will show that the textile and clothing industry has many difficulties, but it will also show that potentially it has a great future. It will also show that it needs strong Government action to protect its interests here, in the European Community and at GATT. I shall not be satisfied with glib answers from the Minister, and neither will the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that Mr. Speaker announced at the beginning of the debate that there will be a 10-minute limit on speeches from 11.30 am. Under the Standing Orders it is not possible to impose the limit until that time, but in view of the many hon. Members who wish to speak, I hope that hon. Members will feel that it would be appropriate if they were to impose a 10-minute limit on themselves from now on.

10.36 am

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I am most grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in the debate. As I have not spoken in the House for a year, I reckon that it might be my turn. I shall certainly not abuse my privilege this morning because I can say what I want and have to say within 10 minutes.

I am scared stiff about what the Government may do about the multi-fibre arrangement. Some of us—in both parties—have lived with the textile industries for many years and some of us are dependent on the textile and footwear industries for thousands of votes in our constituencies. It does not matter whether those people vote for us because we are talking about their livelihoods. We know that without successive MFAs—as we call them —over the past 10 or 20 years, no textile, knitwear or hosiery industries would exist in Britain today. They would have been priced out of existence years ago by dirt cheap competition from the far east and from low-cost countries. They exist now only because successive Governments took some action. However, the Conservative Government's attitude worries me more than the Labour Government's attitude used to worry me, because the Conservative Government's attitude appears to be that we can sacrifice the multi-fibre arrangement without some sort of firm undertaking from GATT.

I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Minister said. He was probably not in the House on 12 December last year when my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) spoke in an important debate on the Leicestershire knitwear industry and said:

> "It would be wrong for me to try to persuade the House that the MFA will be extended permanently, for that is not the case."

I repeat that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham said this. He continued:

> "The plain truth is that this aspect of trade must be brought within GATT, but, to the extent that it is necessary, GATT rules must be strengthened to provide more safeguards in the respects that I have identified, and also to allow a proper period of transition."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 984.]

That is all very well, but I do not think that it falls on the shoulders of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham to make such fundamental statements. It has never been said before by a Conservative Member. As so many thousands of jobs all over the country, not just in the east midlands, depend on the MFA, I hope not to be a member of a Conservative Government who bring about its dismantling.

It is clear from the speeches that have been made so far this morning that the British textile, hosiery and knitwear industry has modernised extensively. It is as modern as any industry in the country and there is no way in which

[Sir John Farr]

low-cost imports can be met by further modernisation. It is no use my hon. Friends the Members for Grantham and for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) saying that they do not see any prospect of the MFA being renewed, but that the GATT rules may be strengthened. I do not think that the House is prepared to leave it to them to make such a decision. Nor is the House prepared to leave it to anyone else. There must be a firm undertaking that, if the MFA is to be ditched, we will not wriggle out of it. It must be done by the firm decision of the House, and any replacement of MFA rules by a restructuring of GATT must be at least as strong as what we have now. We owe that to our constituents.

I had to come here today because I have been worried by what has happened to a similar industry upon which I am lucky enough to depend for a few votes, I think. The same thing is happening with footwear. I have tabled a succession of questions for written answer during the past few days about cheap footwear imports from Korea, Taiwan and Poland and a thing called the VRA—the variable restraint agreement—from which Poland now benefits. We are full of admiration for what is happening behind the iron curtain and the earthshaking events there, but some of us were deeply disappointed when the Minister for Trade in another place, to whom I have spoken on the telephone and who has been most courteous, said that he did not think that many British jobs in the footwear industry would be put at stake by our adopting a much more relaxed attitude towards imports from Korea, Taiwan and Poland. I cannot say it to him here because he is not an hon. Member of this House, but perhaps the message will get through—there are Members of Parliament with tens of thousands of constituents who depend on the textile, knitwear, hosiery and footwear industries.

We demand protection for our constituents. We admire what is happening in Poland, but it is no use the Minister for Trade saying, as he told me on the telephone, that he is not giving instructions to our delegation in Brussels to adopt a vigorous attitude in defence of our footwear industry. If he allows our industry to be eroded, the effect on our constituents will be substantial. It would create a weak and disgraceful pattern of failure by the Government with which I would not wish to be associated.

I have come to the House today because I am scared stiff about the Government's intentions. I have read the report of the debate on 12 December initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on job losses in Leicestershire. It was a most important debate. Since 1987, 11,000 jobs—I think that the Minister is aware of these figures, but he keeps writing them down—in knitwear and hosiery have been lost. Since 1978, more than 42,000 such jobs have gone. There must be a limit.

Mr. Janner: Perhaps I may be permitted to say how happy I am that the hon. Gentleman is back in the House in robust health and voice, expressing a view which I am sure he understands is accepted on both sides of the House by his colleagues from the county of Leicestershire. Does he see any hope of improvement if the Government do not renew the MFA? If he intends to lead further delegations—he has done so successfully in the past—he will be joined by Opposition Members.

Sir John Farr: Once again, I express my gratitude to the hon. and learned Member for Leicestershire, West (Mr. Janner), with whom I have been lucky enough to get on very well when dealing with issues that affect Leicestershire, whether they be health, education, industry or anything else. I am glad to say that we have had no difficulty co-operating in the best interests of our constituents. I am most grateful for his support.

I said that I would be brief. We have to keep the MFA. I would like my hon. Friend the Minister to refer to what my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham said in the House on 12 December—that scope for Government funding exists. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West mentioned that statement earlier. Funds are available, and I would like more details. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham said that he was disappointed with local firms' response to the opportunity to gain access to that money. If the money is there, we need it. We need help. It is no use my hon. Friend making such statements without at least, one would have thought, putting out a press release the next day saying "These are the schemes. Why do you not enter for them?" The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West and I, and our colleagues from the county and city of Leicester, realise that our companies will seize such opportunities if they exist.

I have come up to the House because I am scared stiff. No Government whom I support will ever abandon the MFA.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am most grateful to the hon. Member for imposing a nine-minute limit on himself.

10.47 am

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): It is a great pleasure for me to see the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) in his place. It is a credit to him that he came here today to speak in this important debate on behalf of his constituents. It is a special pleasure to follow him, because I happen to agree with much of what he said. I take the same line as he does: the bottom line in all of this is the need to retain secure jobs for our constituents. I shall not say whether they are well-paid—they are reasonably well-paid jobs—but they must be secure.

The Silberston report is necessarily rather academic. We expect that as it was prepared by Professor Silberston, assisted by Michele Ledic, who is also an academic. I do not believe that it is possible to put to one side the calculation, which Professor Silberston made, that a possible 5 per cent. reduction in the cost of textiles must be set against a loss of 33,000 jobs.

A cost reduction of 5 per cent. spread throughout the country would not make much impact on family budgets. For a start, each year, the inflation rate is more than 5 per cent. so that 5 per cent. would be swallowed up quickly. Even if we accept the 33,000 calculation made by Professor Silberston—it is not the calculation made by the trade union movement—the job losses would fall heavily on certain areas, including my constituency.

The Minister, if I may be a little critical, is rather academic in respect of this issue, and I hope that he will remember that we are dealing with human beings. People's jobs will disappear just to achieve, as the Minister sees it, a 5 per cent. gain in someone's budget far away. We should not proceed in that manner.

I shall keep within the 10-minute limit, so I shall concentrate on a couple of points. I must emphasise that the report was compiled before the recent momentous events in eastern Europe. Page 6 of the report refers to outward processing and to the link between West Germany and the German Democratic Republic with regard to processing. Processing clothing is sent to the GDR and then comes back to West Germany without quota restraint. Circumstances have changed dramatically, however, since the report's publication. Although we are keen to help the development of the east European countries I underscore what my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) has already said, we do not want such help to be given at the expense of one particular region of our country or one particular industry.

When the Minister is considering the Silberston report proposals he should bear in mind the recent changes in eastern Europe and their impact on clothing coming into the European Community from those countries.

China is mentioned on page 119 of the report. Although I do not agree with the report's conclusions, it is valuable because it has drawn together a great deal of information about the textile and clothing industries. It mentions that China's potential for exporting textiles and clothing gives rise to the greatest fear in this country. Since 1970, the growth in China's textile industry and its exports has been tremendous.

We are not talking about an under-developed country that is trying desperately to match our performance. The report informs us that, in 1987, China was the third largest exporter of textiles in the world. What is even more interesting is that China has six universities, more than 40 technical schools and 80 research institutes devoted to textile education and research. If that country is given unrestricted entry to our markets within the EC, the effect on our textile industry will be devastating.

Mrs. Peacock: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, apart from the textile research and education undertaken in China, what is worrying is that Hong Kong companies and some of our own are now investing in plant in Guangdong province? Such investment means that those companies can operate outside the quotas and it means that much of the expansion of the Chinese textile industry is being funded from outside that country.

Mr. Lamond: The hon. Lady's point strengthens my argument.

My constituency still has considerable textile interests, although they have been greatly diminished in the 20 years that I have represented it. About 6,000 people are now engaged in the textile and clothing industries in Oldham, but, in the past year, 1,000 jobs have been lost and a number of mills have been closed, including Courtaulds' mills.

Courtaulds is a good company and it has invested a great deal in improving its mills, particularly in the Oldham area. The result of increased investment, however, has led not to an increase in employment, but a decrease. The company has become more efficient, but the net result has been a loss of jobs. I do not like that. I want increased efficiency to result in increased employment. Perhaps the Minister will say something about that when he replies.

Courtaulds has spent £5 million modernising the Maple mill in Oldham. It was ironic that, on the day Professor Silberston visited Oldham to see the Maple mill, it was closed because of short-time working. Courtaulds has been forced to close the Briar mill, the Fox mill, the Lilac mill and the Maple No. 1 mill. In the clothing industry, the Barron Clothing Manufacturing company and Eli Lees have closed. That has all happened in the past year. The situation is serious, and if the MFA is abandoned it will become even more so.

This week I received a number of letters about this debate. I received one from Courtaulds Spinning of Oldham. By and large, that company accepts the Silberston proposals, provided, in common with Professor Silberston, that the GATT protection is strengthened. That company asked me to emphasise to the Minister that one cannot abandon the MFA without taking fully into account the Silberston proposals to replace it.

I also received a letter from an important local company, Shiloh plc from the chairman and managing director of that company, Mr. Edmund Gartside. His letter is much more forthright. Mr. Gartside is internationally important in the textile industry, and has played an important part in the EC negotiations. He unequivocally states:

"We do not accept the Silberston Report that the MFA should be phased out. Even if there is a strengthening of the GATT rules under the Uruguay round talks it is absolutely essential that any new rules are seen to be effective before we can contemplate a relaxation of the MFA.

It does not give us much confidence when the existing GATT rules are not used, so how can we have any confidence that strengthened rules will be effective?"

Mr. Gartside also mentioned dumping, which is negotiated on our behalf by the EC, as is the MFA, which, sometimes is rather disturbing to consider.

On dumping, Mr. Gartside says:

"We have something like between 10 and 15 anti-dumping cases in the pipeline originated by Eurocoton in Brussels. Some have been on the books for nearly two years, e.g. Turkish cotton yarns."

I have written to the Minister on a number of occasions about that. The letter continues:

"There is no sign at all of them reaching any effective conclusions. Meantime jobs are being lost in your constituency and serious hardship is being caused while the papers lie in the Civil Servants pending trays in Brussels and London."

We look to the Minister to do something about those long-standing matters that are costing jobs every day of the week in Oldham.

10.58 am

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I am delighted to join colleagues on both sides of the House in welcoming the return of my good friend, my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). How good it is to see him lead the debate once again with such vigour.

In common with the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), I shall be brief. In a sense, I must apologise not to the House, but to my constituents. This is the first time in about 10 years that I have participated in a debate on textiles. The issues, however, remain much the same.

I make no apology for speaking as a firm and committed supporter of the continuity of the multi-fibre arrangement. I may view it from a different angle from other hon. Members, but I do not envisage the use of the arrangement as purely protectionist. It is part of the

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development of a trade policy that, with fairness and firmness, will allow world textile manufacturers and marketing to take place in an orderly and reasonable way.

Although I have heard Professor Silberston and read chunks of his report, I do not believe that the issue can be determined by such examinations. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs should accept that in any industry as complex as the textile industry—which has been ill-organised for many generations, but now it is impeccably organised—there will always be huge difficulties with international trading arrangements, whether with primary raw materials, marketing, manufacturing or the labour force.

The reason for the large gathering of hon. Members today is to demonstrate, almost at a stroke, that we are talking about 9 per cent. of British manufacturing industry. Every significant region on the north and the midlands is represented by its Member of Parliament. It is a large exporting industry, with significant potential.

What has happened during the past 25 years in the industry is history, but there has been a massive reinjection of new technology, which has contributed to the reductions in labour forces—however unwelcome they may have been. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton about the future stability of employment in the industry depending upon the future stability of the industry. Employment is not, of itself, the objective; the objective is an industrial base that can sustain employment. To date, that degree of security has been represented by the multi-fibre arrangement. I wish to make three points about that.

First, if we believe, as I do, that the arrangement is a continuing ideal, there is no reason why the basis of how it is implemented should not change. I well recall that, when it was introduced it was viewed as a transitional arrangement from two standpoints—first, that of European Community development and, secondly, world trading arrangements with countries outside the Community. It was to be a market liberator, an industrial opportunity and a trading bedrock that would allow that opportunity to develop fairly over time.

There is no reason why the multi-fibre arrangement should not be renegotiated within the GATT framework, which would ultimately take over. However, we must learn from what has already happened with the application of the multi-fibre arrangement and what needs to be done in GATT to make that application more effective for all parties.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary referred to modalities. In Pudsey we do not know about modalities, but we do know about dumping. I agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton that, taking it as a simple issue, the existing arrangements on dumping are absurd. No organisation in the City of London would have a regulatory body operating in such an arcane and absurd way. Why cannot the onus of proof be on the importing country? Why must the receiving country have to prove that 14 companies have collapsed? That is absurd.

If there is to be a way of passing through the House a refined multi-fibre arrangement within the context of GATT, the dumping issue must be grabbed. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has the zeal to grab it. He must demonstrate that the Government will make it an immediate and effective requirement on the exporting countries to show, at bill of lading stage, the costs of their goods and that those are true, fair and acceptable.

My hon. Friend specifically mentioned time scale. There must be a time scale while the multi-fibre arrangement and GATT work through. I do not think that any hon. Member would disagree that the linkage between the two is essential. The time scale must be generous—perhaps five, six or eight years. That matters not, provided that it is not overnight and provided that it is not dealt with, in European Community terms, as an arrangement that we have had for long enough, and therefore we just end it.

I am worried that Community rules and regulations may not provide for a sufficiently long period of linkage into GATT before GATT takes over. I recognise that other textile countries within the Community are not as substantially based as the United Kingdom, so they may think that it is another British issue that they would rather not tackle. I urge my hon. Friend to recognise that the present state of the industry—even in this country, where it has great support, 9 per cent. of manufacturing, and a vast export potential—requires a generous renegotiation of the multi-fibre arrangement within GATT and that the linkage be positive, not negative.

The Community arrangement with GATT must be firmly led by the United Kingdom, and must not trot off after the Portuguese. Above all, dumping—I do not know the Turkish word for dumping, but I do not like the sound of it—should be dealt with in an effective, speedy and practical way, as opposed to the impractical modality at present in place.

11.6 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). I agree that there is a danger that the discussion of this important subject could be confused and befuddled by a great deal of technical, economic jargon that no sensible knitwear or other manufacturer understands or wants to know anything about. However, they certainly do know the difference between modality and dumping. That should be understood by the Government.

The background economic conditions affecting the industry are serious. There has been a serious financial haemorrhage suffered by the industry in recent years. It is no exaggeration to say that it is now bleeding towards a slow and lingering death. That must be a matter of concern for the Government. It would be unfair to attribute all of these difficulties to imort penetration alone. Obviously, other factors are involved such as the increase in raw material costs, fashion changes in the knitwear industry and the warm weather during the past few summers, all of which have had an impact on the domestic market. Those are in addition to the more obvious perennial economic problems of relatively high interest rates and a wildly fluctuating exchange rate. In the high fashion sector of the knitwear industry there has emerged a noticeable increase in consumer resistance to the price increases required for the industry to maintain any degree of profitability. We should therefore reccognise that other factors are involved.

We are rightly principally concerned in this debate with import penetration. It is worth remembering that against the background to this debate, which is a shift in, or at

least the beginnings of a reconsideration of, Government policy in two important areas. The first is the relative importance of manufacturing as opposed to service industries.

During the past few years, there has been an almost pathological obsession in favour of service industries, to the detriment of manufacturing industries, emanating from the Treasury as well as the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope that that balance will shift more positively in favour of manufacturing industry. The Minister today has a valuable, if not unique, opportunity to demonstrate, in the way that he handles this issue, the Government's position on the balance between manufacturing and service industries. That will be crucial to the industry in the coming months, if not years.

In terms of the Government's macro-economic and trade policy, whatever he does about the knitwear industry will have an impact on the country's trade deficit and balance of payments. I wholeheartedly agree with everything said earlier in the debate about the difficulties which the industry faces because of the constraints on their exporting efforts.

The knitting industry is the sector that concerns me most because of its importance to my constituency. According to the provisional figures, which go to the end of 1989—I have to rely on them because the final figures are not complete—the United Kingdom imports of knitted products in 1989 amounted to £1,470 million. There were exports in the opposite direction of £700 million, which leaves a trade deficit of £770 million. That has a substantially adverse effect on the United Kingdom's economy.

Imports of knitted products to the United Kingdom have increased since 1986, when the import figure was £923 million. In 1989—again using provisional figures—it was £1,470 million. That is an increase of £547 million during that period. It is a 59 per cent. increase in three years—a substantial figure in anyone's language. That was against the background of the MFA. If anyone were to suggest that the level of imports could have been properly controlled if the MFA had not been in place during that time, it would require a great deal more detailed explanation, at least to satisfy me.

This debate is important, because it gives us the chance to share constituency experiences. Each constituency Member is concerned about particular aspects of the industry. It is also an important and valuable opportunity, particularly because the textiles committee in GATT is required to meet in July 1990 to discuss whether another renewal is to be contemplated. Therefore, during the next six months or so, public and private discussions will take place. It is necessary for the Government to make their position clear to the House. I fully understand that Ministers are not entirely masters of their own house in this matter. Therefore, it is important that the EC mandate that is eventually negotiated should be discussed as openly as possible.

I have found in the past that this debate is valuable too, in order to explain the exact realities of the multi-fibre arrangement to the outside world. Many people labour under misconceptions about the arrangement and its effect. It produces difficulties as well as advantages, and these must all be weighed in the balance.

It surprises my right hon. and hon. Friends when I remind them that there have been significant and dramatic increases in quotas in the three renewals since the original MFA was introduced in 1974. It staggers some of my hon. Friends when I tell them that the United Kingdom's MFA quota on sweaters is 52 million pieces per year. The misconception exists that there is a great, oppressive element of trade restriction and barrier in the multi-fibre arrangement. Far from that being the case, under the current arrangement generous increases have been countenanced and others observed during the past 15 years.

Each of the three renewals of the arrangement has made considerable improvements. For example, during the last renewal one quarter of the products covered by quota were removed. The MFA has improved the regulation of trade and provided confidence and stability in international trade, which is warmly welcomed, particularly by less developed countries. The newly industrialised countries can look after themselves.

I share the fear mentioned by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) about the future impact that China may have on this country's trade position. That must be watched carefully.

The multi-fibre arrangement has allowed helpful bilateral arrangements to be negotiated across the world, throughout the network of international trade, in a positive and beneficial way. It has given this country's industry the confidence to invest substantial sums of money, to go high tech and to be as capital intensive as possible—the industry is essentially labour intensive. All those benefits have accrued because of the MFA's existence in the past.

If there had been no multi-fibre arrangement to provide orderly regulation in the international market, the Americans would not have kept their markets as open as they have in the face of the penetration that they have suffered. Costs and benefits are therefore involved on both sides of the equation. The Silberston report refers to them. We have also heard that there is a case for allowing greater access to the lesser developed countries. It is no part of my political philosophy that there should be a siege economy in this country. It would be stone daft for us to consider going for trade barriers for the sake of them. This country has survived and prospered because of its quite rightly open international trade policy.

We are talking not always about the Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans, but about, for example, Australians. I remind hon. Members that countries such as Australia, which is not a signatory to the arrangement, impose 60 per cent. tariff barriers on our knitwear going into Australia. We buy the wool from Australia and knit the jerseys with Australian wool, then the Australians charge a 60 per cent. tariff when we try to export them to Australia. That is unacceptable. It is not fair trade, but exploitation. That cannot be allowed to continue if the industry is to have any chance of surviving and prospering.

I am sceptical about the modalities and other economic factors that have crept into the Silberston report. I do not follow all the detailed economic arguments, but there are good grounds for rebutting some of the economic conclusions reached by Silberston, about the effect of the MFA on import prices, manufacturers' prices, output and unemployment. His job loss figure is not right.

The knitted products sector alone in the year to June 1989 suffered as much as almost 7,500 job losses. My figures are slightly different from those used by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), mine come from *Textile News*. Those are

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serious job losses. Professor Silberston is wildly optimistic if he thinks that the removal of the MFA would result in the loss of only 32,000 jobs.

The Silberston report has not paid enough attention to the impact on sectoral employment. I am pleased that Hawick in my constituency gets an honourable mention on page 99—that is an improvement on the first Silberston report some years ago, which did not even mention Scotland. However, there is evidence that there is a move towards twin tracking in the industry's lower sector, in places such as Leicestershire and Lancashire. I do not blame them because they have suffered more job losses than we have in the Borders of Scotland, if not in other parts of Scotland.

The trend is for some of those companies to trade up market. I do not blame them for that, but they will end up competing with the fashion sector of the industry that already exists in the Scottish Borders. That will produce no solution for the United Kingdom's domestic industry in the long term.

The Silberston report did not pay enough attention to the problems that will occur in the single European market. Unless something is done about it, there is potential for market targeting by importing countries that could cause havoc in the United Kingdom's domestic market and will end up with us taking even more than we are now. Ater 1992, the MFA can and should be subsumed into GATT. I make no apology for returning to the point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) when he quoted page 123 of the Silberston report. Those three sentences are most important and I make no apology for quoting them again. Under the heading

"Europe 1992, GATT and the Uruguay Round"

it stated:

"What would be regrettable would be for the MFA to be abolished without agreement on measures to strengthen GATT rules and disciplines. The MFA, for all its faults, is better than no MFA with no international agreement on safeguards. That would lead to piecemeal unilateral, or forced bilateral, action by many importing countries, without multilateral supervision: the remedy would be worse than the cure."

The Government must take that advice seriously. The MFA can and should be brought back into GATT, but the linkage is crucial. We must get movement on reductions in tariff and non-tariff barriers, more effective action against dumping, better safeguard clauses than the existing article 19 and action against piracy of design and trade names. That linkage is crucial. Without it the future of the industry throughout the country and particularly in areas such as the Borders and my constituency will be seriously prejudiced.

11.21 am

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The multi-fibre arrangement has played a vital part in avoiding conflict in international trade, in allowing poorer developing countries to gain growing access to the market of the developed world and in preventing disruption in the United Kingdom and European textile and clothing industries with the resultant saving of vital jobs which otherwise would have been lost. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs has a true understanding of the industry or the immense benefits that the MFA has brought since its inception in 1974.

I preface my brief remarks in today's important debate with a summary of the effectiveness and the benefits of the MFA so that there can be no doubt that, like so many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who take an active interest in the clothing and textile industries, I am unequivocal in my view that the MFA should be renewed in its current form when the present term expires in July 1991, and that its longer-term future should be dependent on clear and quantifiable progress being made in tackling the trading abuses and barriers which face the international textile and clothing trade and which hold back the development of the United Kingdom industries.

There are those in the House and outside who criticise the MFA as a restriction on free trade, as protectionism and as unjustifiable in a world which is seeking to move ever closer to free and unrestricted trade. Those who express such a view are displaying a great naivety and a complete ignorance of the way in which the MFA has taken the world textile and clothing industries nearer to that goal that we all want to achieve—free and fair trade between nations. Had it not been for the MFA, the developing producers in Third world countries would soon be squeezed out of the world market by the big boys in Europe, in the far east, and the United States of America, who of course were able to wield considerably greater commercial clout.

We have heard robust speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House, particularly from my hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and for Leeds, North-West, who was a distinguished Minister——

Sir Giles Shaw: Pudsey.

Mr. Winterton: I apologise, I thought that the name might have been changed, although I always recall it as Pudsey. My hon. Friend the Minister will ignore the views that have been expressed at his peril, and so will the Government.

Sir Giles Shaw: I apologise for interrupting my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). Although I have not participated in a textiles debate for some time, I can assure my hon. Friend that during that time the name of my constituency has not been altered.

Mr. Winterton: My hon. Friend has made his point very well.

Renewal of the MFA is vital to the future of free trade in the textile and clothing industries. The leverage and influence that it provides can be used to ensure that clear and quantifiable progress is made in dismantling and eliminating the trading abuses that still exist and that allow the dumping of goods—which has been emphasised during the debate—to continue almost unchecked, although technically it is condemned under the GATT rules, which, in too many cases, have proved to be a toothless watchdog. It is time that we tightened up on those abuses. The renewal of the MFA could be used to encourage the establishment of rules to allow action which is swift and effective in coping with attempts to undermine markets through the dumping of seasonal and fashion goods in particular.

I and other hon. Members who seek to assist the industry are deeply concerned that current European proposals do not go nearly far enough in allowing

increased scope for the use, for example, of constructed prices in anti-dumping cases, and penalising the use of dumped components—all important points in the debate. We have a long way to go in eliminating the grossly unfair subsidies which are made available by some Governments to reduce the cost of exports from their own textile and clothing industries. That practice is unacceptable, but it continues to be widespread. I am sure that others who speak in today's debate will provide specific details.

I wish to move on, as two further gross trade distortions must be put on record. The first is the theft of designs and brand names, which is sadly becoming increasingly prevalent as the pace of fashion change heats up. Effective international rules must be established to outlaw that practice and to protect intellectual property rights.

The second trade distortion is the straightforward closure of markets to the United Kingdom clothing and textile industry. We cannot possibly open up our markets totally to overseas competition while our own products face huge tariff and non-tariff barriers overseas. It is essential that the Uruguay round should lead to an opening of those markets to allow a true free flow in international trade.

I have highlighted to successive Ministers the gross distortions which exist, which mean that Brazil has implemented virtually a total ban on import , and that Turkey, through the imposition of an imaginative if totally unjust housing fund contribution, has priced our products out of its domestic market. Yet we are expected to open our markets to them. That is grossly unfair, and, whatever the EC might say, we must do something about it to ensure that it does not continue.

The rules of the GATT agreement must be made more workable. We need to consider the possibility of selective action against particular countries whose exports cause or threaten disruption and to suspend in specified circumstances the requirement to compensate the countries which are affected.

It is interesting to note that Professor Silberston, who so often has been portrayed as the bete noir of the textile and clothing industries, now shares the concerns that have been expressed about the trade. He now supports in principle the need to link the future of the multi-fibre arrangement with verifiable progress in strengthening GATT rules and disciplines. Needless to say, I believe that Professor Silberston has once again seriously underestimated the impact of phasing out the MFA on jobs in Britain. Even his own figure of 33,000 resulting job losses is one which we must not begin to countenance.

I understand that the Retail Consortium, which has just hot-footed it back from a meeting with our former colleague and now European Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, and which is a long-standing opponent of the MFA, has also accepted that the immediate abolition of the MFA would cause such disruption to the United Kingdom industries that it would be counter-productive, even from its own limited viewpoint.

In a call to my office yesterday afternoon, the consortium accepted that renewal of the MFA in 1991 is necessary and said that its subsequent phasing out must be gradual. The Consortium's time scale of five years, like that of Professor Silberston, displays a continuing ignorance of the way in which in reality our domestic clothing and textile industries function in international markets.

After careful thought, I take the view that we must look forward to a period of at least 10 years beyond the time at which GATT rules are strengthened before we can assess whether the changes have worked and it is prudent to begin to bring an end to the MFA. Any earlier move would be imprudent, precipitate and downright irresponsible. As my hon. Friend the Minister well knows, that view is now shared by several developing countries who fear for a future in which their infant industries would be left to flounder if exposed too soon to unrestricted trade.

It is interesting to note that the Retail Consortium, the textile industry, a number of developing countries and even Professor Silberston, all take the view that premature abandonment of the MFA would cause serious damage to our economy and world trading patterns. That would be in nobody's trading interest, and that makes support for the renewal of the MFA in 1991 the sensible and inescapable conclusion of our debate.

I should like to ask the Minister two specific questions. Will he give us an assurance in clear terms that he accepts that the future of the MFA must be linked to clear and quantifiable improvements in the working of the GATT rules? Secondly, I express my concern and ask the Minister about current rumours that would affect the position of the United States of America. It is mooted that the American Administration are currently proposing that the MFA should be replaced by a series of global quotas.

Can the Minister shed any light on that rumour, because such a change would be disastrous for United Kingdom exports? It would leave us and the rest of the European Community vulnerable to all the goods diverted from the United States and would throw world trade in textiles and clothing into chaos. Will the Minister give a firm assurance that he will stand against any such ludicrous proposal?

This debate is unique because every speaker will be strongly in favour of the MFA. That is not only a message to the Government, but a clear message to the European Community, and I trust and pray that it will not be ignored.

11.32 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): In opening the debate the Minister spoke about the debates that we have had in recent months on the textile and clothing industries. All those debates unfolded in a familiar way. There are many familiar faces in the Chamber; I am pleased to see that the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) is again with us and that other hon. Members representing clothing and textile constituencies are clamouring for more help and understanding by the Government. The Minister dishes out buckets of praise and sympathy but has displayed little understanding and little hope of action for the industries.

Reference has been made to the Minister's predecessor, who is now the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. In past debates that Minister showed a forthright understanding of the textile and clothing industries. He reported robustly to us on many occasions the international efforts that he was making to defend British textiles and clothings. By contrast, I am sorry to say that the Minister who opened this debate gave a good impression of someone who will be happy to preside over the continuing decline of industries which, sadly, have

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been in decline for many years. I hope that when the Minister speaks to us again, his views will have changed dramatically.

The 485,000 men and women who work in textiles and clothing want clear assurances, not only from the Minister but from the Government as a whole. Because of the importance of the industry, such assurances should come from the Prime Minister, who should say that the Government do not regard those industries as expendable. That is the suspicion in the minds of many people who depend for their livelihood on the prosperity and future of those industries. We must know clearly whether our textile and clothing industries are expendable in favour of Britain's financial services. Many people in the industry think that there is the risk of such a deal.

The textile and clothing industries face great difficulty. Successive Ministers have sought to argue that matters are in the hands of others and there is nothing that the industries themselves can do. I challenge that view. There are a number of steps that the Government can take to help the industries and stop or lessen some of the damage that is being done. Over the last year, 400 jobs a week have been lost in the textile and clothing industries, which describe the prospects for the coming year as extremely worrying.

Mills are closing, workers are being made redundant and still more are being put on short-time working. Recent changes in the social security benefits system are heaping penalties on workers who are forced into short-time working. I appeal to the Minister to take note of that and to ensure that those recent benefit changes are again changed so that short-time textile workers are not penalised.

The Government can take other action. I was contacted this week by a carpet manufacturer in my constituency who is owed £48,000 in VAT as a result of his company's sharply improved export performance. The company has been waiting since 19 December for that money to be repaid by the VAT office. I have written to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about this matter, and I hope that the Minister will intervene to ensure that that money is repaid to that firm as soon as possible so that it can continue in business.

I support the view expressed by hon. Members that the MFA must be continued, and whether that is as part of GATT or independently does not matter. What is important is that the framework of protection and assistance given by the MFA continues for the foreseeable future. Some obvious strengthening measures must be taken to safeguard the industries, especially against dumping, subsidies, theft of design and brand names, and the closure of markets.

The Minister should give a much stronger assurance than the one he gave earlier about the insertion of a social clause into either GATT or a renewed MFA. In view of welcome changing events in recent months, not least in Europe, the insertion of a clear and forceful social clause is vital.

The purpose of such a clause is not to restrict the export opportunities of developing countries, but to act as a positive lever for improvements in working conditions. It is a stated objective of the GATT and of the Uruguay round to improve social conditions in the developing countries by introducing a social clause to achieve basic International Labour Organisation standards for employment rights, child labour and freedom of association.

The clothing and textile industry is vitally important for a number of regions, particularly Yorkshire, the north west, midlands, Scotland and Northern Ireland, where it plays an important part in the local economy. When Ministers speak of consumers, they should understand that textile workers themselves are consumers—and if they are forced into short-time working and unemployment, the local economies that we represent will be badly damaged. The areas concerned have suffered massive unemployment through the Thatcher years, and I appeal to the Minister and to the Government to begin to understand the enormous problems that those communities have striven to overcome.

For those communities, the future is extremely worrying. The men and women whose livelihoods depend on the industry's future want to be reassured that the Government will give a firm lead. They may not have done so in the past, but the need to do so now is greater than ever. The Government must ensure that, in the GATT negotiations, there are firm undertakings on the matters about which I and hon. Members who have spoken, or that the MFA will continue independently. The arrangement is not a protectionist measure, and never has been, but it allows for limited textile imports.

The latest figures show textile imports in this country amounting to £3,500 million—representing almost one fifth of our trade deficit. Britain is often regarded as a soft touch. If Marks and Spencer increases the number of imported goods it buys by 1 per cent., that will add more than £20 million to Britain's trade deficit. That illustrates the dimension of the problem and the importance of the industry, which is the fifth largest manufacturing industry in this country. It is not expendable.

The Government must respond to the pleas made today by hon. Members in all parts of the House, and to those made in previous debates, with determination and conviction, and in the understanding that their endeavours will help to sustain fragile local and regional economies. Right hon. and hon. Members who represent the textile and clothing industry, which has served this country well, look to the Government to serve it in the same manner.

11.44 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I agree with many of the comments of the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). I welcome back to the House my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), who is in good voice and heart, and who started the debate off well.

The strength of feeling expressed today and the cross-party united view demonstrates the importance that right hon. and hon. Members attach to the clothing and textile industries that they represent in different areas of the country. I represent the cloth and knitwear sector and, like the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), a constituency in which the mills account for a high proportion of employment and in which any short-time working or redundancies would have serious repercussions.

I am worried about the lukewarm approach of my hon. Friend the Minister towards the multi-fibre arrangement. Without it, unemployment in the industry would be much

higher, even though it has reached serious levels. The Government must adopt a higher profile and lead from the front in Europe, to secure an even better MFA than the present one at the next GATT round in Uruguay. Everything must be done to prevent escalating imports and unfair competition.

The cloth and knitwear sectors are facing severe difficulties—knitwear most of all. They need, above all, confidence. I hope that the debate will stimulate that, and that the Minister will do everything that he can to restore confidence. Right hon. and hon. Members have been presented with a number of valuable documents relevant to the debate from the Scottish Knitwear Association, the Apparel, Knitting and Textile Alliance and the Confederation of British Wool Textiles, as well as from individual companies. It all points to the concern that is felt about the industry's economic future and the future of the MFA. I have received individual confirmations of that anxiety from speaking to managing directors and managers of mills in my constituency.

I approve of the Government's overall economic objective. They have brought down inflation, and in my constituency unemployment has halved over the past three years. I accept that an important ingredient in the success of those policies is containing interest rates. They were high when we came to office and were then brought down, but have risen again. The textile industry wants nothing more than to see interest rates again being reduced, coupled with a stable exchange rate. That is the common denominator of the industry's complaints, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will convey that view to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

As was mentioned by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, the Government are unable to do anything about the warm weather of the past 18 months, which certainly affected knitwear sales, or about fashion trends. However, the industry is not sitting back and doing nothing, for I doubt whether any other industry does so much in export and design. I am sure that things will turn in the industry's favour in the coming year. It is working on the development of non-traditional fine yarns and cloths to meet changing fashions. Nevertheless, it still has to meet the very high costs of imported cashmere, which have escalated dramatically over the past five years. I am glad that in the agricultural sense we are diversifying in Scotland into cashmere, but it will take a considerable time for that innovation to have a significant effect on the domestic industry.

The textile industry has a fine labour force, which has held back on wage claims in the past year or two, when the situation has been difficult. Mills are retaining their employees, perhaps against their better judgment, but mindful that in the long term there will be a shortage of skilled labour. They are desperately hanging on in the expectation that things will improve—but they cannot do so for ever.

What action can the Government take? We have all read the Silberston report and have made up our minds about it. I strongly disagree that we should fade out the MFA and its links with the GATT. The opposite is true. We must play our part in Europe and retain the MFA and insist that it is effective. That point has come out strongly in the debate. We must strengthen it and ensure that implementation is fair and that we are all on the same level playing field. In that way, all sectors and countries will have a better balance of opportunity.

As many hon. Members have said, we must halt the escalation of imports. They come into this country under various shades of regulation, but basically it is all a matter of dumping in one way or another—let us not mince words about it. We must quickly stop dumping. It takes years before there is effective action and the Government must do what they can to speed up effective measures to prevent dumping and enforce GATT. We must eliminate the export subsidies achieved by other countries. Goods from China are selling at less than the cost of the raw materials, and that cannot be allowed to continue because it is unfair and destroys our industry. We must act quickly when there is a breach of the rules. As my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said, we must watch like hawks the moves towards further protectionism in America.

By coupling our economic policies with stimulation of demand, which is necessary for the industry to pick up, we can bring back confidence to the industry. This is a great opportunity for the Government to start us off in the right direction. Firm words from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State about the determination to lead from the front in Europe on MFA would be the best possible start.

11.50 am

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and to join a growing chorus in the House in favour of renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. I speak as one who represents a constituency where the knitwear, textile and clothing industry is the main employer, following the drastic, unnecessary and short-sighted closure of deep mining in Ayrshire. My hon. Friends the Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) have asked me to speak on their behalf. Five thousand people in Ayrshire work in the knitwear industry. The Ayrshire knitwear industry deals almost solely with cut and sew rather than fully fashioned knitwear, and is therefore much more vulnerable to the flood of cheap imports.

The Under-Secretary of State asked what factors he should consider in the negotiations. I hope that he will take account of my point. He seemed to speak only of high-value exports from the United Kingdom, but a large part of the industry produces cheaper garments. Thousands more people in Ayrshire are employed in textile and clothing production. On behalf of Afton Dyers in New Cumnock, I have already written to the Minister expressing concern about the flood of imports of cheap socks from Turkey. Manufacturers of jeans, ladies' nightwear—I shall make no further comment, because Scottish Members should keep away from that subject—and other clothing in my constituency are under intense pressure, because of reduced margins, short-time working and lay-offs.

I remind the House that the Cumnock and Sanquhar travel-to-work area has the highest level of unemployment of any such area in mainland Britain. We are particularly anxious about the threat to jobs, as a former Minister, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), knows only too well.

[Mr. George Foulkes]

Last week I had a meeting, at their request, with representatives of the Scottish Knitwear Association, including Cumnock Knitwear and Kyle Knitwear, and of the employees. They asked me to bring this urgent plea to the House and the Government about their worries. This is a crucial time for the industry, which is facing difficult trading conditions because of warm weather and fashion changes, as the hon. Member for Dumfries said. We can do nothing about that, but we must take account of factors on which we can have some influence. Abandoning the multi-fibre arrangement would have a devastating effect on an area of already high and chronic unemployment.

As Scottish Members know, there has been understandable and widespread concern in Scotland about the threat to the Ravenscraig steelworks. There has been an all-party outcry and a campaign to preserve steel operations. I would argue that the threat of abandonment of the MFA in Scotland is an even greater danger to employment in Scotland than the closure of Ravenscraig.

That point is not fully appreciated because of the spread of employers throughout Britain and the lower profile of this sector. The hardship, the economic effect and the other problems would be just as severe. The industry has told me that it reckons that the 30,000 jobs about which Silberston talks would be lost in Scotland alone, not just in the United Kingdom.

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rarely speak from the Back Benches because I am a Front Bench spokesman on foreign affairs. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Thank you. I am a spokesman on aid and development, which is appreciated by Conservative Members. In that role, I am constantly made aware of the needs of developing countries, so I know of their concern about protectionism and of their wish to have access to the rich markets of the West.

That has to be balanced against our constituency interests, but as other hon. Members have said, the MFA allows controlled growth in access to the market without excessive disruption of employment. Other hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) have said that the employees in the textile industry are themselves consumers and their purchasing power is important. With controlled growth, we can ensure that priority in growth is given to the poorer countries rather than to the newly industrialised countries whose economies, in some cases, are stronger than our own, especially with the present Government's economic policies.

As other hon. Members, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) have said, we must ensure that the market throughout the world is not swamped by the colossus of China. That would have a devastating effect in other countries, as well as ours.

I want to reinforce above all what others have said about the need to ensure that, before the full rigours of the free market come into effect, there is a level playing field. That means that the present inadequate controls against dumping must be tightened. It also means that there must be no subsidies such as the subsidy in South Korea which I mentioned in an intervention, or the subsidy in Turkey, which the German Government are giving to encourage the return of the guest workers. We must ensure that all those subsidies are eliminated, that all markets are opened up and, as the Minister said—I hope that he will say it in other councils as well as here—that intellectual property is safeguarded.

Above all, that policy needs to be pursued vigorously by the British Government. The producers have told me that they detect a lack of determination in the Government's approach. I have a great respect for the Minister's intellect and capability, but there seemed a lack of energy and determination in his speech. The industry feels that this sector is being sacrificed to others. The Prime Minister, for example, considers that civil engineering contracts in Turkey can be traded off against United Kingdom textile jobs. That is not acceptable. The Government must fight hard.

We make representations by remote control through the European Community, but that increases the need for the Minister to be even more active in fighting on behalf of the industry to retain the MFA or a similar arrangement that is far more effective than GATT. If that is not done, there will be not only unacceptable job losses but, as was said earlier, as a result of increased imports and the decline in exports, there will be an increase in our already abysmal trade deficit.

The Minister must act with more vigour than he has displayed today to protect this vital industry. Above all, he must represent what will be seen at the end of the debate as the unanimous view of the British House of Commons.

11.58 am

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): I welcome this opportunity to participate in the debate on the multi-fibre arrangement and to hear a virtual unanimity of view.

In view of the importance of textiles to my constituency, it is perhaps appropriate that my first Back-Bench speech after six years of ministerial office should be on this subject. No other parliamentary constituency has as many employees in textiles as we have in Pendle. The 1987 figures—the latest figures—showed that about 3,800 employees were in textiles, which represented 24 per cent. of total manufacturing employment and 13 per cent. of overall employment. Hence, the health and prosperity of the industry are of particular concern to me.

In preparing my speech, I referred again to my maiden speech in June 1979, in which I pointed out that the textile companies then would not invest the substantial sums necessary to re-equip and increasingly automate their plants unless they saw a permanent future for their products. I went on:

"That is why the commitment to continue with the multi-fibre arrangement well into the 1980s is vital."—[*Official Report* 14 June 1979; Vol. 968, cc 690-1.]

As the House knows only too well, the early 1980s were a sad and difficult time for our textile industry. There was mill closure after mill closure and painful redundancies as the industry carried through brutal, if necessary, restructuring, in the teeth of the recession. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) here. He knows full well the impact that the recession and the closures had on our region of Lancashire.

Management appreciated that there was no future in mass-produced, low-value products and concentrated on higher-value products, often in niche markets, taking full advantage of the most modern manufacturing techniques,

with increasing emphasis on quality, design and colour. The industry also faced up to the increasing globalisation of companies and markets. Perhaps no industry is so truly international as the textile industry, with major companies taking full advantage of the lowest raw material and making-up costs on the world scene. Many of our major companies act as both importers and manufacturers.

Heavy and continuous capital investment has produced dramatic increases in productivity. For example, at the Carrington Viyella fabrics Holmefield mill operation at Barrowford which I visited last week and which is part of the Coats Viyella group, productivity per employee will have risen by 50 per cent. in the four years from 1987 to 1990.

Perhaps no industry is quite so sensitive to factors outside its direct control as the textiles industry. It is sensitive to imports, exchange rates, interest rates and climate—let alone fashion. In Pendle today, firms such as Smith and Nephew, Albert Hartley, Thomas Mason, J. B. Battye, Verber Bairdtex, Dawes and Company, Lontex, Clover Brook, Mitchell Interflex, William Reed, Johnson and Johnson, Peter Reed and others battle away in intensely competitive markets.

I think that it is agreed that, despite its imperfections, the present MFA has given a measure of protection, and during the mid and late 1980s, in broad-brush terms, the industry experienced better trading. Now there is increasing anxiety, however, with a question mark over the future of the MFA post-1991.

I welcome the fact that 25 of western Europe's most powerful textile groups came together in December to finalise plans for a new organisation to represent the industry on trade issues, including forthcoming negotiations on the future of the MFA—companies such as Marzolto and Benetton of Italy, DMC and Chargeur of France, and Courtaulds and Coats Viyella of the United Kingdom.

Nobody in the industry believes that the world's textile trade is fair as between companies and countries, when hidden subsidies abound, when a country such as Turkey imposes substantial duties on EC textiles and clothing imports, compared with a nil duty for Turkish exports to the EEC and when anti-dumping cases take so long to prosecute. I have considerable regard for my hon. Friend the Minister, but his officials at the Department have a lousy record when it comes to prosecuting dumping cases. I can only think that the Barlow Clowes team has been promoted to the task.

I can do no better than to quote Dr. John Finnegan, the chief executive of Carrington Viyella fabrics and a vice-president of the Council for British Cotton Textiles, who summarised his views to me:

"Whilst we understand the UK Government's and European Commission's desire to move to a free trade arena, their pace towards this goal takes no account of the realities of overseas trading practices where local subsidies are given to producers, and significant barriers to our own exports exist . . . We cannot see the point in freeing EC import restrictions without such moves being reciprocated in our export markets. We are not asking for any privileges or support, just simply that we are allowed to play on a flat and level pitch with an unbiased referee."

What happens to our textile industry in future is vital for the United Kingdom economy in terms of employment and balance of payments. Textiles and clothing constitute no less than 23 per cent. of our overall adverse trade balance.

I have some recommendations for my hon. Friend the Minister as we look to the future. First, if negotiated on an EC basis, each country must retain its own quotas so that no member state can be the target for total EC quota. Secondly, if the MFA is to be scrapped, that must happen over a long period—say five to 10 years—during which time the GATT rules must be strengthened. There must be a reciprocal opening up of domestic markets in low-cost exporting countries. Thirdly, the tightening of procedures and reciprocal duty rates must be in place and working before the MFA is phased out. Finally—this is perhaps particularly apposite at the moment—we must maintain our quotas against newly liberalised eastern bloc countries or they will be another cause of job losses.

I repeat that I have a considerable regard for the intellectual ability of my hon. Friend the Minister. He said earlier that, at times, he would fight like a tiger. When he replies, I hope that he will sound rather more like a tiger; the future of the MFA may be of limited concern to his constituents, but it is of considerable concern to my constituents.

12.5 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I will endeavour to speak for less than 10 minutes.

I was born in Bradford and I am proud to represent part of Bradford that is the centre of the wool and textile industry. I was brought up in Saltaire, a textile village, where what was once the biggest integrated textile mill in Europe now stands gaunt and idle.

Some 14,000 people in Bradford depend on textiles directly—perhaps double that number in other respects—for employment. The industry is vitally important. I am committed to a confident, modern, well-paid textile industry which does not have short-time working. A statutory instrument was introduced at the end of 1989 which limited unemployment benefit to a maximum of £43 a week. That was disgraceful, because it has badly hit textile workers and others who are forced to work short time, although they may not want to do so.

I urgently call for a renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. It is better to have arrangements for solving trade problems by agreement than to indulge in trade wars that are potentially highly damaging to our industry. The MFA has helped developing nations, not hindered them, by providing increased and improving quotas. We face the problem of imports from developed nations and that problem must be considered.

The Minister said that there was no calculable proof of the efficiency and effectiveness of the MFA. He should ask his civil servants in the industry section of the Department of Trade and Industry to calculate the number of jobs lost in relation to the quantity of exports. An increase in exports to the United Kingdom might bear a direct comparison to the number of jobs lost.

It is very important that a social clause should be incorporated into the MFA. Child labour is used in some developing nations such as in South Korea. There are no adequate health and safety standards in those countries and I resent the National Consumer Council urging in more cheap imports on the back of child labour and shoddy and dangerous working conditions.

I thought that the Minister concentrated excessively on the alleged lower prices of imports as outlined by Professor Silberston. The cost of job losses is very great. It includes

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

a waste of skills, the level of unemployment benefit, retraining costs and health costs for workers and other family members who are adversely affected.

As I said in an earlier intervention, textile workers have collaborated with changes in shifts, with new machinery and new working patterns. No one could describe their wages as excessive. On every criterion, the textile industry reflects help and collaboration on both sides of the industry. However, workers have often been kicked in the teeth by mill closure after mill closure, and the Minister should bear that in mind. The Minister's speech was not clear. It may be because of his style that he sounds lacklustre, but he did not provide an assurance that he will clearly and positively support the industry in the future.

The EEC must negotiate the new agreement with important, effective measures of application. People have criticised the Department of Trade and Industry. We handed powers to the Common Market when we should not have done so. People who support the Common Market must direct their criticism at that institution to ensure that they negotiate the multi-fibre arrangement satisfactorily and produce an effective means of application.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) referred to anti-dumping cases taking years, and jobs being lost in the process. Bradford is concerned with woollen textiles. The Prato region of Italy has been subsidised for many years. That problem has not been dealt with effectively by the Commission, because it is difficult to obtain proof. With increasing water prices and privatisation, many people in the woollen textile industry are looking apprehensively at 1992 and regarding it as a nightmare and not a benefit.

I emphasise that the burden of sharing arrangements for imports into the Common Market must be continued. The United Kingdom has the most efficient retailing system in the EC. Therefore, why should our manufacturing industry be damaged because importers find a soft retailing arrangement in the United Kingdom? They can go to five major retailers in the United Kingdom and get distribution to every major town and city throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom. That cannot be done in any other Common Market country. It is absolutely vital that the burden-sharing arrangements are retained after 1992 and coupled with the existing multi-fibre arrangement.

People in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Scotland and other regions have pride in their skill and traditions in producing fine textiles of high quality. Of course we must develop our design potential, but we have pride in skills and ability. We have a tradition of knowledge. I am determined, and I hope that the House is determined, that those skills should be retained and have application in job opportunities in the textile industry.

12.12 pm

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) said that we discussed the same topic 10 years ago. That is quite true. It is because the Conservative Government have renewed the multi-fibre arrangement on two occasions before this. Therefore, we have had similar debates. My credentials for speaking in the debate are as strong as those of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) or anyone else. My constituency is in the centre of the Yorkshire textile industry. In 1914, when she was 12, my mother started work as a weaver. She worked in the textile industry until she was married. She thought that I was a bit Left-wing.

My area makes textile products of all sorts. In 1988, I held a celebration of textiles on the Terrace of the House of Commons. We had printed clothes, woollen clothes and woven fabrics. There were 50 different ensembles from my constituency, and manufacturers brought buyers from all over the world. Our firms are old family businesses, new one-man and one-woman businesses, national companies and multinational companies. All export and all work hard to encourage people to buy British. In the 1980s I visited a firm that was closing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) said, 26 ladies worked in that firm. All of them were wearing imported jeans. We should buy British more often.

It cannot be that all my companies will remain as they are at present. Various factors, from the developments in Eastern Europe, which the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) mentioned, to the hot summers, which the last remaining Liberal, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) mentioned, change trade all the time.

I expect to see an expansion in some areas, but unfortunately I also expect to see significant restructuring and—I know that my hon Friend the Member for Pudsey asked us not to put too fine a point on this—a significant number of redundancies in my constituency shortly because of the changes in fashion and the hot summers. Jobs will disappear for both training and technical reasons. I am fortunate in the level of employment in my constituency. Between 95 and 96 per cent. of all those who want to work are working.

However, many of those jobs rely on the same factors that affect the textile trade, and high on the list of factors for keeping those jobs is access to other markets. We should begin to deal with that at home—here in the EC. The fastest growing sector of employment in the country and in Calderdale is financial services. That industry cries out for the same level playing field as textiles. That is what we need if we are to keep jobs in that industry.

The EC cannot continue to sanction a totally unbalanced agreement with Turkey. I know that other hon. Members have had and will have more to say on this detailed point. Like other hon. Members, I have received a significant amount of correspondence from the textile firms in my constituency, much of it about Turkey. I simply want to point out the position to the Commission. Here I agree with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but from an entirely different standpoint, that the Commission cannot go on pussyfooting and prevaricating, because that is costing me jobs and those jobs will not be replaced until the EC allows free trade within its own boundaries, not just for the textile industry but for financial services and other industries. Those other industries should not be instead of the textile industry, but should run alongside it. We must ensure that the same level playing field prevails for all our industries.

An effective MFA and/or a strong framework in the Uruguay round of GATT is necessary. As other hon. Members have said, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey so eloquently put it, we need that protection through GATT and the MFA because otherwise it would

be like playing a game of American football as the only chap without protection or padding. It would be difficult for us to score.

Europe must put its own house in order as part of that process because unless we do so we cannot argue with strength. All businesses rely on capital equipment and on the price of raw materials, power and labour. We cannot negotiate demand elsewhere in the world unless we in Europe have a level playing field in those things. Firth Carpets in my constituency, the manufacturer of the very carpet upon which the Minister now has his feet, was subjected to unfair competition by a German firm within a few months of laying that carpet. The German firm received £1 million and the EC did nothing about it. We cannot have such unfair competition in Europe.

Raw materials will be discussed at the GATT round, and I shall not go on about that issue. Power is an emotive subject and United Kingdom suppliers should ensure that they are at least Euro-competitive. However, it is up to the Commission to see that there are no hidden subsidies on power, as there seem to be in France at present.

We have debated social clauses before. I was glad that the hon. Member for Bradford, South again brought up the subject of the "perpetual Prato" in northern Italy and the way in which it ignores social standards. I am worried when I hear Opposition Members say that we should have a social charter when there are still such people in Europe. I saw nothing in the article that I read in the *Financial Times* in November last year about the heavy South Korean aid for textiles, nothing about the £15 billion or the £23 billion to help replace outdated production lines. I saw no evidence of the Korean Government doing anything for a social charter. We may find pronouncements such as that by South Korea nearer to home when state trading companies shape themselves into some other animal—perhaps tigers.

My textile workers and companies are frustrated by the Commission's lack of action on their behalf. I ask the Opposition not to complain when our Ministers attack the Commission in Europe. They should not call us little Englanders, as that is what they have asked my hon. Friend to do all day today. The EEC will have to be vigilant.

The textile industry looks after itself and is looking after itself in a remarkable number of ways. With other hon. Members, I recently went to a seminar on trading in the clothing industry in London, where I was delighted to learn that the much vaunted German trading systems are not flexible, cannot adapt to retraining people who come into the industry and are not as effective as ours. All they are is more expensive.

The future also depends on our industry exhibiting throughout the world, which it already does very well. I have had complaints about the British Overseas Trade Board. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has received similar complaints from hon. Members on both sides of the House and that he will deal with them. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire knows all about quotas in a fishy sense and how they lead to more and more complications. We must be careful when asking for quotas, even in the MFA or the GATT round, that our industry is not restricted as to what it can produce, as was the steel industry until very recently. It would be in the interests of many countries to restrict production to the 1 January 1990 level. An arbitrary date was chosen for milk quotas.

The textile industry is essential to Britain. We have to have high technology industries, and the textile industry is one of them. We have to have industries that are ready for change, and the textile industry is one of them. My time is up.

12.22 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): An arrangement has been made to enable every hon. Member who wants to, to speak—the Front Benches have been squeezed a bit.

I, too, welcome the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). The House may know that for several years we have been joint chairmen of the all-party knitwear industry federation, the aim of which has been to support the industry in whatever way we can. It is obvious from the attendance today what is happening and what hon. Members feel about the effects of the proposals on their constituencies. Hon. Members know that things are going wrong. I must tell the Minister this—he has to change his ways. He did not do any good at the Dispatch Box this morning. We have heard Minister after Minister speak on behalf of the textile industry from the Dispatch Box. Now we have another one who is going in the wrong direction. I hope that he has got the message about what hon. Members feel. The House will decide which direction to take.

Mr. Cryer: It probably will not.

Mr. Haynes: Oh it will. The Government will have to listen. They will have to go in the direction that we want them to take.

The Minister is representing the Government, and he portrayed Government policy this morning. They can start to change their minds. We want our industries to have a fair deal. The Government are destroying the mining industry. It used to be the main industry in my constituency, but it has almost gone. The next biggest industry is textiles, hosiery and knitwear. Slowly but surely, the Government are allowing it to be destroyed as well because they are not helping as they should.

Ministers stand at the Dispatch Box and talk about all the help that they are to give to eastern European countries, but I hope that that help will not enable those countries to dump all their textiles on our shores. We have had enough of that. Since 1978 imports from those countries have increased year by year. The Minister brushed those massive imports to one side today, but he must listen to hon. Members. We want a fair opportunity to be given to the workers, trade unions and management of the textile industry rather than a move towards the destruction of that industry.

The Minister talked about being competitive—that is all we get at the Dispatch Box. Sometimes industry needs help, but the help that has been given for many years is being taken away slowly but surely. The Minister must realise that the countries that dump their textiles on our shores get massive subsidies from their Governments. How can we compete against that? It is the same with coal mining. The new port on Humberside will allow the massive importation of coal at the expense of our industry. The same thing is happening with textiles, and it is not good enough.

I know that the Minister came to my constituency to have a look round. He should come back to see the textile industry and the mess that has been allowed to develop

[Mr. Haynes]

because the Government are not pulling out all the stops. One of his hon. Friends has already told him that he must get stuck in. He must do that or else he will get his backside kicked—he will get it kicked from Ashfield, I can assure him of that. That is what will happen unless he starts travelling in the right direction.

A lot of people are pulling out all the stops and, back in the constituencies, they are working like billy-o. But they are standing still because they are not getting the proper support from the Government.

I hope that the Minister has got the message and I hope that he will do something about it because we are crying out for help. For God's sake give it to us.

12.26 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I do not go all the way with the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), but the Minister must realise why people are so het up.

In the east midlands, one in four jobs are connected with textiles, representing 9 per cent. of all manufacturing jobs. My family comes from Lancashire and it has been through all this before. There is a strong feeling that the textile industry is given no support, that somehow it is seen as an old-fashioned, sunset industry. That is not only unfair, but incorrect.

We have seen recent company closures in the east midlands. Kemptons went into liquidation and 1,200 people lost their jobs. Texted Jersey of Corby recently closed with a loss of 120 jobs. Those closures are the tip of the iceberg, as there is a great deal of out-work in the industry. Those people are the first to go, then the part-timers. It is only when a company closes that it might make the headlines. Many textile companies are small, however, and they disappear gradually. The unemployment figures show only the cumulative effect of such company closures.

There is a feeling that there is a lack of sympathy for the industry in the Department of Trade and Industry. A recent issue has been the import of socks from Indonesia. Such imports have risen from 4·5 million to 9·5 million a year. In that time, those imports have more than doubled. The average price of those socks is 28p, which does not even cover the cost of the raw material. The replies from the Department about that matter could hardly be described as sympathetic.

If we are to respond to such subsidised imports, the Department must move much more quickly. If one sits around waiting to produce an intellectual study of the implications of those imports, the affected companies will be already bankrupt.

The Department must respond quickly. It should remember that we are talking about a major industry that employs 500,000 people. Employees in that industry represent 9 per cent. of the manufacturing work force, which is a lot. There are annual sales of £14 billion, which could be increased.

The MFA has brought substantial benefits since its introduction, not least because it has averted an international trade conflict. That would have followed as night follows day if the MFA had not been introduced. If the MFA is wound up too quickly, that type of conflict will be the result. Without it, the weaknesses in GATT will produce a proliferation of unilateral measures. We need only to think of the Bills produced in the United States Congress last year to realise what the result would be. That would affect our exports as well.

The other day I received a letter from someone in an associated trade. He was referring to the situation in Hong Kong and how it should be dealt with and to the suggestion that 50,000 heads of families should be allowed into this country. He concluded his letter by saying:

> "Ministers tell us that if we do not give assurances to these hand-picked people, the economy of Hong Kong may suffer. Dare I say—so what?"

That is the response of someone on the receiving end of some of the trade that Hong Kong has conducted.

The MFA has kept disruption to a lower level. Without it, not only unemployment but—I speak as a Nottingham Member—the problems of the inner city would be exacerbated and the social consequences felt. For the poorer developing countries, the MFA has provided guaranteed and growing access to the world markets. The danger for them is that otherwise they would be crushed and ground between the millstones of the newly industrialised countries.

Under the Uruguay round, the MFA is supposed to be integrated into GATT. The GATT rules and disciplines will be strengthened and the MFA-imposed restrictions can be phased out. That may happen, but even if it does, there would be a year between the conclusion of the Uruguay round and the MFA being renewed. One year is not long enough to determine whether those measures would have the desired effect. The MFA must be renewed. If the GATT rules have done their job, we can start talking about phasing out the MFA, but not until then.

It is essential for the Community and for the United States to develop and implement their textile trade policies in a harmonised way; otherwise, we will be played off against each other. We are the two great markets and we would each start taking protectionist measures without controlling dumping subsidies or non-tariff barriers. Once those problems have been solved, the British textile industry can gain substantial markets. The industry is confident that it can.

In 1989, the industry had almost £4 billion of exports. I must make it clear to the House that our textile industry is our most successful single-industry exporter to Japan. Let no one do the industry down. When it has a level playing field and when there is free and fair trade, our industry can more than hold its own. Our plea to the Minister is to ensure that the playing field is level.

12.33 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be conscious of the sense of unanimity and harmony that has been shown by Scottish Members today. However, that will not continue into other debates. The hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and I are here because we want to speak strongly on behalf of our constituents and all those in Scotland who are employed in the textile industry.

The latest figures from the Library show that more than 55,000 people are employed in the textile industry in Scotland. That represents 14 per cent. of the manufacturing base in Scotland. Hon. Members have already touched on the industry's overall significance, but when we realise

that 14 per cent. of the manufacturing base in Scotland is represented by textiles, people will appreciate why there is unanimity among the four of us today.

Moray is the most northerly constituency of the Grampian region. I do not know whether the Minister has ever had the opportunity to watch the exciting presentation prepared by the Grampian Initiative. If he has, he will know that strong reference is made to the importance to our area of the textile industry. In that presentation one of our proud boasts was that from the Grampian region we have sold warm woolly overcoats to the people of Russia. I do not know whether President Gorbachev is going round in one of the Crombies we produce in the north-east of Scotland. If it were possible to persuade Ministers and the Cabinet to adopt the same decentralist philosophy that the President of Russia shows, I would gladly supply them with coats from our area.

Like others who have spoken, I pay tribute to those who work in the textile industry—both at management and shop floor level. It is important to remember that people have tried hard to respond to the new challenges in the industry. They have not been slow to respond to the changing demands. I have seen great determination and vision shown by those in the industry.

In my area, small companies have managed to make major breakthroughs into the more general fashion market through contracts with organisations such as Tie Rack and Next—household names. Sixty per cent. of all goods produced in my constituency are exported. The work is being diversified because, like those mentioned by the hon. Member for Dumfries, many of the companies in my area are looking carefully at the prospects for cashmere. One of them is already competing effectively with fashion knitwear companies in Italy and France because of the high quality of its product.

One difficulty we have experienced is the high cost of cashmere during the past few years. In correspondence with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office, we were disappointed when we asked whether there was any possibility of fallow ground, which is part of the set-aside scheme in agriculture, being used for grazing cashmere goats. A strong attempt is being made to establish our own cashmere flocks to to reduce the cost. It will take a long time to reach the required levels, and we should be given more assistance.

Investment in new machinery has been made by many of the companies to make them more competitive. One comment I received from the mills this week was that the textile industry was not looking for feather-bedding and was not afraid of competition as long as it was fair. All the work done in the companies in my area shows that they do not expect feather-bedding, and have not received it. They want fair treatment to ensure that they can maintain the manufacturing base that exists in our area.

I am conscious of the other hon. Members who wish to speak, so I shall be brief. I was surprised at the debate's opening, because the Minister seemed to say—he can correct me if I am wrong—that he agreed with many of the findings of the Silberston report. I re-emphasise the point made by the Scottish Knitwear Council: that, if the multi-fibre arrangement is abolished, the upper projected figure of unemployment in the report—33,000—will apply in Scotland alone. When the Minister winds up, I should like clear guidance about which aspects of the Silberston report the Government agree with and with which they disagree.

Like other hon. Members, I believe that the renewal of the MFA is essential for the continuation of our industry. The Uruguay round of negotiations must lead to a reduction in the unreasonably restrictive tariff and non-tariff barriers operated by competitors. We need better rules to allow prompt and effective action to be taken against dumping, particularly as we move towards 1992, and we need action against the clear subsidies which are being given in other countries.

Finally, I am often told that it is becoming increasingly difficult to attach "Made in Scotland" labels to our goods. Apparently that is because of regulations pertaining to the country of origin of the raw materials and various EC regulations. Right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have shown great pride in the work of their country or region. We all want the right for goods to be clearly labelled because it gives dignity to the work undertaken by the people in the mills and it is generally a sign of quality. We want quality to be recognised, because it wil be one of the most accepted ways in which we can compete in a hard commercial world. Will the Minister touch on the labelling of our goods, as it is an important issue?

May I add my request that the Minister goes in fighting very determinedly for the textile industry? The hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) said that the Minister was being urged to be a Little Englander. The Prime Minister boasts about negotiating tough and hard on our behalf. Generally speaking, I did not agree with the Prime Minister's attitude in the European Community or with the issues on which she fought, but if the Minister reflects the same toughness of attitude in fighting for the textile industry, the House will be greatly indebted to him.

12.40 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I maintain today, as I have always done, that the British textile industry does not seek protection for its own sake, but wants to end the distortions of the free trade system. Some people in the House—although not today—and outside have failed to grasp that when, without examining the facts, they condemned our industry for opposing the opening of our markets to what they called fair competition.

A report from the National Economic Development Office shows that many countries have protected their home markets using every trick in the book, including high tariffs, quotas, restrictive licensing and distribution systems as well as import deposits and bans. By no means are the worst offenders the poorest countries. At the last renewal of MFA the British Government rightly pressed for special provision to be included for the most underdeveloped countries to expand their markets. However, tariffs of 100 per cent. or more destroy the jobs of British workers and to say, as the leader of the Liberal Democrats stated in 1986—I am sorry that the representative of his party, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is no longer present—that MFA 4 must not be renewed is effectively to give away all our bargaining counters. Not for a moment must we consider trading off or bargaining away our textile industry in return for other benefits.

[Mr. Gary Waller]

We must also recognise that a protectionist spiral would harm Britain perhaps more than any other country. We in Europe cannot sit back and allow our market to be swamped by diverted goods if the United States imposes unreasonable protectionist measures. Earlier legislation in Congress may have been halted, but United States protectionism is certainly not dead and buried and we must be vigilant.

At the beginning of the previous decade there was great scope for rooting out inefficiency as a means of improving productivity in our industry. After such enormous improvements have been achieved it is much harder to detect ways of reducing costs and increasing production. Because the nature of many sectors of the industry requires them to be relatively labour-intensive, demographic changes involving a fall in the number of school leavers pose particular challenges. It is no longer a matter of seeking cheap labour only. Training has become all-important and we need more people with the skills and commitment to make their career in a progressive industry. We should never forget that, despite the structural improvements which have taken place in the past decade, profitability in our industry is still relatively low, and even a modest decline in demand would have devastating effects. Already many sectors of our home market have been captured, and eight out of every 10 pairs of jeans or shirts sold in Britain are made abroad. The dramatic effect of textiles on our trading position generally can hardly be underestimated, with a deficit in textiles accounting for nearly one fifth of the total national balance of trade gap.

The fragility of the present trading position is well put by the managing director of Aire Valley Mills in my constituency, Mr. John Knox. He writes:

"Imports over the last few years have grown at a greater rate than our domestic market . . . It would seem that already we must brace ourselves for a fresh avalanche of imports from Eastern Europe as they sell us one of their few tradable commodities (fabric and clothing) for hard currency. We would doubt if their prices would represent the actual cost of manufacture."

Despite the recent changes in eastern Europe, it is likely to be a considerable time before one will be able to say that the countries there have ceased to be state trading economies. For political and social reasons, we are right to encourage their economic resurgence, so there is likely to be a long period during which imports from eastern Europe will increase while prices continue to be centrally supported. As Mr. Knox says:

"in the case of a sizeable percentage of our imports the main beneficiary is the middle man and not the general public. We manufacture wool crepe which we sell to the makers up at about £6·50 to £6·70. A very similar fabric is bought by a merchant from Poland at £4·65 and sold to the same makers up at £6·25."

It is not surprising that Mr. Knox concludes:

"The controls that exist in the form of the MFA are to a great extent illusory, but their final removal would precipitate further disruption to our market and more manufacturing closures."

In several of our previous debates about textiles and the MFA in its various forms, hon. Members have stressed the importance of reciprocity and the need for any dismantling of safeguards to be linked to clear progress towards free and fair competitive conditions and access to markets. Some newly industrialised nations now have many people prosperous enough to seek out the best in textiles and clothing of the type which our exporters produce so well, but those countries remain adept at using tariff and non-tariff barriers to deny us access to their markets.

It should not be thought that we can rely on further moves towards liberalisation without insisting on the renewal of the MFA. I agree with hon. Members who have said that its phasing out must take place over a lengthy period. I emphasise again the critical importance of the Punta del Este declaration, and that GATT rules must be strengthened before the MFA can go.

It is clear that the measures that GATT should incorporate in its rules must be sufficiently flexible to deal with unfair disruption of European Community markets in response to changing fashions and preferences. It is often difficult to make out a case that dumping is taking place, but its effects can be quite deadly in terms of the survival of companies and employment in this country. Although Professor Silberston says that Britain is not alone within the European Community in its susceptibility to targeting, it remains a fact that the relatively small number of distributors and retailers who account for over half the clothing sales in the United Kingdom make us peculiarly vulnerable to targeting—very often from countries whose own markets remain relatively restricted.

The creation of a single European market implies a single quota, but I do not think that we are alone in our concern about the damage that could be caused if that change was not introduced gradually and linked to progress in eliminating restrictions by producing countries.

Contrasting to some extent with his earlier report, Professor Silberston has gone a long way in recognising the realities of international trade in a competitive environment which is, unfortunately, far from fair. It is now perhaps also more widely recognised that over-hasty changes would have disastrous effects on employment in certain parts of the country, including the north of England. One must also not underestimate the problems caused by high interest charges and fluctuating exchange rates for an industry that is bound to import much of its raw materials and that depends so heavily on exports.

To an unparalleled extent, factors such as interest rates, which so often matter more than anything else, are outside the control of those who have to make the decisions about investment for the future. One must applaud the long-term vision and confidence of Courtaulds Textiles, which is currently investing over £4 million in a new factory for the production of mainly furnishing fabrics at Silsden in my constituency.

It is important to lift our eyes from the economic issues and consider the political and social consequences, not just in terms of jobs in Britain, but internationally.

The former Minister for Trade, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), was never slow to speak up for British interests, and in introducing our debate on the MFA in December 1988, he stated:

"As 1992 approaches, there is talk and, indeed, apprehension about the prospects of a Fortress Europe developing, and that would not be in the interests of the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 563.]

A great deal has happened in eastern Europe since then. Economic factors will continue to play a key role in determining the future both of western and of eastern Europe, and trade, both between Europe and the rest of

the world and within Europe, will continue to involve a number of state trading systems in the East—with tremendous consequences for the rest of this decade and into the next century. Unless that trade develops against a background of discipline and order, there could be disastrous results for both East and West.

Mr. Tredinnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance because of the crucial nature of the debate. Is it in order to proceed now that the Liberal Democrat Benches are empty?

12.51 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): It is important, even at the risk of being repetitive, to remind the Government of the views of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House on the possible consequences to the textile industry of any move to end the multi-fibre arrangement. The Minister gave a rather ominous warning about the industry's wages costs. Given the Government's record of not looking after the industry as well as they should have done, I hope that we are not entering a phase of the Government blaming workers, who have co-operated in every possible way through the most difficult times, for the industry's problems.

Like the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), I have a strong constituency interest. In fact, my mother was a textile worker, as were many other members of my family. I can go one better than the hon. Member for Calder Valley, because I worked in the industry myself, in two or three different disciplines.

I object to Conservative Members blaming the industry's current position all on the EEC, when in truth the Government themselves are responsible for a great deal of the mismanagement that has affected the industry's fortunes. No effective manager would have allowed a clothing and textiles trade deficit of £3·5 billion to develop, accounting for almost 20 per cent. of Britain's negative trade balance.

As to wages, if the Minister imagines that low pay leads to a successful economy, why is it that Bangladesh is not ahead of West Germany in the league of successful economies? My constituency and Calder Valley have suffered the loss of 8,000 jobs in the industry since 1975 but 5,000 jobs remain, and that is a substantial work force. The industry's workers, in co-operating in massive restructuring and in achieving an enormous increase in per capita production, helped to achieve the stabilisation that the industry enjoyed until very recently. Unfortunately, textiles are again becoming very vulnerable, and part of the blame for that must be laid at the Government's door. High interest rates and energy costs and other factors have created that vulnerability.

The effect of water privatisation has already been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), and it is of particular concern to those engaged in wool manufacture. It is suggested that water supplies will be cheaper, but I hope that any Conservative Member who makes that argument will be around when the industry starts receiving huge bills for water services.

For years, the Opposition have been telling the Government about misdescribing, which is another big problem for the industry, and about dumping. The Minister has promised to fight like a tiger. In the past, we have seen rather more kittenish behaviour, and we would welcome a change. Against that background, the MFA has been important to the industry, allowing it to recover. There is no question but that the MFA has controlled the rate of imports and allowed planning to take place.

The Silberston report said:

"It seems on balance to be desirable that every effort should be made to bring the MFA to an end, phasing it out over a period of time."

We would have expected that view from a pro-marketeer such as Professor Silberston. Even he has had second thoughts. He now feels that the MFA should not be abolished without agreement on measures to strengthen GATT rules and disciplines. He now says:

"This would lead to piecemeal unilateral, or forced bilateral, action by many importing countries without multilateral supervision: the remedy would be worse than the cure."

I am worried because the Minister has not shown even this modest conversion. He told us that there was no evidence that the MFA had protected jobs. I wait with apprehension to see what the Government have in store. The Silberston report, referring to consumers and bringing down prices in shops, says that the ending of the MFA would allow

"viable sectors of their textile and clothing industries time to adjust to greater competition."

I know what my constituents would choose if given the choice between decreassing prices and their jobs—they would definitely go for jobs in the industry. I ask the Minister to take that on board.

I welcome the assurances given by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) that the Labour Front Bench was considering helping areas without assisted areas status. I have long complained that we in the Calder valley have been left like the hole in the middle of the doughnut, with areas all round us given assisted area status, but we have had nothing. That is detrimental to long-term planning and to the aim of attracting business into the area.

We have heard about the 33,000 jobs, or 7 per cent. of the total in the United Kingdom, that might go if the MFA were abolished. That is nonsense. Informed people agree that the figure would be nearer 100,000 jobs. If only 7 per cent. of jobs went in my constituency, that would mean half the jobs gone at a stroke. If the figure were 100,000 nationally, it would wipe out the industry in Halifax and the Calder Valley for ever.

It is important to pursue the aim of a social development clause if we purport to be democrats. That measure concerns child labour. I should like the Under-Secretary of State to ask Ministers in other Departments to look at the awful regulation affecting textile workers laid off and working part-time which was introduced before Christmas. I ask the hon. Gentleman to give us some assurances to end the uncertainty and to tell us that the MFA will remain in place and protect the industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Several hon. Members seek to catch my eye. Doubtless, Front-Bench speakers will want time to wind up. I therefore hope that, although the 10-minute limit has expired, hon. Members will continue to make brief speeches.

12.58 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I want to place on record the fact that six Leicestershire Members are in the Chamber this morning. That is over 20 per cent. of the total number of hon. Members in the Chamber this morning. There have been three Opposition Members; and three Conservative Members: that shows the enormous concern in the county about the multi-fibre arrangement. I welcome the return of our senior Member, my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and I also welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) was in the Chamber, although, as a Government Whip, he was unable to speak.

I too believe that the MFA is crucial, as does every hon. Member who has spoken in this debate. It has enabled the industry to modernise. In the past five years, more than £2 billion has been spent on new equipment. As a result, since 1980, output per head has risen by 50 per cent. These industries make a huge contribution to the national economy. In 1988, sales exceeded £14 billion and their value added exceeded £5·4 billion. That is more than half as much again as the aerospace industry, and more than twice the computer and office machinery industry.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) I am worried by what I perceive as the attitude of my hon. Friend the Minister to the MFA. I should like him to adopt a little more feline zeal. I forget whether he said that he would put a tiger in his tank or fight like a tiger. I hope that by the end of the debate, my hon. Friend is persuaded to fight like a tiger for the MFA.

The industry has had record exports of £3·6 billion. It provides 480,000 jobs, which is 9 per cent. of total manuafacturing employment. My hon. Friend represents Wokingham so he must believe me when I say that this issue is crucial in the midlands and in the north. We are not concerned merely with tinkering with technicalities; we are talking about livelihoods. I appeal to him to take seriously the issue of the continuation of the MFA.

At this very time, firms in my constituency are making desperate requests for MFA quotas to be introduced on imports of socks and sweaters from Indonesia. Firms such as Atkins of Hinckley, Hall and Son, Pex and Smallshaws, which are well known to me, are under threat. Most of the 70 firms in the Hinckley areas will be affected to some extent. The Knitting Industries Federation has been fighting hard on behalf of the firms, which are faced with a huge surge in sweater imports of 2·2 million pieces in the first nine months of 1989 compared with 1·4 million pieces in the same period in 1988, against a basket extractor level of 462,000 pieces. Indonesian sock imports spiralled to 9·5 million pairs in the first nine months of 1989, which is an incredible figure. We must see the MFA as the only way in which we prevent this wild escalation in imports. The 28p cost of those socks is lower than the cost of the raw materials in this country.

The Minister for Trade in another place—my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Trefgarne—has replied to the representations of the Knitting Industries Federation. He said:

> "I am not persuaded that we have the clear evidence that these Indonesian imports, as opposed toother factors, are a major cause or threat of injury to UK producers in this sector."

I am delighted to tell the House that I received a letter yesterday from the KIF saying that my right hon. and noble Friend has now agreed to consider the matter again. That is the flexible approach that we need. I appeal to my hon. Friend to follow the example that has been set by our right hon. and noble Friend Lord Trefgarne.

The examples of the surge in the import of socks and sweaters from Indonesia show up the weakness of the basket extractor system, which exists to introduce new quotas when imports rise and become disruptive. The Government require proof of injury or proof of the threat of injury before any action can be taken. The production of the necessary facts and figures inevitably takes time.

In the meantime, while the data are provided for the Government, the industry continues to suffer severe damage. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) said earlier, the process is too slow. To me, it is like trying to catch a rabbit which has gone down into the warren. What hope is there? The imports come in and it is impossible to track them down. We have discussed this with representatives of the KIF. We face an uphill task. The onus should be on the exporting countries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey said, we want to see the bills of lading. Why should we do it all at this end?

Then there is the whole question of enforcement. The industry as a whole seeks reassurance from the Government that in future they will readily implement the existing agreements. That problem is highlighted by the massive influx of Turkish socks. In just three years, United Kingdom imports of knitted products have risen by 59 per cent., fuelled by artificial manipulation by many south-east Asian countries, particularly in connection with currencies and other matters.

Hon. Members have touched on the question of the United States. The USA is currently considering the possibility of introducing a global quota on all imports. If that happens, we shall have another major dumping problem. That too strengthens the case for existing arrangements. In the important Adjournment debate on the Leicestershire knitwear industry on 12 December, my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, responding to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) said that, in looking for ways in which the industry could be helped, there was

> "scope for collaborative ventures in which the Government are prepared to play a part."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 984.]

I should like to know from my hon. Friend the Minister what those collaborative ventures are; we should be grateful for clarification.

The Minister also referred to the 10-point plan put forward by the Knitting Industries Federation. Half of those points entail self-help. Many firms in my constituency have approached their problems aggressively with self-help in mind. Few industries, if any, have a better record in this respect. Take Fludes in my constituency. In 1975, it employed 1,200 people. Today, it employs half that figure, but its productivity is a third higher. Local firms—Fludes, Bennetts, Atkins and many others—have all invested in new plant and new equipment. They have certainly helped themselves—make no mistake about it. One can get any modern high-fashion design made up in Hinckley now. One does not need to go to Italy. The turn-around in Hinckley is 24 hours for a sample. That shows how competitive we have become.

There have been failures too, and that is why we need the MFA and we need the transitional period extended. My hon. Friend the Minister asked how long we should extend the period. The answer is 10 years. Failures in my

constituency include Castle Knitwear, Sunnydale Knitwear, Hinckley Knitting, and K. D. Apparel, which announced its closure almost a year to the day after I attended its new factory opening ceremony.

I am convinced that any phasing out of the MFA must depend on demonstrable progress in strengthening GATT rules and principles and signs that the rules are truly effective in eliminating trade abuses. That is why I argue for a 10-year period. It is unrealistic to expect that strengthened GATT rules and disciplines will have had a sufficient effect in removing trade distortions for the benefits to be felt fully before 10 years have elapsed. It will take 10 years for the new arrangements to evolve. One cannot wave a magic wand and simply say, "It will change." It will not work like that.

We are all delighted at the changes that are taking place in eastern Europe, but the hosiery knitwear industry must surely view the prospects with some foreboding. The obvious way in which to help eastern European countries is to ease the quotas. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) referred to requests for quota increases of 44 per cent. for Poland and 16 per cent. for Hungary. We cannot take such changes straight away. I am all for giving aid to help the countries develop internally, but we must not give away concessions that will wreck our industry.

Finally, I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to initiate a "Buy British" campaign. We have great products. It has been done before. I receive lots of letters asking why the Department does not promote a "Buy British" campaign. I am sure the Minister would have the support of all of us, and I leave him with those thoughts.

1.9 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I join other hon. Members in welcoming the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) back to the House, although he has had to leave the Chamber because he is unwell. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) is here and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Janner) was present earlier, but had to leave because he had an urgent constituency engagement and was unable to stay.

The unity of Leicester Members was demonstrated recently in the early hours of 12 December 1989, in our speeches during an Adjournment debate initiated by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

The history of the textile and hosiery industry is embedded in the social fabric of the county of Leicestershire. As early as 1520, one third of the aldermen in the city of Leicester gave their occupations as connected with the textile and hosiery industry. Despite the job losses over the past 10 years, Leicester remains one of the principal seats of the industry.

It was wrong of the Minister today to begin his speech trying to stir up problems between the two sides of the industry by referring to wage costs. One of the rare things about the industry is the degree of unanimity in Parliament and outside between the employers and the trade unions. Representatives of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers and the Leicestershire knitting district committee came to the House of Commons in December to lobby and speak to both Labour and Conservative Members. It was a great pity that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry could not be present, although he was invited. The representatives spoke with one voice and said that the problems in the industry over the past 10 years were in part due to the Government's policies. The high level of imports, the Government's inability to take a tougher line in negotiations with the Common Market, the high interest rates—a direct Government policy—and the fact that the level of the pound was so high have caused devastation in our local industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) witnessed the problems at first hand when he visited Leicester. He visited firms, met both sides of the industry and heard what they had to say about the Government's policy. The Minister is not prepared to accept the level of job losses as a sign of the damage to our industry.

Over the past 10 years, the industry has lost 150,000 jobs. This week the Leicester initiative was launched, which shows that if we divide the number of jobs lost as a result of the Government's policies over the past 10 years, by the number of weeks, days and hours in that time, one textile job is lost every hour. By the time the debate is concluded, five more textile workers will have lost their job. The Minister has said nothing at the Dispatch Box to end that decline.

The ordinary people in the industry, the workers who understand the problems and the employers who live daily with the high interest rates, want the Government to take firm and effective action. Recently I visited a small textile firm in Humberstone. The owner asked me honestly, openly and in plain language, "How, Mr. Vaz, do I compete with 14p knickers that come from the far east? How do I compete with that? What profit margins do I have to pay on that?" In a week when my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) has made an issue of such matters and the press went to town, the press did not question the origin of that particular garment.

The hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) referred to America. I visited America a year ago. When I watched the legislators in the Senate, I was astonished to see them discuss the textile industry. Senator after senator in that place, which represents the gods of the free market, urged the President of the United States to set import quotas. That area, which believes in free trade, has suffered a penetration rate in the textile industry of between 80 and 90 per cent. The senators were putting forward initiatives which they call Acts, but which we call Bills. Twenty Acts were before the Senate, calling for the limitation of imports into the United States. If the Minister wants to know what the textile industry will be like in the year 2000, he has only to look at the American experience. That is why everyone is concerned and passionate about the issue. We do not want to share the American experience.

Hon. Members mentioned the economic importance of the industry. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon). I do not accept for one moment that we can anticipate that 33,000 jobs will be lost if the Silberston inquiry report is accepted by the Government. The figure will be nearer 100,000. That will devastate the city which I and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South represent. It will affect not only firms, which will have to close, but whole families.

I have asked the Minister to give an assurance about assisted area status. He says that other Ministers have said that it is not right that the Government should provide subsidies to industry. What about Rover? When it was convenient for them, the Government were prepared to

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

give sweeteners to buy not a lame duck but a lame dog company. They were prepared to give incentives to convince the people who wished to buy. Why not provide the same assistance to our industry? The industry does not want the Government to assist it with its profits, but it would like fair competition. At present, it faces unfair competition.

All other Governments in Europe are prepared to give assistance to their industries. The French, who have refused to accept EEC directives on origin marking, are prepared to support their industries. Why are the Government and the Minister not prepared to do that? When hon. Members raised the issue of assisted area status with the Minister for Industry on 12 December 1989, he gave two explanations why it could not be effective for Leicester, Halifax and other centres. He said that, for the duration of this Parliament, he was not prepared to alter the maps for assisted area status. The Government are prepared to alter the constitution and social fabric of the country, so why are they not prepared to alter the maps for assisted area status? The Minister said also that the unemployment figures in Leicester do not justify the establishment of assisted area status for Leicester. Unemployment figures in the textile industry in Leicester certainly justify assisted area status. Since the beginning of 1990, there have been more than 290 redundancies in the county of Leicestershire.

Nine civil servants are sitting in the Box. We have an identikit Minister, who was probably crocheted by the Prime Minister on one of her days off, and we have no policy. The Minister will remember an article in *The Sunday Times* in April 1988, which predicted that he would be one of the great leaders of the 1990s and that, one day, he would become the leader of his party. When he becomes the Leader of the Opposition, there will be no textile industry left unless he acts quickly.

Day by day, we see the human tragedies. *Hansard* shows lists of statistics, which are referred to by many right hon. and hon. Members. We are punch-drunk on statistics. The thousands and the millions roll off the tongue extremely well, but they represent real people who have lost their job and who have invested in their industries, and real companies such as Kemptons and Corah, which have a tremendous amount of involvement in Leicestershire. They cannot survive without the Government taking action.

All hon. Members have pressed the Minister for an assurance that the multi-fibre arrangement is not only to be renewed but supported and toughened because of experience over the past 10 years. On a practical level, let us have an assurance from the Minister that he will ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to lower the damaging interest rates that are forcing many of our companies and industries to close. The evidence and the damage exist. We ask the Government to act now.

1.19 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. As we are coming to the end of the debate, I realise that many of the points that I shall make have undoubtedly been made already, but I make no apology to the House for reiterating them just in case, in the earlier hubbub, the Minister did not hear what we were saying.

It has been a good debate. This is the House of Commons at its best. However, I wonder how much of it will be televised and reported because we are not shrieking at each other, but agreeing. This is good House of Commons work.

It is essential to be positive about the multi-fibre arrangement and about the possible development of a totally free market in 1991 unless we can get a continuation of international trade agreements that will control the worldwide production and movement of textiles. We need that desperately. We have already heard that the industry employs about 480,000 people and has invested highly in automation and technology. Its production has increased by about 50 per cent. since 1980.

I am looking for the continuation of MFA-style agreements, if not for the present one, and for something that is orderly and equitable to provide for the development of trade for a substantial number of years into the future. Together with their European partners, I expect the Government to get on with negotiating the continuation of this style of agreement. Nothing less will be acceptable to those of us who represent textile industries and to the people who work in them.

There is no point in mincing words. The British textile industry has to be protected from unjustified and unethical competition. The Government have a duty to protect British jobs in British industry. I suggest that that is what they were elected to do and many of us look to them to do just that in the future. We must make it clear that the industry is not looking for protectionism as such. It is looking for safeguards. If other countries call it "protectionism", let them, but we know what it means and we should continue with it.

These issues affect many of us in Britain. The north of England, Scotland and the midlands have been well represented by their Members of Parliament today. We are all concerned about the industries in our areas and about many of the people employed in them. In many cases, it is not only the head of the household who is employed in the textile industry, but the whole family and any change in the fortunes of the industry will affect a great number of people. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) mentioned Hunsworth Dyeing. I do not know whether he has been to visit Hunsworth Dyeing—I was not aware that he had visited it—but it is a Coats Viyella company that is closing. The tragedy is that is not just the loss of 100 jobs, which is bad enough in itself, but that husbands and wives and even sons are employed in that industry. They will all lose their livelihoods and jobs. Many of us have been involved in great family tragedies. Unfortunately, we have not been able to persuade Coats Viyella to continue there and, regrettably, we must accept its commercial decision.

I am all in favour of overseas aid. We all are, but sometimes charity must begin at home. We must look to protect our British way of life and our textile industry. We should not be too ashamed if we are occasionally branded as "Little Englanders". Why not? That is what we are and if it helps to protect our industry, why not——

Mr. Foulkes: And Scotlanders, too, if it comes to that.

Mrs. Peacock: I leave other hon. Members to include Scotland.

As a country, a Government and a House of Commons, we should always play by the rules. We are supposed to be English gentlemen, so we play cricket by the rules, but why should we continue to play by the rules when other countries do not even understand how to play cricket and are certainly not playing by the rules? But we are not talking just about cricket; we are talking about preserving jobs in the British textile industry. I take issue with Professor Silberston's report because of his great underestimate of the number of jobs that might be lost. Many of us are greatly concerned that even 33,000 jobs might be lost, but we do not believe that that will be the total number of job losses.

We have a great affinity for our textile industry. I was born and brought up in Yorkshire and have spent most of my life there, and I have seen all manner of textile companies prosper, go down and come back up again.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend also spent some time in Macclesfield.

Mrs. Peacock: Indeed, I did, and no doubt learnt a lot while I was there.

Professor Silberston speculated that if the MFA were ended, textile product import prices would fall by about 8 per cent., which would lead to an average 5 per cent. fall in United Kingdom producer and retail clothing prices. A small reduction in household budgets of 2, 3, or 4 per cent. is no consolation if the head of the household, his wife and some of their children lose their jobs. They might make a small gain in their weekly budgets, but they would have no jobs. I do not believe that they would willingly make the latter sacrifice.

Given the right conditions, the wool industry for one is prepared to sell. It has done that. It has been prepared to create real export growth with first-class value added goods which cannot be equalled anywhere in the world. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the chairman of the Wool Textile Export Corporation, Mr. John Ward, who is a constituent. The corporation has achieved record earnings from wool textile exports for three consecutive years, 1989 being the latest, and it looks forward to the future with confidence. It hopes that 1990 will be even

The Batley part of my constituency has clothed our soldiers since the 1800s. It was the home of the army greatcoat and army blankets. The industry was built up partly on such products. Unfortunately, boom times in Batley were during war, and bust times were when we settled down to peace. The textile industry there has had ups and downs. It is regrettable that soldiers do not wear army greatcoats any more. I am not sure what they use for blankets, but it is certainly not Yorkshire wool. Those times have gone, and we must look to the present and the future. Wool and mixture yarn has accounted for much of the increased value in trade recently, and for increased volume. That is a clear demonstration that the industry is capable of taking positive action if it is encouraged by the right sort of Government and European support. All sectors of the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries have greatly increased their efficiency and competitiveness, especially during the past 10 years. They are less vulnerable to foreign competition than they once were as they have learnt to handle fashion changes and provide quick deliveries. That is what we need. Nevertheless, we need an international framework which enables the industry to prosper and reinvest.

This is too important an issue to leave to civil servants in Whitehall or bureaucrats in Brussels. We have to be involved and to have strong Government pressure and a strong Government input into the decision. In my part of the world, we have halved unemployment since 1984, but we are losing jobs in textiles. We are worried about that. If more jobs go, they will be regional. They will be Yorkshire jobs, Scottish jobs and jobs in Northern Ireland. We are not prepared to lose them to help achieve greater affluence for what I suggest are already affluent people in Britain.

Having recently discussed textile matters in Hong Kong and China, I am aware of the tremendous international pressure to end the MFA in 1991. We have to reject any change. Businesses never stay still. We all recognise that, and it is particularly true for international concerns. At the 1990 Uruguay GATT round, we must negotiate the continuation of firm and sensible MFA-style controls. I suggest that we need some sanctions, if necessary in the form of emergency tariffs. Other countries can get away with that. Anybody who sends goods to Turkey contributes to that country's housing programme. I wonder whether we could do the same here. I am sure that we will be told that that is not possible.

I note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you are looking carefully at your watch. Therefore, I must curtail my remarks.

Business is about confidence to invest and about long-term planning and investment to minimise risks. It is not about allowing agreements such as the MFA to wither away. We must plan for its replacement a long time before that happens. In modern-day life we tend to do everything quickly. We should take 10 years or more to decide on any replacement. The six to seven-year timetable for change proposed by Professor Silberston is not long enough. It is up to us to ensure that we have a much longer hand-over period.

When my hon. Friend winds up I hope that he will give us some assurance that the Government will ensure the continuation of an MFA-type agreement. If that agreement must be called something else it must come out of the GATT round of talks. That would be acceptable. We need such an agreement as it ensures help for the British textile industry.

We should concede nothing during the GATT round that would commit Britain to any steps that are not part of a long-term management plan to ensure the stability of our textile activities. Those activities are important to our manufacturing base and important to many hon. Members and their constituents.

1.31 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The Minister must be impressed by the unanimous view expressed in the Chamber about the need for continuing with some form of MFA, whether a renegotiated MFA or a strengthened GATT arrangement developed over a suitable time.

The Minister must also be impressed by the fact that we are not seeking extra protection for the textile industry, but we are seeking to ensure that our textile industry, at home and abroad, can compete on equal and fair terms with its competitors. Despite some of the Minister's

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churlish remarks at the beginning of his speech—he redeemed himself a little by the end—the industry has made great strides to face increased overseas competition.

Reference has been made to the increase in output per employee, which, in the past 10 years, has been 50 per cent. In the past five years, £2 billion has been invested in the industry. It is also important to note that wage claims within the industry have always been moderate. Male employees earn about 85 per cent. of the national average male wage, whereas female employees earn between 90 and 95 per cent. of the average female wage. The workers are not grasping and avaricious; they have always moderated their wage claims in their interests and in the interests of their industry.

Industrial relations are good. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has already mentioned the amicable relationship between the trade unions and the employers. It is amicable because people realise that employers and employees have a vested interest in ensuring the industry's success. The industry has made a real attempt to survive.

I have been involved in the textile industry in some way or other ever since I graduated from university in 1963; first professionally, and then, after my election here in 1974, politically. Without fear of contradiction, I can say that confidence in the industry now, particularly among the employers who make the decisions, is at the lowest ebb that I have ever seen.

We had meetings during the past few months with employers, who said that unless action were taken—they were talking about the need for changes in Government policy on interest rates and the high value of the pound—there was a real possibility that large sections of the textile industry would not survive the next two to three years. The Minister said that the value of the pound has declined. However, we still need action on interest rates. They are so high that they act as an inhibition on employers to invest in the new technology that the industry still requires.

There must also be continued action on the MFA. If it is thought that the Government are prepared to do away with the MFA, that could seriously—if not lethally—undermine the remaining confidence within the textile industry. The Minister must say clearly and unambiguously that the Government are prepared to renegotiate the MFA and, if necessary, to set up a new MFA and wait for the strengthening of the GATT in the next 10 years.

The Minister and the House are probably sick of Leicester Members speaking during such debates as this, but I wish to say a few words about Leicestershire, as the industry is vital to the city and the county. Two years ago, 42,000 people were employed in the textile industry in that area. Since then, 20 per cent.—one in five—of those jobs have disappeared. If present trends continue, that figure is likely to be further increased throughout 1990. That would be disastrous.

As the Minister and the House know, a large proportion of those employed in the industry are women and members of the ethnic minorities. Every time a job disappears in the textile industry, it impinges upon equal opportunities for those people. It is essential that there is some stability in the industry to protect their jobs.

It is in all our interests that there should be an expansion in world trade, as that will increase prosperity both here and overseas. When we seek to bring that increase about, it must be done in such a way that competition is fair on both sides. The Government have made clear the guidelines that they want for that to be brought about.

There has been a surge in imports and in tariff and non-tariff barriers. The hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) talked about the surges in imports of sweaters and socks from Indonesia. The initial reply from the Minister for Trade, Lord Trefgarne was appalling. He said that, although imports had increased by one third in 1989 over the corresponding period for 1988, he remained unconvinced that that was a surge in imports, and he was not prepared to take any action. I was pleased to learn from the Under-Secretary's speech that he may now be prepared to take action. We must ensure that, if the Government know the rules, they are prepared to operate them quickly and expeditiously so that British industry can be saved from unfair competition.

On tariff barriers, the example of Turkey has been quoted many times. Turkey is operating discriminatory trade barriers against British goods. For knitted outerwear, it is 125 per cent. That is a well-known fact. Therefore, why the hell is something not done about it, so that British manufacturers can compete on an equal footing?

I shall repeat the point that I have already made twice. The British textile industry can and will be able to compete if the Government are prepared to ensure that there is fair competition at home and abroad. In the short to medium term, we must maintain the MFA so that we can have such fair competition.

1.40 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): The subject of today's debate is of great significance to the knitting and textile industries, which play a major role in the national economy. Therefore, it is essential to renew the multi-fibre arrangement in its current form when its present term expires in July 1991. It is also essential that its longer-term future should be dependent on demonstratable progress in tackling the trading abuses that adversely affect international trade and hold back the development of the United Kingdom's industry.

The knitting and textile industries are vital to the national economy, with annual sales of more than £14 billion, exports last year approaching £4 billion and a work force of 485,000 people who account for 9 per cent. of all manufacturing employment—64 per cent. of whom live in the east midlands. The region's prosperity is crucially linked to the fortunes of the knitting and allied industries, in which one job in five is to be found in manufacturing, compared to one in nine nationally. The industries are also major employers of women, who represent 80 per cent. of the work force.

What I have said so far gives the impression of a successful industry. Unfortunately, that is only half the story. The profitless prosperity of 1987 and 1988—high activity with insufficient profit margins—has been overtaken by high interest rates, which have stunned high street sales. Today's debate takes place against the background of increasingly difficult trading conditions. The latest production index from the Department of Trade

and Industry shows output down 13 per cent. in October 1989 compared to a year earlier. Job losses in the 12 months to December 1989 were 23,000, and the outlook for 1990 is extremely worrying.

The United Kingdom's knitting and allied industries are efficient and well equipped, with a strong reputation for quality and design. Their work force is skilled and adaptable. That commendable tribute is supported every time I visit a factory in my constituency. My latest visit was to the Viyella menswear factory in Hucknall. It preceded an important visit by the Princess Royal. We saw the latest in computer design and a new production line system of gents' shirtmaking—revolutionary but necessary for the company to stay in business and to meet its customers' growing need for a quick response to rapidly changing consumer preferences.

Despite the continuing rise in exports, the trade deficit in textiles and clothing is likely to have reached £3·5 billion in 1989—almost 20 per cent. of the national balance of trade deficit. In those extremely difficult circumstances, it is vital to avoid adverse changes in the international trading framework. Any phasing out of the MFA must be dependent on progress in strengthening GATT rules and disciplines, and signs that those new rules are truly effective in eliminating the trading abuses that adversely affect our constituents.

It is too early to specify the period required to bring about such progress, but it is unrealistic to expect that strengthening GATT rules will remove trade distortions and allow the benefit to be felt until at least 10 years after the integration process begins. Even the exporting countries whose exports are limited under the MFA recognise that the process cannot take place overnight. Virtually all have recognised the need for a phasing-out period of at least five years, and some will be seeking considerably longer.

Therefore, it is essential that the MFA should be renewed in its present form in 1991 when the current term expires. Without the MFA, despite its serious imperfections, there is no doubt that the present critical situation would be even worse.

In my constituency there is an added dimension. The House and the country know that Sherwood is Britain's premier coal-producing constituency. It was also the home of Rev. William Lee, the inventor of the knitting machine, whose quincentenary we celebrated last year.

Miners' wives invariably work in the textile industry. The two industries run hand in glove. The textile factories take advantage of the available female labour and the wives' salaries complement the household income. However, since 1983 6,500 miners in Sherwood—50 per cent. of the total work force—have left the industry. Miners over the age of 50, having worked underground for almost 40 years, were encouraged by their wives to accept early retirement and enjoy their remaining years, but before doing so, all the options were considered, including the wives' earnings. Due to the textile recession and the unfettered dumping of garments, wives' jobs are disappearing, bringing hardship to many households. If there is no alternative female employment available, as a last resort retired miners will have to seek work again. That would be grotesquely unfair.

However, my hon. Friend the Minister has said that he will fight like a tiger. Perhaps he should not have said that, knowing that these days the only people who win fights are the lager louts. I know that he is listening to the arguments and that he will act in the best interests of my constituents who work in the knitting and allied industries.

1.47 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Debates on the textile industry have one factor in common: right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House who represent constituencies with textile interests rally round an industry which is vital to Britain. The textile industry is the fourth largest light manufacturing industry in Britain. It employes 485,000 people. Its output per head has been increased by 50 per cent. in the last 10 years. Its annual sales amount to £14 billion and exports in 1988 reached £4 billion. It represents 9 per cent. of manufacturing employment in the United Kingdom. However, the textile industry is concentrated in particular regions. Therefore unemployment in the industry means unemployment in those regions which were hardest hit by the recent recessions. Often there is little alternative for employment. Therefore it is the duty of the Government and Back-Benchers to support the textile industries in those regions.

I was taken aback by the Minister's rather laid-back approach—it was almost horizontal. Of course, he has no direct responsibility and of course the decision will be taken by the EC, but it is the duty of the Government to speak for the textile industry in the councils of the EC and those negotiations are no place for sleeping tigers.

Management and unions have the feeling that the Government look upon the textile industry as something from the past. Financial services are the up-and-coming thing and there is an impression created by the Government that we may have to do without the textile industry. I hope that that impression is wrong and that in his winding-up speech the Minister will say that the Government are fully behind the renewal of the multi-fibre agreement. I hope that he will tell us that the Government will do everything that they can to see that the agreement is renewed.

I recently found a quotation which sums up the matter fairly well. It is from a speech by Mr. Tony Benson, president of the British Textile Employers Association, and was delivered in 1985 before the last renewal of the multi-fibre agreement. Describing the agreement he said:

"The developing countries have been provided with an assured, quantified market in the developed countries, and with reasonable annual growth rates. The more vulnerable developing countries receive equal treatment and are protected from the crushing power of their more advanced neighbours. We must have confidence to invest in new and modern equipment in order to improve our international competitiveness, and the prospect of a balanced trading environment, in which the MFA is an essential part, is a pre-requisite for this advance."

That quote from a speech made some years ago sums up the present position.

The Government must seek the renewal of the MFA because it is all that we have at the moment to safeguard the textile industry. We must not throw away such an agreement by actions or by default. The textile industry has an efficient, skilled and adaptable work force. Management has done what it can to modernise, but that is not enough to counter the grinding effects of high interest rates. I am sorry that in his opening speech the Minister seemed to place responsibility for success entirely on the management and work force. In the battle to retain

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our share of the textile market, Government have a part to play. It is worrying that a great deal of the severest competition comes from countries whose Governments have taken up the cudgels and are prepared to support their textile industry in every way.

I hope that the Minister will do everything in his power to help our industry. More than anything else it needs confidence. It must be assumed that Back Benchers and Government are speaking on its behalf and that the Government will argue in Europe for the renewal of the MFA.

This nation is a member of the EC and must fight its corner within that organisation. We have a tremendous textile industry, but its is facing increasing difficulties, which in many cases such as high interest rates have not been caused by its own actions. It is for us and the Minister to back the industry and to help Britain to retain an important part of its manufacturing base. That can be done only by supporting a renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

1.54 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): Perhaps it is appropriate that the last Back Bencher to speak in the debate is from Oswaldtwistle, where James Hargreaves invented the spinning jenny. Not so many years ago, a debate on textiles would have prompted a large postbag for the Member of Parliament representing my constituency. That that has not been so on this occasion reflects the massive loss of textile jobs in Hyndburn in recent years, with those involved in the industry now numbering hundreds rather than thousands. I may be speaking on behalf of fewer constituents, but they are no less important for that.

The debate does not concern propping up the domestic textile industry but is about maintaining a fair and stable environment that will give it confidence to invest in the future. It asks not for protectionism but for the enforcement of fair trading practices. Given that, there is no doubt that massive investment on the scale of recent years will continue.

The present rules are unsatisfactory, in that in many instances they allow a case to be proved only after damage has been done. Blackburn and District Textile Manufacturers Association supports the view that any erosion of the rules would be catastrophic and that strengthening of GATT is of paramount importance prior to the ending of the MFA.

I welcome the fact that that view is widely shared by the Government, by the European Community and by Professor Silberston. It is important that before the arrangement is ended, stronger and more efficient safeguards, especially those relating to dumping, subsidies and fraud, are put in place. I welcome also the statement by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs that

"The main issues for discussion in GATT are clear. It is accepted that the integration of textiles and clothing into GATT could only be gradual and progressive."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1989; Vol. 159, c. 1304.]

In a letter to me on 8 January, Mr. David Duckworth, secretary of Blackburn and District Textile Manufacturers Association, commented:

"To achieve an orderly transition from the MFA to GATT rules will need a period of five to ten years in order that the effectiveness of the GATT rules may be tested."

I believe that he is absolutely right.

The textile industry and the fine people whom it employs deserve our support. The industry has shown remarkable resilience over the past few years and has acted to improve its competitive position. Even in the uncertain conditions that now prevail, investment is increasing, with some £8 million of investment in north-east Lancashire over the past five years.

Increasing importance is being placed on design. Hilden Manufacturing Company in my constituency, under the enthusiastic leadership of its managing director, Mr. Peter Hargreaves, has succeeded in expanding through a combination of positive attitudes by all and a determination to break into the often difficult export market. I know that Mr. Hargreaves will ensure that its export earnings continue to rise.

The survival of such firms depends on improving further their competitiveness in both domestic and overseas markets. The investment required in new technology will be made only if companies are confident of the future. Without the present system of restraint on low-cost imports, the prospect of reasonable stability would be removed—and with it, much of the confidence on which investment depends. Job losses would inevitably follow.

Professor Silberston himself acknowledges that almost 33,000 jobs will be lost if the MFA is ended. Many in the industry believe that he underestimates the danger and fails to take full account even of his own statement that imports entering this country at very low prices

"if sustained for some time, could make it impossible for competing domestic production to survive at all."

Professor Silberston has also paid too little attention to the additional job losses resulting from the knock-on effects in other related manufacturing and service industries. Despite the increased investment in east Lancashire, which I mentioned, in the past 12 months there has been a return to short-time working in many companies, together with a number of redundancies and mill closures—at a time when unemployment has fallen dramatically in north-east Lancashire. The loss of jobs in textiles is sad in an industry that is made up of skilled, hard-working people with an industrial relations record second to none, people who have readily accepted attempts to improve competitiveness—shift working, job flexibility and low wage increases.

Those are real people, as the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) said. To those of us who have lived in textile areas all our lives, these are our family, friends and neighbours. I believe that the Government care about the textile industry. Although the British Government in isolation cannot have their own way in the important decisions and discussions ahead, I hope that we can look to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to argue Britain's case forcefully.

2 pm

Mr. Henderson: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a few concluding observations on an interesting debate. Much information about the industry has emerged and the passion felt about the industry and the communities that depend on it has been displayed. The number of hon. Members who have

spoken shows the strength of feeling on this subject on both sides of the House. I welcome the fact three former Ministers were prepared to give us their experiences of industrial affairs in making the case for strong support for the industry—the hon. Members for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), for Pendle (Mr. Lee) and for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson). The Minister should be in no doubt about the opinion of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) commented on the Minister's lack of energy in presenting his case. I hope that there is nothing physically or mentally wrong with the Minister. I hope that he has some appetite for his brief. He is remembered, especially by Conservative Members, as a somewhat energetic tiger when he was involved in the No. 10 think tank. I hope that he is not burnt out. Industry needs something better than a paper tiger in the Department of Trade and Industry tank. Unless the Minister explains the Government's position more clearly, the House will be in great doubt about their intentions.

The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) said that he was scared stiff of the consequences for his constituency. My hon. Friends the Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) said that they, too, had been scared stiff by the possible consequences if we do not get this matter right. The industry will be scared stiff if, at the end of the debate, it is not clear where the Government stand.

The Under-Secretary of State must not hide behind any brief that the civil servants have prepared for him in the hope that he will play for more time before it is necessary to make the Government's position clear. I am not saying that this was your intention, Minister, but I do not believe that the Government's intention was clear from the opening remarks. You must give the House a clear answer—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Henderson: I apologise. The Minister must give a clear answer to the House so that we know where he and the Government stand on the matters that we have raised.

I have four final questions for the Minister. First, will he make it clear that he will support a multi-fibre arrangement renewal by the European Community in the talks that are about to begin? Secondly, will he guarantee that any outcome of the talks at the GATT negotiations on safeguards, anti-dumping and market access will be reported to the House before a final decision is reached by the EC negotiators? Thirdly, if the results of those talks are unacceptable to the House, will he give us a commitment that it is not the timetable, but the substance of the issue that then matters? Will he guarantee that the British Government will seek to toughen the MFA, if that is the situation that we face? Fourthly, does the Minister accept the argument that whatever one's long-term strategy, there is a strong and essential case to be made now for a tightening-up and renewal of an MFA 5?

2.5 pm

Mr. Redwood: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate. We have had a good debate in which many hon. Members have put forward strongly held views from their constituencies, and have stressed to the House the importance of the textile industry and the way in which it has changed in recent years. I appreciate all those comments and I understand the importance of the textile industry to many communities. In the mid-1970s, I was a textile analyst and I travelled the country extensively visiting the textile industry, so I learnt a great deal about it. Although I travel less frequently these days in my new job, I see textile companies, and I am impressed by how great the changes have been and how much progress there has been in introducing new machinery, new ideas and new products. Nothing that I said at the beginning of the debate was intended to cast aspersions on the industry, and I went out of my way to stress its importance and its achievements in increasing productivity and exports and playing an important role in our economy and in many individual communities.

I understand that some hon. Members have had to leave before the conclusion of the debate and I am grateful to them for letting me know in advance. Friday is the day on which hon. Members like to be in their constituencies and I am grateful for the courtesy of those hon. Members. Much comment has been made about my remark that I would fight like a tiger against unfair trade practices. I reassert that now. I have no love of unfair trade practices, whether they are state subsidies and state aid, dumping or other types of market distortion which are widely condemned by GATT provisions covering individual products, and in the framework set out in the treaty of Rome and subsequent documentation aimed at creating a fair and level playing field in many areas of the market place within the European Community.

I repeat that assertion, but the House should remember that most of the remarks today were addressed to my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade. I am not in the same position as my predecessor at the Dispatch Box at the end of 1988, who was Minister for Trade and who was himself handling these detailed matters. My right hon. and noble Friend is doing a good job standing up for British interests in matters such as Turkish and Indonesian imports and he will read the comments made in the debate. I know that he is doing the best possible job for Britain in trying to put across our point of view through the EC and directly when he meets his opposite numbers. He has, for example, recently been to Turkey and has made strong representations about the points on which the House is concerned. The House will have noticed that I have been here throughout the debate listening attentively and I have made copious notes. I shall report the strength of feeling in the House to my right hon. and noble Friend and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Three times in recent weeks the Government have set out their attitude to the negotiations in the EC and to those in GATT. My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry put it clearly in a recent Adjournment debate. I have tried to be more expansive today as we have had the advantage of a five-hour debate. I have tried to explain some of the intricacies of the negotiating position that has been assumed by the European Commission in the early negotiations with GATT and the type of questions that the British Government are pursuing as a result of the consultation replies to Silberston, this debate and other representations that have been made.

When the record is read, it will be quite clear that a number of issues of importance to the textile industry are being covered in those negotiations but that the

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negotiations must be looked at in the round. The EC negotiators will, in the end, have to do the best possible deal for European interests at large and for industry and commerce generally. Those negotiations are a matter not for the British Government but for the Commission.

It was good to see my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) here today, and I hope that his health continues to strengthen. It is a sign of his great concern about the issue that he came today to give us the benefit of his views. He said that the final decision on the MFA had to be a firm decision of the House. That is not the legal or constitutional position. Some hon. Members may regret the fact that these decisions are made following EC negotiations; others will welcome it because they wanted such powers to be exercised at European level. Under our treaty obligations and under the other legal arrangements with our Community partners that have developed, the simple fact is that the European Community is a party to the MFA and the European Community handles the GATT negotiations.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister is not being very helpful. We get this sort of talk all the time. It is time it stopped and the British Government did some fighting over there in Brussels. Proposals come to us when they have already been decided in Europe. That is all wrong. We should be deciding our own destiny in this place and it is high time that the Minster said so over there.

Mr. Redwood: Usually the Government are criticised for fighting too hard for British interests, so it is strange to hear the Opposition level the opposite criticism. I assure the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) that I fight extremely hard for British interests in the Council of Ministers. I look at them in the light of wider European interests, but there is no way in which I will let Britain down when I am handling negotiations because I believe that it is my job, as a member of the British Government, to make the point for Britain.

Mr. Henderson: On the question of how the negotiations have been considered in Europe, may I ask the Minister how the British Government have argued? Have they argued that there should be a further round of MFA, an MFA 5? If the Government have argued for an MFA 5, have they argued that it should be the same as MFA 4, less strong than MFA 4 or tougher than MFA 4?

Mr. Redwood: As I explained, the British Government have said that they seek the best possible series of market-opening measures in GATT. We have been making the necessary representations to Brussels and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will keep in touch with Brussels as the negotiations develop. They have not proceeded that far yet.

Mr. Kirkwood: Surely the GATT textile committee will have to meet initially in five or six months' time—in June 1990. The Uruguay round of GATT will not be completed until the end of the year and the Government will have to strike a position in four or five months. I realise that the Minister cannot give away his bargaining hand but the House is entitled to know what attitude the Government will strike in June or July this year.

Mr. Redwood: I have explained the Government's position on the GATT negotiations and on the negotiations through our European Commission friends. By June, other issues may be on the table but I do not intend to prejudge those because they will, of course, depend on progress being made in the general negotiations on GATT.

Mr. Foulkes: Can the Minister clarify something? I am sorry to interrupt, but this is the most crucial point. Am I right in saying that the answer that the Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) is that, rather than the strengthening or continuing the MFA, the Government propose to opt for the GATT alternative? That effectively means that they are abandoning the MFA. Is that what the Minister meant?

Mr. Redwood: I have described the way in which the European Commission is approaching the GATT round negotiations. The Government are happy for the Commission to negotiate in good faith in that round to get the best possible deal. The implications of that for the MFA were set out by my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry in the Adjournment debate on 12 December. I have tried to enlarge on that today in the interests of keeping the House informed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) asked what scope was available for funding and other hon. Members wanted me to clear up what my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry meant when he commented on that in the recent Adjournment debate in response to hon. Members from Leicester.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry meant that there are various types of money available for which textile companies may be eligible and in particular research and development money. Research and technology initiative money is available via bodies such as the British Textile Technology Group and the Clothing Technology Centre. Those technology-based bodies can advise people about that funding and the sort of project that would qualify. The Department of Trade and Industry can also offer advice. If companies have projects which they believe might qualify, the Department would be more than happy to make information available and offer guidance on how the system works. My hon. Friend the Minister for Industry recently issued a press release stressing the nature of those schemes from which the textile industry could benefit.

Many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), referred to eastern Europe. Of course, changes in eastern Europe will have a major impact on many elements in the European Economic Community as the economies in those countries develop and they widen their horizons and liberalise their trading patterns. Many eastern European countries are now aware of the dangers of extreme protectionism and they see the way in which their poverty has been underlined or enforced by the absence of open trading with western Europe. They naturally now seek greater trading links with western Europe to try to remedy the obvious defects in their economies created by many years of closed markets.

The European Community and the British Government believe that it is right for us to respond to those changes, particularly where the countries concerned are making good progress in returning to democracy. In many cases

countries have specified when they will be holding open elections and they are moving to multi-party systems. We also believe that Commission negotiators should be interested in the question of reciprocity so that market opening should not be one way, as that might be damaging to British and Community interests. There should be give-and-take in those market-opening devices and our businesses should gain access to their economies. We believe that our companies and economies have much to offer the eastern European countries as trading partners, as inward investors and as advisers in many sectors.

That is the basis for the tentative steps taken so far and I described one such step at the beginning of the debate in connection with the USSR. I am sure that Hungary and Poland will be close to the top of the Commission's agenda.

There are other considerations about China, which has become a worry. It is an important textile producer and exporter. The British Government have always argued that we should reflect the fact of increasing Chinese dominance in the textiles trade and the fact that it is heavily dependent on state trading when constructing trading arrangements with that country. That has been the consistent British Government line to the Commission. Once again, those are matters that can be settled primarily by the Commission, in which Britain has an important voice, but not the sole voice, in determining how those matters are achieved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) made a powerful speech in which he gave advice about the time scale of transition, which he said should take five years or a little more. He was particularly worried about dumping. Many hon. Members, words on dumping will be taken on board by the Department. I have already said that the Government do not like dumping and, through the normal procedures in the European Commission, will vigorously pursue any case that hon. Members or companies can bring to our attention. If hon. Members have more evidence or information about dumping, or they know of companies that have evidence or information about dumping, of course I pledge, as the Goverenment always have done, that those cases will be vigorously pursued.

Mrs. Peacock: In my experience, whatever evidence is brought to the Department, by the time the case is proved, jobs are lost. That has happened in my constituency with imports of acrylic yarn mainly from Turkey. By the time the system works, jobs have gone and quotas gone up. We need to change the system to get faster action.

Mr. Redwood: I quite understand the point. It is now firmly on the record that many hon. Members are worried about the time that it takes to deal with anti-dumping cases. I pledge that I and my noble Friend will do anything in our power to make sure that the delays are not in the Department of Trade and Industry. But the procedures themselves are designed at European level. Of course, they must relate to a range of industries, not just the textile industry. For that reason, they are complex and difficult to change. My noble Friend and I will take that point on board.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) began his speech by saying that the industry is in a state of financial haemorrhage. He implied that there had been a financial collapse. There have been problems in the industry in recent months, and they have been well documented in the debate. However, I do not think that the results of the major companies in the industry can in any way be said to represent a financial haemorrhage. I recently looked at the reports and accounts of three of our major textile companies. Courtaulds, for example, had more than £250 million of operating funds flow. Coats Viyella had £172 million of funds generated in the past year in which it has reported. Tootal had £51 million of funds generated. Those three major companies are central to our textile industry—Courtaulds is a major textile producer of some significance—with profitable businesses generating good profits for their shareholders because they have made such good strides in investment and productivity.

Mr. Foulkes: In each case can the Minister work out how much of the profit was from manufacturing overseas rather than in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Redwood: I could work that out if I spent a little while with the reports and accounts, but there are profits from the United Kingdom operations, and the picture in the accounts is of companies that are a great deal stronger than the textile industry was in the mid-1970s. That reflects the fact that they have made major investments, taken care of their staff, opted for training schemes, and completely changed their product ranges. They have spent a lot of time wondering which is the niche market for which they can opt or how they can enhance their markets, how they can brand their products, and how they can use the techniques of modern manufacturing to reduce their costs and boost their productivity and output. I want the House to admit that the great British textile companies have done a good job in adapting to changing conditions. That is manifest in their recent results.

Mr. Kirkwood: Of course there have been successes in my constituency. I refer to Pringles, the Dawson Group and so on. They are coping and are doing very well in the circumstances, but there are many small companies in my constituency. Small companies with 20 or 30 employees are struggling hard and swimming against the tide. When the Minister is doing his research on the results of the big companies, will he extend it to smaller businesses, too?

Mr. Redwood: I am sure that some small companies will be under cash flow pressure. I began my researches with the major companies because they happen to be major employers and, therefore, of major concern to many hon. Members. Of course I am concerned also about small businesses. I understand what the hon. Gentleman says.

I was staggered to hear the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) say that there had been a dismal performance by the industry. Many hon. Members have explained that the industry is working extremely hard and well at improving and changing its market position. I was glad to hear that Professor Silberston has moved from being "mad" to almost a good thing because the hon. Gentleman now seems to have found some things in Professor Silberston's report with which he can agree. However, I remind the House of the hon. Member's clear statement on 9 December 1988, with which I entirely agree. He said:

"I must make it clear that the Opposition recognise that for a trading nation such as the United Kingdom it is important that we encourage the maximising of free trade."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 567.]

[Mr. Redwood]

He went on to say that trade should be fair. I entirely agree with his sentiments. Indeed, that is the central objective of the EC negotiating position in GATT and it is an objective that the British Government entirely endorse.

I got a little lost when the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North said in December 1988 that he wanted both a lower currency and no currency fluctuations. However, I was pleased to hear that he welcomes the level now. Perhaps we can agree that the current level gives people good export opportunities. The battle against inflation is a central task for the Government.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) expressed concern about the Turkish sock problem. I have already explained that that issue is being handled by my noble Friend who will continue to take whatever action is possible to deal with that difficulty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) made a good, penetrating speech in which he considered the way in which the negotiations could be progressed. Many of the points that he made very much covered the issues that the EC Commission is bringing to the negotiations. My hon. Friend talked about the need for transitional arrangements and the need to strengthen the GATT rules. Most importantly, he referred to the need for reciprocal market-opening. That is what this is all about. The whole point of GATT is that all countries should take action to remove barriers and blocks to trade because that is the way to achieve a more prosperous international community and that is how good companies can have a chance to export to other countries and therefore create employment and opportunity. That is exactly what the Government will be arguing for.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was concerned about recent changes in unemployment benefit which affect those who might be working short-time. I remind the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), who also made this point, that other benefits are in place for which such people may be eligible. People on low incomes may qualify for income support or for family credit, which was designed deliberately to help people on low incomes with family responsibilities and to encourage people into work. That is the Government's aim.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South thought that there was no assurance that I would support the textile industry. I thought that a bit harsh, since I had already covered the way in which the Government have offered a great deal of help to the industry in past years and still intend to do so. The Government have represented the industry's case in the past over issues such as dumping and unfair trading practices. I note that along with several other hon. Members, the hon. Member for Bradford, South is concerned about the possibility of our losing national quotas and about the transition to a single EC-wide quota. The Government will take that point into account when making decisions on such matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) was worried about hidden French subsidies that might make competition unfair between ourselves and some French companies. Again, if there are any hidden subsidies that can be exposed—as long as they are not so hidden that we cannot find them—they are a suitable case for treatment under the Commission's attack on state aids. It is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to ensure that the Commission is given every help in pursuing unfair state aids wherever they may be in the European Community, with a view to levelling the playing field for competitors between one country and another.

The Government are willing to help through the British Overseas Trade Board and through the organisation of trade fairs. If individual companies have problems or questions about that, the DTI would be more than happy to supply the necessary information about the type of assistance that is available for companies that are starting up in a new country and wish to have some guidance and support in that task.

The hon. Member for Ashfield wanted to start kicking me all round the House and all around the pitch—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] He made a lively speech. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) did not think that he would join the hon. Gentleman, so I shall not be quite as sore as I would have been if I had been kicked from both sides at the same time. That might have caused me some anatomical difficulty. I repeat that the Government are not going in the wrong direction. We are going in the direction of more open trade across the board. That must be good news for jobs and customers.

It is a pity to talk in this high-quality debate about the industry——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 17th January, the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House shall lapse at Seven o'clock unless it has been previously disposed of.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 18th January, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Mr. Speaker shall put any Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Patten relating to Local Government Finance not later than Ten o'clock. —*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Sports Facilities (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.30 pm

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am grateful for this opportunity to bring to the attention of the Minister for Sport serious worries about the future of sport and recreation throughout the country, but particularly in London.

As we start a new year and a new decade, it seems appropriate to have this Adjournment debate. It has been recognised for some time that, in spite of being a city of apparent wealth, London has real problems that are spread through much of the inner city. Government statistics show that 13 of the 20 most deprived local areas in the country are in London.

London has special needs that can be tackled only by special measures. What is true of London in general is more particularly true of London's sport. It has had buoyant days. We are all proud of the sports men and women who have achieved so much on the international sporting scene. We are all proud of the medals that they have won, but today anyone who participates in sporting and recreational pursuits at whatever level of excellence, who is committed to safeguarding such opportunities for future generations of community use, has genuine cause to feel that all this is threatened.

Ever-increasing commercial exploitation of land, insensitive planning and lack of awareness are contributing to the growing threat to our outdoor recreational space. Too many playgrounds and playing fields are deteriorating or disappearing altogether.

Recently, the Central Council of Physical Recreation brought to public attention some 800 public sites nationally that it targeted as at risk. It estimated that the recent total loss of recreational land exceeds 100,000 acres. The Minister may say, as he has said on many other occasions, that those figures are open to question, that some local studies have suggested that, in a number of areas, there have been gains in provision and that they outweigh the losses, but is that not precisely one of the fundamental weaknesses of the present system?

We do not know the quantity of the national stock of educational playing fields in the public or private sector. We do not know the regional variations in provision per head of population of urban recreational space. We do not know the percentage of urban land that has been lost to development. We do not know the number of planning applications for development of recreational or open space that have been approved by planning authorities or at appeal.

A recent survey by the National Playing Fields Association showed that, at local authority level, the position is rather similar. Only half of our local authorities knew the number of sports pitches that were being used for dual use. Less than a quarter of our local authorities knew the total recreational landholdings within their boundaries. Nevertheless, time and again, we hear the words, "Surplus to requirements." That is the catchphrase used to cover every sale or potential sale.

How can anything be surplus to requirements when we do not know either the total amount of recreational open space or its quality? Whose surplus? Whose requirement? Who decides the surplus and who decides the requirement? How can we plan for the future if we do not have the facts about today? That is why I am calling on the Minister for Sport to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to start immediately the process that enables every piece of recreational playing space to be registered. There should be a statutory responsibility on all planning authorities to maintain a register of recreational playing space within their jurisdiction.

Time after time in the House, when the Minister is questioned on this subject, his response to practically every question has been to say that the information is not held centrally. It should be. Just before Christmas the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who is present today and whom I am allowing to contribute to the debate, received a response saying that the Minister had asked the National Playing Fields Association, the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the Sports Council to combine to consider the matter and to determine whether it is desirable to compile a register of playing fields. The Minister already knows that those organisations want a register to be compiled. Admittedly it was a different Minister who answered the question put by the hon. Member for Ealing, North and that is one of the problems in this place; different Ministers answer questions about different things all the time.

The NFPA document, "The State of Play", which was published recently, specifically called for a register. The CCPR has also called for a register. There is no need for the working group to advise the Minister; the organisations have already told him that they want a register. The working party is looking not at playing fields in general, but at sports pitches. It will count pitches rather than the overall number of playing fields and recreational spaces. I hope that the Minister can tell me why, as Minister for Sport, he cannot start that process and draw up a register.

School sport is already in crisis. The shortage of qualified physical education teachers means that many of our children are not enjoying even a basic minimum of physical activity. Physical education will prepare each child for satisfactory participation in sport through the development of the necessary skills. The extra duties imposed on teachers preparing for the national curriculum, the savings that have had to be made in transport costs and the way in which the national curriculum seems to be downgrading PE are worrying factors.

Physical education must be seen to be as at least as important as any other subject presently categorised as a core subject in the national curriculum. In reality, however, we shall not achieve that end unless at least 10 per cent. of time is allocated for PE for all five to 16-year-olds. We must get that base input right as it is at that base that we ensure that young people also learn the social skills inherent in participation in sport. Social awareness is developed through PE and team competition teaches the importance of co-operation and the meaning of interdependence.

As well as the problems that I have outlined, we face falling school rolls in London. That has made it much easier for education authorities of all political complexions to declare certain playing fields as—that same old phrase —"surplus to requirements".

At the moment education authorities are not required to take account of the increase in the number of children forecast by the end of the century, when there will be more

[Miss Kate Hoey]

than 1 million more children. Because the Department of Education and Science's regulation 909 states "minimum" requirements, many authorities are interpreting the regulation as a maximum over which all else is considered surplus.

The other major concern is the local management of schools. That management will rightly mean that the governing bodies are encouraged to serve the community by allowing access to school facilities. I have spoken out many times about the way in which many facilities, in public and private use, lie empty at the weekends. With the exception of some areas, we have been unable to bring together education and leisure facilities so that dual use becomes a right. However, under local management, schools would have to seek a financial return on the use of those facilities. The Minister for Sport must intervene to ensure that that does not prevent and restrict use. Similarly, where the Sports Council has already put money into school facilities for community use, there must be safeguards to ensure that those facilities continue to be available to the community.

Within London, the abolition of the Inner London education authority and the arrangements for dealing with its playing fields are adding to the insecurity. The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, in a letter to the Greater London Playing Fields Association said:

"Under the Education Reform Act the Secretary of State may transfer ILEA property to an Inner London council only where, in his opinion, it needs to be transferred for the purpose of enabling the council properly to perform its ILEA functions. These functions include providing for school and college sport, but do not of course include the provision for general recreational facilities. Any property that the Secretary of State does not transfer to an inner London borough or existing LEA must, under the provisions of the Act, be transferred to the London Residuary Body for disposal."

Up to today, the Department of Education and Science had still not published the final property transfer order. Therefore, nothing definite is known and insecurity continues. The draft order attaches covenants to those ILEA playing fields for which successive boroughs have identified an educational use, requiring the maintaining authority to consult other boroughs before taking the property out of use. In those circumstances, if another borough wishes to maintain the property for educational use, it is to be transferred to that borough.

The convenant suggestion is a nonsense; it is not nearly foolproof enough. The sites will be just as much at risk because the possibility of raising funds for the boroughs will not be the issue. It may well be the severe decrease in income due to the community charge and the uniform business rate that will ensure that the boroughs do not have the necessary resources to spend on keeping sites in active use. That is misleading.

The covenant will not provide any safeguard unless it states that the land must be kept for recreational use. Put another way, there may be severe pressures on some of the inner London boroughs—and the outer London boroughs—to dispose of the land not because they hope to make financial gain, but because they cannot afford to keep it. Everything that we have read so far seems to show that the effect of the poll tax and the uniform business rate will be to take money out of the inner London boroughs.

Why cannot we do other than transfer for educational use? Although there is no power to allow for special transfers of land, it is not too late for the Minister to ask for that power, and that is what he should be doing. More crucially, he should be calling on the Secretary of State for the Environment to place an immediate stop notice on the sale of all sports fields and recreational land in London until such time as the register is complete and we can consider the overall position.

With such powers, it might be possible to vest the land either in the National Playing Fields Association or in one of its affiliated associations. The management would be either through the association or it would be farmed out to the local authority or voluntary organisations. The security would be having the land vested in a charitable organisation for use as a recreational space for ever more.

Instead, what we have ended up with is a response from the Department of Education and Science, which is too blinkered to look further than narrow educational requirements, with a national curriculum so crowded with mandatory subjects that physical education will not get a look in; and the Department of the Environment's view that, in planning matters, the presumption is still in favour of the developer.

We all know that there is still a crisis, the scale of which is unquantifiable. The Central Council of Physical Recreation, the National Playing Fields Association and the London region of the Sports Council have all said that. We feel passionately about the importance of sport and recreation to society, of the capacity of sport to teach us self-discipline and of the opportunity that it gives many youngsters to achieve, to participate and to succeed in competition as an individual or in a team. Those at the grass roots who do so much of the voluntary coaching should not have to spend increasing amounts of time worrying about whether they can continue to use a facility or campaigning to stop a development. That is the challenge that sport provides at all ages and levels.

There are incidents of rugby clubs in Mitcham being moved twice in one year and still being insecure about where they will be going next. I know that the Minister has occasionally intervened. I am pleased that he did so in the case of the Port of London Authority playing fields in Redbridge—a high-quality facility—and I thank the *Evening Standard* for its campaign urging the local authority to consult other organisations interested in recreation and sport. However, urging is not enough. We have seen that. More needs to be done and more statutory support must be given. Where is the planning policy guidance note which was promised but which so far has not been delivered?

At the root of the debate is the fact that sport in this country is still undervalued. Either the Government should accept its case for adequate funding on the grounds of its contribution to education, health, social welfare and the economy or the Government should provide a tax and legal environment that encourages voluntary effort and facilitates fund raising for sport.

The paltry increase in the grant to the Sports Council of less than inflation compares with the much larger increase given to the Arts Council. In real terms that constitutes a direct cut in school sports funding. As a recent example, why did not the Minister for Sport protest to the Department of Education and Science that the Inner London federation of school sports was refused a paltry amount of money? Why is there no Question Time on sport in the House? We have questions on the arts, so why not on sport?

We need the Minister for Sport to stand up for sport. He should not be an apologist for the rest of his Department and the Secretary of State. We need a Minister who will take the lead in trying to prevent the loss of our playing fields and sports facilities. I hope that he will respond to the positive suggestions that have been made, to ensure that the future heritage of young people and the sporting life of this country remain secure.

2.47 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Gentleman have the consent of both the hon. Lady and the Minister?

Mr. Greenway: Yes.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) and the Minister for allowing me to participate in this crucial debate. I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing it and on her excellent speech. She said, rightly, that the Central Council of Physical Recreation, the National Playing Fields Association and the Sports Council have called for a strengthening of the position concerning playing fields in London. That means opposing present moves by statutory organisations, including local councils, to take away playing fields from communities and schools. Playing fields also make an environmental contribution to areas in which there are often excess amounts of buildings.

The demise of PE and games in London schools in recent years has been tragic and must be reversed. It is partly due to misguided educational policies and also because the facilities have been progressively lost, and that must be reversed. However, I strongly support the present links which have grown, and are growing daily, between schools, clubs and the youth service. I hope that there can be dual use not only of club facilities by school pupils, youths and others, but of manpower—expert teachers and coaches—available to teach the sports and games. Such dual use could be most valuable.

I shall refer to a specific case in my constituency with which I know the hon. Lady associates herself. I do not want the Warren Farm sports complex to be placed under the control of the London borough of Ealing because that borough will not give an assurance that if it takes on the sports complex—which I have known for 30 years to be a valuable and excellent facility—it will abandon plans to build on the 17 acres of the Cayton road playing fields in my constituency which belong to Ealing Green high school. Without that assurance I and the community know that if it possibly can Ealing council will go ahead with a building project in conjunction with the Notting Hill Housing Trust to build on 10 or 11 acres of those 17 acres of playing fields. The sleight of hand is that the remaining six or seven acres will be released for community use.

I and the community that I represent want to maintain those 17 acres of playing fields at Cayton road for school and community use. We need all 17 acres to serve a heavily built-up area. No sleight of hand by Ealing council or any other body must be allowed to take away those facilities from the school or the community. That would be wicked and tragic.

Generally speaking, as the hon. Lady said, is it not time that the Department of the Environment and my hon. Friend in particular gave some planning policy guidance on sport and recreation? We really need guidance stating that from now on not another inch of playing field shall be released for building or any use other than sport. We need all we have and more.

2.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) on securing the debate and on presenting her case so eloquently. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). In the short time available I shall attempt to respond to a number of points and possiby add a different dimension to the perspective of London sport that the hon. Lady has presented to the House this afternoon. She has painted rather a gloomy picture which takes scant regard of the excellent initiatives that have been and are being developed by many London boroughs and by the numerous voluntary organisations based in the area.

The hon. Lady also underestimated the importance of the role of the London Regional Council for Sport and Recreation. The council is the strategic planning body for sport and recreation in the region and has great influence among those involved in this area. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the council for its achievements and in particular I congratulate it on its work in bringing together the private sector and more customary partners in the public sector to develop facilities in the capital.

Local authorities have traditionally been the main providers of sport and recreational facilities, and that is certainly true in London. CIPFA estimates show that over the past decade the net expenditure on sport and recreation by the London boroughs has been in excess of £1 billion. Part of that sum has been used to maintain existing facilities, but a considerable amount has been used to provide new ones. The decade has seen the construction of nine new swimming pools, taking the total to 118. Six more are currently under construction. There are 144 sports halls compared with a little over 50 10 years ago, and there are 40 synthetic pitches compared with 11 in 1981.

The residents of London also benefit from many of the sports facilities owned by the local education authorities which, over the past five or six years have been opened up for dual use by schools and local communities. I echo the importance that my hon. Friend attached to the need to develop the concept of dual use. A particularly good example of which my hon. Friend will know is in the London borough of Enfield where there are seven dual-use school sports halls. The regional council is doing much to encourage similar schemes in other boroughs, for example, Newham. The Government will continue to work for more facilities in schools to be made available to the wider community and will soon be issuing a dual-use guidance booklet on the subject.

Then there are the specialist facilities, a number of which have been developed since 1980. Examples are the indoor athletics training facilities at Wood Green and Crystal Palace, the football facility at Douglas Eyre playing field in Walthamstow and the ice rinks at Lea Valley and Romford.

Some of the most exciting sport and recreation facilities developed in conjunction with the private sector are in the Docklands. The Docklands arena became fully operational during 1989. Costing £30 million it is

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

London's first major, post-war, purpose-built arena capable of seating 13,000 people. It will provide recreation opportunities for the local community as well as people coming from further afield. The private sector made a significant contribution to the development of the new water sports centre on the Isle of Dogs which became operational last spring. The centre offers a variety of water sports including sailing, canoeing, windsurfing and angling for use by the local community and by elite competitors.

In addition to those more ambitious projects many smaller projects are every bit as worth while. As the hon. Lady is aware, the Sports Council allocates annual grant aid to the regions. In the last financial year the London region received some £2·5 million from the council. This was used as pump-priming money and more than 150 projects received financial support. Eight capital grants, totalling £550,000, were given towards the construction of new facilities with a total value of £3 million. Some 62 grants, worth £300,000 in all, were given to voluntary organisations towards projects worth just under £3 million. Those included projects as varied as improvements to the Heathrow gymnastic club; the installation of floodlighting at the multi-games area at the Marvels Lane boys' club in Lewisham, the purchase of equipment for a group of people with disabilities at the Otter canoe club in Wandsworth and the conversion of churches in Richmond, Harrow and Balham for community use.

All 150 projects which received aid from the Sports Council during the period in question were aimed at making a wider range of facilities available to a wider range of people. That could mean constructing new facilities, but could just as well mean refurbishing existing ones to ensure that the best possible use is made of them.

In its strategy document "A Capital Project", published in 1987, the London Regional Council for Sport and Recreation estimated that 40 per cent. of Londoners participated in outdoor sports and 22 per cent. in indoor sports. Those are among the highest participation rates in the country, but clearly they could be even higher. The London council has done a great deal of good work in this area, particularly with the special programmes that it has developed to encourage participation among target groups such as women, young people, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. There are now some 20 sports-specific development officers working in the region and a similar number of local authority development officers. Much good similar work is being carried out by the Central Council for Physical Recreation.

I deal now with the additional points made by the hon. Member for Vauxhall and by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North who made particular reference to the Warren Farm playing fields in Ealing. I understand that ILEA submitted a formal application yesterday seeking the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to dispose of the playing fields at less than best price. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North would commend that to the House. That is the present position, and I give my hon. Friend the undertaking that Ministers will carefully consider that request and will have noted the important points that my hon. Friend has brought to the attention of the House. My hon. Friend will accept that as I hold a quasi-judicial planning position in my Department, I have difficulty in going further today. However, I have noted carefully all that he said and undertake to see that it receives careful consideration.

Mr. Harry Greenway: The danger about Ealing council taking over Warren Farm is that as it has built on Cayton road playing fields, it will build on Warren Farm playing fields. It cannot be trusted.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. Friend's point has been noted by the House. He will accept that in the House I must take a neutral position on the issue, but it is important that it has been placed on the record.

The hon. Lady asked about a register of recreational land. I was not the one who said that the group to which she referred should consider setting up a register. The contrary is the case, because a long time ago I urged the setting up of a register and when I was a Back-Bencher I actively supported that principle. I did that because it is quite clear that, despite the hard work carried out by many interested groups to draw up a register, inevitably it requires more than the input of just one body.

It is far better that the Sports Council, the CCPR and the NPFA should get together and work together in moving swiftly to establish a comprehensive register. That would be in the interests of establishing the important guidelines that hon. Members mentioned. For that reason, as long ago as 14 April 1989 I initiated an arrangement to ensure that the Sports Council and the regional councils monitored and developed an assessment of the national situation. I share with my hon. Friend the belief that there should be a move in that direction.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 December 1989

PRIME MINISTER

Public Libraries

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on public libraries.

The Prime Minister: None.

Official Travel (Rail)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister when she last travelled on official business on a public transport train in *(a)* London and *(b)* Singapore.

The Prime Minister: I regret that for reasons of practicality and security it is difficult for me to travel by rail on official business. I do so when a suitable opportunity arises. I last travelled by train from King's Cross, London to an official function on 31 August 1989. I last made a journey on the mass rapid transport system in Singapore on 31 July 1988.

CIVIL SERVICE

Disabled People

107. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what percentage of staff employed within the Civil Service on 1 November were then registered as disabled persons.

Mr. Luce: The latest figure available is 1·3 per cent.

TRANSPORT

A1 (Roadworks)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, pursuant to his reply of Monday 4 December, *Official Report*, column *93*, to the hon. Member for Stockton, South, he will make a statement on the extensive roadworks being undertaken on the A1 in Yorkshire.

Mr. Atkins: The roadworks now being carried out on the A1 in Yorkshire are essential maintenance works to protect the structural integrity of the road and at the same time keep it in a safe condition. The present scheme at Scotch Corner is for major resurfacing, whereas the other schemes in progress are short-term minor works. In accordance with the Department's policy, the works are phased and spaced out as much as possible to keep traffic disruption to a minimum.

Travel Concessions

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make an order under section 93(7)(f) of the Transport Act 1985 to enable men between the ages of 60 and 64 years to receive the same travel concessions as are currently available to women.

Mr. Portillo: I have no plans to change the present arrangements which link eligibility for travel concession for the elderly to state pensionable age.

Air Services

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what restrictions he sets down on the number of hours that crews of British airlines may fly; and what information he has on the restrictions that apply to foreign registered and operated air services.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is the Civil Aviation Authority that is responsible for the regulation of the working hours of crews of British airlines, in accordance with the Air Navigation Order 1989. The order requires that no member of the flight crew may fly for more than 100 hours in any consecutive 28-day periods or more than 900 hours during the period of 12 months expiring at the end of the previous month.

Furthermore, the order requires operators to establish a scheme for the regulation of crew duty times and the scheme must be approved by the Civil Aviation Authority. The Civil Aviation Authority provides guidelines, CAP 371, to assist operators to develop acceptable schemes. The guidelines cover such matters as rest periods, standby duty, days off, extended range operations by two pilots, delayed reporting times, acclimatisation to local time, the records that must be kept and the reports that must be made.

Guidelines are also issued by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. I understand that other states' regulations are in general comparable with the Civil Aviation Authority's requirements.

A40, Acton

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the work of cutting down shrubs on the central reservation of the A40 Western avenue at Acton was scheduled for the current time of year; what assessment he has made of the effect of the work on the journey time from Uxbridge to London; and if he will give intructions for this work to be postponed until the new year.

Mr. Atkins: This work is part of a rolling programme to provide central reservation safety fencing and guard railing on trunk roads. The work along the A40 Western avenue is being co-ordinated by the Department's agent, the London borough of Ealing, and is being carried out in the interests of safety. Some disruption is inevitable, but efforts will continue to be made to minimise any inconvenience to the public.

Work will be suspended over the Christmas and new year holiday and should then be completed in mid-January.

A40, Ealing

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long the present work on the central reservation of the A40 in the London borough of Ealing has taken; what it is costing; when it is expected to end; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: These works are part of a rolling programme to provide central reserve safety fencing and pedestrian guard railing on the A40 Western avenue in the London borough of Ealing.

The current phase of these works began in mid-September and is expected to be completed by mid-January 1990. The total cost of these works is approximately £960,000.

Further works will be required in the coming months. I will write to my hon. Friend when the contractual arrangements have been finalised.

Near-Miss, London-Belfast Route

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will ask the accident investigation branch to investigate the near-miss involving a civilian aircraft travelling from London to Belfast on the evening of 11 November and then publish the results of the inquiry.

Mr. McLoughlin: No near-miss, or airmiss, was reported for the date and time referred to. However, a mandatory occurrence report was filed with the Civil Aviation Authority by the captain of a British Midland aircraft en route from London to Belfast.

It is for the chief inspector of air accidents to determine whether an investigation into an incident or accident shall be carried out. I understand that the chief inspector has found no reason for instituting an investigation in this case. It is thought possible that there may be a meteorological explanation to the phenomenon observed.

Driving Licences

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorists have had their licences withdrawn as a result of medical advice given to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre regarding lack of fitness to drive a motor vehicle; and if he will make a statement on the procedure for advising the licensing authorities on such matters.

Mr. Atkins: The figures available are given in the table:

Year	
1984-85	5,821
1985-86	8,216
1986-87	9,318
1987-88	10,442
1988-89	10,891

Advice about the obligation to notify the onset or worsening of medical conditions which might affect ability to drive safely is printed on all driving licences. Further information is available in the leaflet "What you need to know about driver licensing", Form D100, which is available from most Post Offices.

I will write to my hon. Friend to give fuller details about the statutory powers available to the Secretary of State in this area of driver licensing and how the driver licensing centre carries out its medical investigation of drivers.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorists over the age of 75 years hold current driving licences; and what proportion of these has been declared medically fit to operate a moter vehicle.

Mr. Atkins: No details are available of the number of drivers over the age of 75 years.

There are 1,656,818 current licence holders over the age of 70, all of whom have been considered to be medically fit to hold a driving licence; 117,586 of these drivers are recorded as having a medical condition. All drivers are obliged by law to notify DVLC of the onset or worsening of medical condition which could affect their ability to drive safely.

American Airlines

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what attempts are being made by the Government to persuade American airlines to adopt a more flexible attitude towards new routes and services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The United Kingdom pressed the US Government during talks held between 29 November and 1 December to join the United Kingdom in addressing the broad question of liberalising the air services arrangements between our two countries. We also suggested an exchange of opportunities to meet the shorter-term ambitions of the airlines of both sides. Arrangements are in hand to resume these talks shortly.

Foulridge Bypass

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest assessment of the level of overcrowding in the Foulridge bypass; if he will bring about an early start to the construction of the Foulridge bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: These are matters of Lancashire county council as the highway authority for the A56 north of Burnley. I understand that the council hopes to start construction of a Colne-Foulridge bypass in late 1991. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what budget he has set aside for information to the public on the London assessment studies after publication of the next stage of the London assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins: The cost of providing information is included in the overall budget for the studies.

Free copies of the reports have been provided to local authorities throughout the study areas with a request that they should be put on display to the public in main libraries and suitable locations. They will also be sent to representative organisations in the study areas. Summaries of the consultants' work and leaflets giving the Department's initial views and request for comments are also available at those locations, or free of charge direct from the consultants. A short summary in Bengali of the options for consultations in east London will be available from Ove Arup.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many residential properties his Department has acquired along the line of the east London river crossing; how many have been offered to housing authorities; how many have been refused; and how many are currently unoccupied.

Mr. Atkins: The Department owns 111 residential properties along the line of the east London river crossing; 54 are let to the London borough of Greenwich and three to the London borough of Bexley; 35 are let to various housing associations; 13 are let directly to individual tenants; and six are currently unoccupied.

There is no readily available record of refusals.

Disabled People

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to introduce a national corporate orange badge scheme to enable essential medical staff to park to visit disabled people in city centre areas.

Mr. Atkins: Arrangements already exist whereby police and traffic wardens exercise discretion in respect of parking controls where doctors or nursing staff on urgent visits display the authorised British Medical Association badge. We are not aware of any reasons to extend these arrangements.

By contrast, the orange badge scheme conveys specific parking concessions to enable severely disabled people themselves to get close to their destinations.

M3

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had negotiations with the main contractor on the Compton to Bassett section of the M3 to widen all bridges and gantries to enable his Department to construct a fourth lane at some time in the future; and if he will make a statement as to his policy for a fourth dual lane on the M3 at Winchester.

Mr. Atkins: The section of the Compton to Bassett section of the M3 motorway north of Leigh road, Eastleigh, is being constructed with dual three-lane carriageways. However, as a prudent measure my Department has negotiated with the contractor a small modification in the design of one bridge to allow for any possible future widening that may be required.

As my hon. Friend is aware, proposals for the remaining section of the proposed M3 motorway round Winchester were considered at the 1985 public inquiry and the re-opened inquiry in 1987-88. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport are considering the reports of the independent inspectors who conducted the inquiries and they will announce their joint decisions as soon as possible. I am sure my hon. Friend will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to comment further until that decision is announced.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an early statement concerning resurfacing work on the Severn bridge and associated problems and the consequent hold-ups on the M4 motorway.

Mr. Atkins: From Tuesday 12 December eastbound traffic on Severn bridge was restricted to a single lane in the interests of road safety due to unexpected difficulties with skid resistance on the new road surface. This caused extensive delays. Two-lane working was restored on Friday 15 December. The underlying cause of the problem is being investigated.

SCOOT Programme

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many countries have bought the SCOOT programme for traffic signals developed by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: Six.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much of the cost of constructing the Jubilee line extension will be paid for by *(a)* developers, *(b)* fare payers, and *(c)* the Treasury.

Mr. Portillo: In my right hon. Friend's written answer of 16 November to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) *Official Report* column *398*, he said:

"The Jubilee extension will cost about £1 billion in today's prices to which developers will over time be making a cash contribution of over £400 million."

We do not yet know the full total of developer contribution as negotiations with some are still continuing. London Regional Transport's present fare revenue is not earmarked to particular projects; and the fare revenue that will be generated by the Jubilee line extension itself will depend upon decisions on fare structures and levels that will not be determined by London Regional Transport until much nearer the opening of the line. In the meantime the Government will meet that proportion of the costs of the line not covered by developer contributions.

Panamanian Registered Ships

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what calculation he has made of the likely impact on British owned Panamanian registered ships which will arise when the United States Administration bans Panamanian flag carriers from United States ports;

(2) what information he has on British owned Panamanian registered ships re-flagging as a result of the impending ban on Panamanian flag carriers from United States ports;

(3) what representations he has received from British shipowners following the decision of the United States Administration to ban Panamanian registered ships from United States ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: The General Council of British Shipping has objected to the ban on principle. It has told us of one United Kingdom shipowner who may re-register a Panamanian flagged vessel that operates in the United States trades.

Traffic Pollution

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has of the likely atmospheric pollution caused by the increase in traffic as forecast by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department's traffic forecasts are of demand up to 2025. But it is not possible to foresee the

extent to which it will be possible or desirable to meet forecast levels of demand for such a long period ahead. Another cause of uncertainty is that the total level of vehicle emissions will depend upon the progress of current initiatives to reduce emissions by individual vehicles.

Port of London Authority

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the rank and function of Mr. P. Graham Hewett within his Department; if he will indicate on how many occasions Mr. Hewett had meetings with *(a)* officials of the Port of London Authority and *(b)* the authority itself in the period 1 January to 31 July; and if he will indicate the purpose of such meetings and the subject matters discussed.

Mr. McLoughlin: Mr. Hewett is an assistant secretary currently employed in the European and general division of the Department. Between January and November this year he was seconded to the Port of London Authority at its request in connection with the financial reconstruction of the authority. The terms of his secondment and his work there were entirely for the PLA; Mr. Hewett, during his endorsement, did not report to my Department.

Congestion, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to reduce congestion in London; and when he expects to see the first results.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made to the House on 14 December (*Official Report*, columns 1184-86) by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Coastguard Service

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *538*, what was the cause of the technical fault on the Swansea coastguard line, timed at 15.25; how it was detected; and how it was made good before the 999 call to Swansea timed at 15.35 on 16 August.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information can be obtained only from British Telecom.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *81-82*, what was the origin of the VHF radio call timed at 15.22.

Mr. McLoughlin: The radio call, from Milford Haven coastguard to Swansea coastguard, passed information received as a result of a re-routed 999 call, concerning an incident at Ilfracombe. The logged time of 15.25 at Milford Haven reflects completion of both the telephone call and the relaying of the information to Swansea, while the logged time of 15·22 at Swansea reflects the initial radio call from Milford Haven indicating distress information.

Roads (Funding)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much local authority expenditure he intends to accept for transport supplementary grant in 1990-91; what supplementary credit approvals and what level of annual capital guidelines he will be issuing for local roads expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I have decided to accept £466 million of local authority highway expenditure for transport supplementary grant in 1990-91. Grant will be paid on this expenditure at a flate rate of 50 per cent. The total of £233 million TSG is nearly 15 per cent. higher than for 1989-90.

I have also decided to issue supplementary credit approvals of £50 million and total annual capital guidelines of £352 million, bringing coverage for local roads and parking for 1990-91 to £635 million. The capital allocation for 1989-90 is £513 million.

Seventy new major (over £1 million) schemes will be supported through TSG for the first time. Among these are the Birmingham Heartlands spine road; a major new link road from the M57 to the A562 in Merseyside; the Littlehampton bypass; further stages of both the Avon ring road and the Leeds inner ring road; as well as the Thornaby bypass and the Beddington-Mitcham relief road other important improvements in both urban and rural areas. Twenty-two of these schemes will directly assist inner cities.

Some 270 other major schemes will continue to receive TSG support, including 90 in inner-city areas. Most of these are already under construction or are due to start in the current financial year.

Local authorities have reported completion of 59 TSG-supported schemes costing £245 million in 1988-89 and a start of works on 65 such schemes costing £401 million. During 1989-90, they plan to complete a further 62 schemes costing £290 million and start 76 costing £538 million.

In deciding the distribution of transport supplementary grant for 1990-91, I have considered carefully the transport policies and programme document submitted by each local highway authority, and have looked at the extent to which authorities' programmes relate to roads of more than local importance. Many local authority roads —such as major urban roads and roads on the primary route network—carry significant amounts of through traffic, and thus complement the trunk road network. Improvements to such roads are important locally because they save lives, reduce congestion and relieve communities from the effects of through traffic. They are also of national benefit by aiding the efficient flow of goods, people and services. TSG reflects the national taxpayer's interest in helping local authorities to improve these roads.

I have also given special priority this year to schemes which will assist in the regeneration of our inner cities. New and improved roads are often crucial in unlocking inner-city potential, either by removing through traffic from inner-city streets, thereby relieving congestion, increasing safety and improving the environment, or by providing high-quality access to the motorway network for inner-city industry and commerce.

Many smaller schemes on heavily trafficked roads produce very significant accident savings and other benefits. My right hon. Friend has therefore also taken into account £38 million of expenditure on minor (under £1 million) schemes for grant in 1990-91.

Annual capital guidelines, together with supplementary credit approvals, will provide local highway authorities with the necessary resources to meet the balance of their

TSG-accepted expenditure and to undertake a further wide range of improvements and expenditure to which TSG support does not extend.

The amount of expenditure accepted for TSG, the amount of grant, the annual capital guideline, and the supplementary credit approvals which the Government intend to issue for highway expenditure for each local highway authority are set out in the table. Councils are being informed individually today of their own figures.

Local authority capital expenditure on roads 1990-91

Authority	*Net expenditure accepted for TSG* £ million	*Transport supplementary grant* £ million	*Supplementary credit approvals* £ million	*Annual capital guideline* £ million
Metropolitan districts				
Bolton	2·684	1·342	0·000	1·945
Bury	1·698	0·849	0·000	1·315
Manchester	9·632	4·816	0·187	8·198
Oldham	1·228	0·614	0·000	2·443
Rochdale	0·378	0·189	0·000	1·036
Salford	5·096	2·588	0·000	3·882
Stockport	0·916	0·458	0·000	0·959
Tameside	0·806	0·403	0·000	1·438
Trafford	0·778	0·389	0·000	1·566
Wigan	1·744	0·872	0·000	2·065
Knowsley	1·792	0·896	0·000	1·397
Liverpool	1·500	0·750	0·000	2·506
St. Helens	5·882	2·941	0·340	3·007
Sefton	0·738	0·369	0·282	0·689
Wirral	0·900	0·450	0·220	1·299
Barnsley	3·148	1·574	0·132	2·142
Doncaster	1·414	0·707	0·000	1·897
Rotherham	2·486	1·243	0·000	1·908
Sheffield	11·092	5·546	0·270	6·191
Gateshead	1·944	0·972	0·000	1·991
Newcastle upon Tyne	0·124	0·062	0·000	2·920
North Tyneside	0·306	0·153	0·000	0·542
South Tyneside	1·400	0·700	0·000	1·242
Sunderland	1·694	0·847	0·000	3·033
Birmingham	15·790	7·895	0·744	9·811
Coventry	2·948	1·474	0·825	1·537
Dudley	1·150	0·575	0·000	2·272
Sandwell	1·504	0·752	0·000	2·672
Solihull	0·856	0·428	0·000	1·325
Walsall	5·502	2·751	2·693	0·490
Wolverhampton	5·684	2·842	2·111	1·748
Bradford	4·934	2·467	0·127	4·115
Calderdale	0·192	0·096	0·000	1·428
Kirklees	0·120	0·060	0·000	0·735
Leeds	5·264	2·632	0·088	3·876
Wakefield	0·314	0·157	0·000	2·457
Shire Counties				
Avon	13·428	6·714	0·491	7·230
Bedfordshire	5·182	2·591	0·132	3·659
Berkshire	3·764	1·882	0·239	5·723
Buckinghamshire	2·306	1·153	0·000	2·087
Cambridgeshire	3·864	1·932	0·000	4·316
Cheshire	8·308	4·154	0·000	6·174
Cleveland	10·884	5·442	0·000	6·351
Cornwall	5·594	2·797	0·000	4·670
Cumbria	4·652	2·326	0·000	3·326
Derbyshire	1·164	0·582	0·000	4·353
Devon	6·788	3·394	0·407	7·622
Dorset	5·732	2·866	0·000	4·544
Durham	4·820	2·410	0·000	2·932
East Sussex	6·142	3·071	0·660	5·082
Essex	13·372	6·686	0·373	11·533
Gloucestershire	3·866	1·933	0·000	3·215
Hampshire	15·278	7·639	5·910	4·274
Herefordshire and Worcester	2·676	1·338	0·000	2·585
Hertfordshire	6·050	3·025	0·000	4·700
Humberside	10·624	5·312	0·000	7·677
Isle of Wight	0·828	0·414	0·000	1·202
Kent	25·100	12·550	9·853	8·869
Lancashire	25·746	12·873	0·000	16·496
Leicestershire	6·094	3·047	0·081	4·477
Lincolnshire	3·148	1·574	0·000	2·481
Norfolk	11·346	5·673	2·889	4·428
Northamptonshire	5·698	2·849	0·000	5·115
Northumberland	2·962	1·481	0·000	2·265

Authority	Net expenditure accepted for TSG £ million	Transport supplementary grant £ million	Supplementary credit approvals £ million	Annual capital guideline £ million
North Yorkshire	6·888	3·444	0·000	4·909
Nottinghamshire	3·828	1·914	0·000	3·986
Oxfordshire	4·924	2·462	0·000	5·352
Shropshire	3·132	1·566	0·000	3·540
Somerset	6·312	3·156	0·000	4·486
Staffordshire	5·826	2·913	0·000	4·390
Suffolk	6·374	3·187	0·000	5·782
Surrey	12·660	6·330	2·746	6·359
Warwickshire	0·984	0·492	0·328	2·112
West Sussex	9·064	4·532	0·000	6·045
Wiltshire	5·970	2·985	0·000	4·714
London Boroughs				
City of London	0·202	0·101	0·000	0·461
Barking and Dagenham	3·496	1·748	0·000	3·622
Barnet	0·322	0·161	0·000	0·571
Bexley	4·268	2·134	0·000	2·869
Brent	0·014	0·007	0·000	0·736
Bromley	7·668	3·834	0·000	4·328
Camden	0·378	0·189	0·000	1·095
Croydon	1·776	0·888	0·000	1·890
Ealing	4·858	2·429	1·710	3·592
Enfield	9·762	4·881	6·480	0·429
Greenwich	0·038	0·019	0·000	1·149
Hackney	0·372	0·186	0·000	0·791
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·296	0·148	0·000	1·303
Haringey	5·442	2·721	2·780	0·661
Harrow	6·428	3·214	0·000	5·668
Havering	0·430	0·215	0·000	0·568
Hillingdon	5·484	2·742	4·917	2·297
Hounslow	0·558	0·279	0·279	0·540
Islington	0·336	0·168	0·000	0·549
Kensington and Chelsea	0·570	0·285	0·000	0·694
Kingston upon Thames	1·132	0·566	0·000	1·881
Lambeth	0·308	0·154	0·000	0·280
Lewisham	3·974	1·987	0·000	3·081
Merton	14·200	7·100	1·150	7·282
Newham	3·582	1·791	0·000	2·869
Redbridge	0·268	0·134	0·000	0·598
Richmond upon Thames	0·344	0·172	0·000	0·633
Southwark	0·498	0·249	0·000	1·701
Sutton	1·180	0·590	0·000	3·168
Tower Hamlets	0·182	0·091	0·000	1·007
Waltham Forest	0·112	0·056	0·000	0·726
Wandsworth	2·022	1·011	0·000	3·429
Westminster	0·734	0·367	0·000	4·589

Western Environmental Improvement Route

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he received to the public consultation on the western environmental improvement route which took place in the spring.

Mr. Atkins: Some 7,000 responses in one form or another were received to the consultation exercise. These, together with any further comments made in the context of the London assessment studies, will be taken fully into account in reaching a decision on the future of the Western environmental improvement route.

Speed Limits

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column *84*, how many representations he has received in favour of a speed limit *(a)* higher and *(b)* lower than 70 miles an hour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* This year I have received 95 letters concerning the 70 mph maximum speed limit. Of these 13 were in favour of a higher limit; 29 asked for a lower limit and 53 for the rigorous enforcement of the existing limit.

The maximum speed limit on motorways was fully reviewed in 1984 and 1985. I am satisfied that the existing limit allows for safe and sensible maximum speeds in normal driving conditions and gives a correct balance between the need for fast, convenient travel and safety.

Car Pollution

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has conducted a comparative study of the pollutant gases and particulate matter released from *(a)* cars run on leaded petrol, *(b)* cars run on unleaded petrol, *(c)* cars fitted with catalytic converters run on unleaded patrol and *(d)* diesel engined cars, each in terms of weight carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide per mile.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* The Department has not conducted a comparative study of the type suggested, but the following points may be of

assistance. There should be no difference in emissions, other than of lead, between non-catalyst vehicles running on leaded or unleaded petrol. Sulphur emissions are directly related to the sulphur content of fuel, which is regulated in the United Kingdom to 0·3 per cent. by weight for diesel and 0·2 per cent. by weight for petrol. Particulate emissions from petrol engines, provided they are not worn out and burning lubricating oil, are negligible compared with particulate emissions from diesel engines.

In general, the same gaseous emission standards are achieved by both petrol and diesel engines. The emission standards on the current urban cycle type approval tests are expressed in grammes per test (g/test). These standards, recalculated in grammes per mile (g/mile), are as follows:

	Co (g/mile)	*HC + NOx (g/mile)*	*Particulate ((g/miles)*
EC Directive 83/351 (the current non catalyst standard)	23·24	7·6-11·1	No standard until October 1990
EC Directive 89/458 (the future standard to be applied from 1992)	7·6	2·0	0·44 (diesels only)

The standards set by directive 89/458 will be revised when the emission directives are consolidated in the near future. The consolidation will include a revision of the drive cycle used in the test. At present it is 2·58 miles long and simulates urban driving. The revised cycle will be 6·8 miles long and include some high-speed driving. It is likely that a reduction of about 27 per cent. in the particulate limit will also be included in the consolidation.

Health Services

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has had to date from organisations treating and providing services for the elderly and chronically sick about the effect of the current National Health Service plans, and how many of these representations are in favour of the proposed changes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply. We have received a large number of representations from a wide variety of sources. Many ask questions, many support some or all of our proposals, some refer only to specific aspects. It is not possible to distinguish individual representations in the way the hon. Member requests.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Violence to Women

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure that women are made less vulnerable to crimes of violence through a review of the present framework of legislation and its application in order to sustain a more appropriate relationship between the damage done to victims and the penalties awarded to convicted criminals.

Mr. Cope: The criminal law is reviewed on a continuous basis, but the application of the legislation concerned is a matter for the courts to determine, taking into account all the circumstances of each individual case. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the maximum penalty in Northern Ireland for attempted rape has recently been increased to life imprisonment, and that any sentence regarded by the Attorney-General as too lenient can now be the subject of a reference to the Court of Appeal.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what function is served by the Northern Ireland negotiating body on teachers' salaries.

Dr. Mawhinney: To negotiate the remuneration and terms and conditions of service of teachers in recognised schools in Northern Ireland. It is also the vehicle for consultation by the Department of Education on matters relating to teachers' superannuation.

Prison Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many strip searches were made on female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry monthly since July, giving the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; if any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for the search;

(2) how many strip searches were made on female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry, monthly since July; giving the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; if any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; on how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for the search.

Mr. Cope: Details of the numbers of and reasons for strip-searches made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry from March 1989 to June 1989 have already been provided—*Official Report*, 28 July 1989. Details from July 1989 to November 1989 are as follows:

	1989				
	July	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*
Number of searches					
Total number of searches carried out	19	56	40	53	32
Total number of inmates searched	15	31	24	25	22
Number of prisoners searched once	11	17	15	15	16
Number of prisoners searched twice	4	12	8	7	5

	July	August	September	October	November
Number of prisoners searched more than twice	—	2	1	3	1
Reasons for search					
First admission on remand/awaiting trial	4	9	9	17	11
First admission on sentence/final discharge	9	24	19	12	9
Attending remand court	—	—	—	—	—
Attending trial	—	—	—	—	—
Inter-prison visits	1	1	—	—	2
Pre-release home leave	5	20	9	6	3
Compassionate home leave	—	—	—	4	2
Visits to outside hospital	—	—	—	—	—
Returning from bail application	—	—	—	—	—
Attendance at court for bail	—	—	1	2	1
Fines paid	—	—	—	—	—
Working out scheme	—	2	2	12	4

No prohibited article was found during these searches and no prisoner refused to be searched.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the dates of the five meetings of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference between 1 January and 31 July 1990.

Mr. Brooke: No dates have yet been fixed.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Meal Requirements)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will include in the relevant code of practice a requirement for the provision of drinks to prisoners on remand or in custody, additional to the existing statutory right to have three meals in any 24-hour period.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The term "meals" in the code of practice is always interpreted as including drinks, and the custody officer will respond to reasonable requests for drinks between meals. This will be clarified in the revised code which we are now preparing.

Vehicle Security

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of all reported crimes are listed as thefts of, or thefts from, motor vehicles;

(2) what percentage of offenders involved in theft of, or thefts from, motor vehicles are apprehended; what percentage are convicted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The available published information can be found in the annual Command Paper, "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales": the latest issue, for 1988, is Cm. 847, and a copy is available in the Library. In 1988 about one quarter of all notifiable crimes recorded by the police were thefts of, or from, motor vehicles, and about a quarter of these offences were cleared up. The number of persons prosecuted and found guilty of thefts of or from motor vehicles in 1988 is given in the following table:

Persons proceeded against and found guilty of thefts of and from motor vehicles—England and Wales 1988

	Total proceeded against	Total found guilty	Percentage found guilty
Theft of motor vehicles	6,111	4,080	67
Theft from motor vehicles	10,796	8,316	77

British Summer Time

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received concerning the implementation of British summer time throughout the year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following the publication in June of the Green Paper "Summer Time—A Consultation Document" (Cm. 722) a total of 30,797 representations have been received to date. We hope to have completed an assessment of them in the near future.

Prison Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of body searches, cell searches and cell changes and strip searches carried out on each of the category A prisoners being held at Her Majesty's Prison, Durham monthly, since July, if any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for the search.

Mr. Mellor: Records are not kept of the occasions when rub down searching or "frisking" is carried out in prisons and it is not the practice to disclose detailed information about security arrangements such as that requested about the frequency of cell searches and cell changes.

Establishments are not required to record all strip searches and comprehensive records are available only in respect of category A women prisoners, of whom there were four in Durham prison between 1 July and 30 November. The number of occasions on which each was strip searched in each month during this period is shown in the following table:

	Prisoner			
	A	B	C	D
July	—	—	2	—
August	1	1	—	1
September	1	3	1	4
October	—	4	4	3
November	2	2	2	2

No unauthorised article was found. On no occasion did the prisoners refuse to be strip-searched.

Strip-searching is a routine security measure to which all inmates—male and female—are subject, both for its deterrent effect and as a means of discovering unauthorised articles.

Falmouth Police Station

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet made a decision on Falmouth's new police station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I will write to my hon. Friend about a new police station at Falmouth, when decisions on the major building programme for 1992-93 have been made early next year.

Chilean Residents

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Chilean nationals resident in the United Kingdom have *(a)* permanent residence, *(b)* student visas *(c)* occupational leave and *(d)* refugee status.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not directly available in the form requested. Annual figures of the number of Chileans accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom, and of the number admitted to the United Kingdom as students, are published each year in "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom" (most recently in tables 22 and 1, respectively, of the 1988 volume, Cm. 726). Annual figures of the number of Chileans granted refugee status in the United Kingdom, or exceptional leave, are published in the Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom" (most recently in tables 7 and 8 of the 1988 volume, Issue 25/89). Copies of both these publications are in the Library.

Jamaican Nationals

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Jamaican nationals have *(a)* been interviewed and *(b)* refused entry to the United Kingdom for each month since January 1989; and what are the annual figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table. All Jamaican citizens are interviewed on admission. Figures for those subjected to further examination are not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Jamaican citizens admitted to, and refused leave to enter and removed from, the United Kingdom

Year/month	Total admitted[1]	Total refused leave to enter and removed
1979	35,000	48
1980	31,000	82
1981	31,000	54
1982	30,000	63
1983	30,200	60
1984	28,600	44
1985	29,700	69
1986	30,500	131
1987	31,600	269
1988	30,600	424
1989		
January	2,600	75
February	1,700	79
March	2,000	82
April	2,200	71
May	2,300	59
June	3,800	65
July	4,500	75
August	3,900	55
September	3,300	72
October	n.y.a.	58

[1] The 1989 figures are provisional.
n.y.a. Not yet available.

Pub Bombings

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers of the west midlands serious crime squad have been suspended; how many of these were involved in the preparation of evidence that led to the prosecution of the Birmingham Six; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands that five officers who have previously been members of the serious crime squad are currently suspended from duty, and that none of these was involved in interviewing those convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times, and under what powers, officers of the Metropolitan police have interviewed either Paul Hill or Gerard Conlon since their acquittal on charges arising from the Guildford and Woolwich public house bombings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Metropolitan police officers have stopped Paul Hill once since his acquittal. The examination was part of routine checks at Heathrow airport under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Civil Defence

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to reduce the level of support currently available to civil defence community volunteers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Government maintain their commitment to community volunteers and support such activity through civil defence grant aid, but expenditure incurred by local authorities on volunteer arrangements must be balanced against that on other statutory civil defence functions. It is the aim of a current review of community volunteer schemes to ensure that effective and realistic arrangements are in place.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name the county councils and

district councils in England and Wales which do not conform to regulations in respect of emergency control centres in accordance with the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983.

Mr. John Patten: Statistics in connection with the provision of local authority emergency centres were given in "A report on implementation of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 in England and Wales at October 1988" which was published in January 1989 and a copy of which is in the Library. Advances on the position shown in that report are now being considered in the light of more recent information provided by local authorities.

Broadcasting

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the need to ensure that deaf people have access to parliamentary programmes.

Mr. Mellor: We have received representations from right hon. and hon. Members and others on behalf of viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing, requesting subtitling or use of sign language in news, current affairs and parliamentary programmes. The Broadcasting Bill contains provisions to encourage more subtitling in programmes generally.

Police Videos

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the reasons behind the decision to have police video cameras present at Thames magistrates court on 12 September; and as to what use will be made of the video produced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that there was considered to have been a significant possibility that a demonstration outside the court on that day would result in disorder. It was decided to video the demonstration to provide contemporaneous evidence to support any prosecutions which might have ensued. In the event the demonstration passed off quietly and it was not necessary to retain the video tape for evidental or any other purposes.

Mr. Leroy Russell

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the action being taken by the Metropolitan police at Forest Gate, London E7, to return the £960 belonging to Mr. Leroy Russell of 90 Gwendoline avenue, London E13.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that this money was seized from Mr. Russell's home by officers of the Metropolitan police following his arrest there on 25 July 1988. The police will retain the money for as long as the matter remains sub-judice.

Police

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a table showing the average age of police constables by police authority area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Police Authority Area	*Average age, Constable rank as at 31 December 1988*[1]
Avon and Somerset	33
Bedfordshire	32
Cambridgeshire	33
Cheshire	33
Cleveland	33
Cumbria	32
Derbyshire	33
Devon and Cornwall	34
Dorset	34
Durham	32
Dyfed Powys	33
Essex	33
Gloucestershire	34
Greater Manchester	32
Gwent	32
Hampshire	35
Hertfordshire	32
Humberside	33
Kent	33
Lancashire	34
Leicestershire	32
Lincolnshire	34
London, City of	33
Merseyside	33
Metropolitan Police	31
Norfolk	35
Northamptonshire	32
Northumbria	34
North Wales	33
North Yorkshire	33
Nottinghamshire	31
South Wales	33
South Yorkshire	32
Staffordshire	32
Suffolk	33
Surrey	33
Sussex	34
Thames Valley	32
Warwickshire	35
West Mercia	33
West Midlands	32
West Yorkshire	32
Wiltshire	33

[1]This is the latest date for which analysis of age and rank is available. An analysis of England and Wales for all ranks can be found in Appendix 12 of HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary's Annual Report 1988, a copy of which can be found in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mining Engineering

111. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance his Department gives to Britain's mining engineering industry in its efforts to improve its export performance.

Mr. Redwood: The DTI and FCO provide a wide range of information, advice and services to firms involved in exporting from the United Kingdom and these are available to the mining engineering industry where appropriate. The DTI's projects and export policy division provides particular support for British companies bidding for major overseas projects.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total net cost or contribution of the nationalised industries within his responsibility in the period of 1974 to 1979; and what was the net contribution of these industries in the period 1979 to the latest available year, taking account of both corporation tax and receipts from privatisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The way in which the expenditure plans and financing requirements of the nationalised industries was recorded changed in 1976-77 when the concept of an external financing requirement was introduced. Before that published figures concentrated on the capital requirements of the industries, whether or not they could be financed from internal resources or required Government or market funding. Figures for the two periods 1974-75 to 1978-79 and 1979-80 to 1987-88 are therefore not available on a comparable basis.

The following figures show, for the nationalised industries for which the Secretary of State had responsibility in these periods, outturn capital expenditure for 1974-75 and for later years the net effect on the public expenditure totals, taking account of net privatisation receipts. Corporation tax payments do not affect the public expenditure total. Information on tax paid is available in the published report and accounts of the relevant nationalised industries and has not been included in the following totals.

For 1974-75 and 1975-76 outturn capital expenditure was £2,925 million.

For 1976-77 to 1978-79 the net effect was an addition of £2,616 million to the public expenditure total.

For 1979-80 to 1987-88, the last year for which outturn figures are available, the net effect was an addition of £591 million.

The industries covered by this answer are British Aerospace, British Shipbuilders, British Steel Corporation, Post Office (including Telecommunications and National Girobank until separation), British Telecom and Girobank, the receipts from the sale of shares in British Aerospace and British Telecom are included in the figures, but the sale of shares in British Steel took place after 1987-88.

Sources: White Papers for the Government's public expenditure plans for the period 1975 to 1988, Command numbers 6721-II, 7439, 7841, 8175, 8494, I and II, 8789 II, 9143 II, 9428 II, 9702 II, Cm. 56 II, Cm. 288 I, Cm. 605, Cm. 621.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the net cost or comtribution of the nationalised industries within his responsibility in 1978-79.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The outturn financing requirements of all nationalised industries in 1978-79 were published in the "Government's Expenditure Plans 1980-81 to 1983-84", Cm. 7841, in March 1980. The net effect on the public expenditure totals of the requirements for British Shipbuilders, British Aerospace, British Steel Corporation, and the Post Office (including figures for Telecommunications and Girobank) was an addition of £845 million.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the net cost or contribution of those industries within his responsibility which are still nationalised or companies which were state owned in 1988, or the last available year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available outturn figures for contributions to the public expenditure total for nationalised industries and wholly Government-owned companies within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry were published in January 1989 in chapters 5 and 21 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" Cm. 605 and 621. The net effect in 1987-88 of British Shipbuilders, British Steel Corporation, Post Office and Girobank taken together was a reduction of £271 million.

European Patent Office

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what efforts he is making to ensure that patent protection obtainable from the European patent office by smaller firms and academic institutions in England and Wales is as comprehensive and effective as that available to other applicants in other parts of the world and particularly the United States of America.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that all applicants, including small firms and academic institutions, can obtain patent protection from the European patent office which is already as comprehensive and effective as that available in other parts of the world including the United States of America. Differences do however exist between the national patent laws of different countries and we are actively involved in international negotations to minimise them.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what contracts, including those relating to privatisations, the Government have awarded since June 1979 to accountancy firms held to be lacking the necessary professional conduct, efficiency and competence by the disciplinary committees of the accountancy profession.

Mr. Redwood: Information on Government contracts with accountancy firms is not collected centrally.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the firms criticised by the joint disciplinary scheme run by the accountancy bodies; and whether any firms or their successors criticised by the joint disciplinary scheme have subsequently supplied personnel for the joint disciplinary scheme committees hearing allegations of unprofessional conduct by other firms.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the annual reports of the joint disciplinary scheme, copies of which are in the Library. Membership of the scheme's committees is a matter for its executive committee.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many seats on the auditing practices committee have been held by individuals from accountancy firms sued by the Government for negligence, criticised by his Department's inspectors in their reports and criticised by the joint disciplinary scheme;

(2) whether any accountancy firms reprimanded by the joint disciplinary scheme have subsequently been allowed to have representatives on the accounting standards committee, the auditing practices committee or any of the working parties.

Mr. Redwood: As I explained in the replies I gave on 27 November at column *92-93* and 13 December at column *702* to questions by the hon. Member, membership of the auditing practices committee and the accounting standards committee is a matter for the consultative committee of Accountancy Bodies. Members of working parties are appointed by the relevant committees.

ECGD

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Ridley: Based on the findings of the Kemp review of future status options for ECGD businesses, that the Cardiff-based insurance services (covering exports on short-term credit) and the London-based project group (handling exports of projects for capital goods on medium-term credit) should be split and run as separate organisations, the Government's intention is that insurance services be converted into a company and that private capital should be introduced quickly thereafter. These changes are being made to enable ECGD to take advantage of the opportunities offered by 1992 and to meet the increased competition which will arise. They will also ensure that its intra-Community business is maintained. Equalising the legal and economic framework for credit insurance in Europe, with private sector capital, is a necessary condition for fostering United Kingdom trade within the Community.

The company will follow the normal practice of credit insurance companies operating in the commercial market in the use of reinsurance. The Government's aim is that this should be obtained from the private market. However, I recognise that in relation to certain of the political risks currently covered by insurance services there is at present insufficient private market capacity.

Thus, in order to maintain facilities for exporters, the Government are prepared to see a transitional period of up to three years from the date of the introduction of private capital during which a reinsurance arrangement will be in place between Her Majesty's Government and the company. During this period the company will work to complete adequate reinsurance arrangements with the private market with the aim of phasing out residual Government reinsurance.

When the new company is formed the intention is that staff who transfer to the company should do so on broadly comparable terms to those which they presently enjoy as Crown servants. ECGD staff will be asked whether they wish to remain within the Civil Service, or to transfer to the new company. ECGD will use its best endeavours to meet their wishes where these are consistent with the business needs of ECGD and the company.

These changes will require legisation at the earliest opportunity. It is the intention that the new company be established on 1 April 1991. Advisors will be appointed shortly to assist ECGD in carrying out necessary preparatory work.

Over the last three years, ECGD's insurance services have introduced major improvements to the range and quality of its services. It has developed a unique underwriting system and rapid credit limit service designed to meet the needs of its customers in the 1990s, particularly in the single European market. The changes I have outlined for the insurance services group are vital to enable it to meet the challenges which will be thrown up by the single European market and so ensure that we develop further what is a significant national asset for our exporters. I am confident that the changes I am proposing are the best way to secure jobs for the future.

In relation to ECGD's project group, the Government have decided that export credit and financing support should continue to be provided.

The ECGD's project support activities will remain within the Government, but the precise form of ECGD's organisation—whether it should remain a Department or acquire agency status—will be decided as soon as possible.

The Government are anxious to reduce the costs which have been associated with ECGD support for project exports in recent years. It will, therefore, continue to press hard internationally, for multilateral agreement aimed at eliminating subsidies which distort export credit and aid. In addition, to reduce the risk of losses in the future, radical new methods for managing ECGD's political risk portfolio will be introduced. Substantial premium increases for project business will be necessary, especially for business in the higher risk markets to ensure that ECGD premiums are better matched to risk. I believe that exporters will accept the need for this and will regard it as preferable to the withdrawal of facilities.

The changes I have outlined are essential if ECGD is to be able to maintain and improve the quality of support it currently provides to United Kingdom exporters. The overwhelming majority of the representations which have been made by interested outside parties have fully supported these changes. I commend them to the House.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his current projections on the expected job losses at the National Engineering Laboratory and the date by which those reductions in staffing will be achieved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The business plan for NEL and the resources it will need, is being prepared. Current projections are that the laboratory will require about 400 staff in total and the necessary staff reductions will take place during 1990.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he has received and appraised the projected business plan for the National Engineering Laboratory, East Kilbride; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he proposes to announce his intentions arising from the projected business plan on the future of the National Engineering Laboratory.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have not yet seen the business plan for the National Engineering Laboratory, but I will see it in due course. The contents of the plan will be commercially confidential and I do not intend to make an announcement about it.

Alcohol Duty

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much *(a)* excise duty and *(b)* import duty is levied on a one litre bottle of whisky containing 40 per cent. alcohol imported into the United Kingdom from Japan.

Mr. Redwood: The excise duty levied on a one litre bottle of whisky containing 40 per cent. alcohol imported into the United Kingdom from Japan is £6·31. The import duty is 14p.

Women's Employment Schemes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what submissions he has made to the European Commission, whether via normal interdepartmental channels or directly to the European Commission, to seek continuation of the present level of funding plus allowance for inflation for women's employment and workshop schemes; and what response has been received.

Mr. Redwood: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the same question by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Dispersal

109. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further plans he has for decentralising the Civil Service establishment from London to the regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ryder: As announced by right hon. Friend, the then Paymaster General, on 31 March 1988 (column *610-11*), the Government's policy for relocating Civil Service work does not involve targets set by the centre. Departments review the location of their work in accordance with central guidelines, and their Ministers announce their decisions. Since the beginning of 1988, plans to locate or relocate over 14,000 posts away from London and the south-east have been announced, and further announcements are expected in due course.

Civil Service (Privatisation)

110. **Mr. Harry Barnes** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure that in any future privatisation of parts of the Civil Service, staff will be given the option of transferring and remaining within the Civil Service.

Mr. Ryder: No. Cases differ, and need to be judged on their particular merits.

Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the increase in real disposable incomes as a result of the separate taxation of husbands and wives at current rates of income, taxation and inflation; and what proportion of the total is expected to accrue to those in the upper and lower quarters and tenths.

Mr. Lilley: The decrease in income tax liabilities in 1990-91 due to the introduction of independent taxation is provisionally estimated to be about £950 million. That would lead to an increase in real disposable income of less than half a per cent. Estimates of its distribution are not available in the form requested, but about a third of the benefit would be to individuals with incomes of less than £5,000 a year.

Those estimates make no allowance for possible behavioural effects. The effect of independent taxation on the composite rate of tax on bank and building society interest will be taken into account in the rate set for the year 1991-92.

Department of Transport (Expenditure)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out general Government expenditure by the Department of Transport for the years 1974-75 to 1983-84, in cash and real terms, consistent with the figures for 1984-85 to 1992-93 that are set out in tables 3 and 4 of the 1989 Autumn Statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tables 3 and 4 of the 1989 Autumn Statement public expenditure press notice set out figures for central Government's own expenditure, by Department. Figures for central Government's own expenditure by the Department of Transport in the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 consistent with those given in the 1989 Autumn Statement are as follows:

£ billion

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Cash figures	0·5	0·6	0·7	0·9	1·1	1·0
Real terms figures (1988-89 prices)	1·0	1·1	1·2	1·3	1·4	1·3

Corresponding figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on the taxation of benefits to employees accruing from the provision of workplace nurseries and creches.

Mr. Major: Employees pay income tax on their earnings whether received in cash or in kind. A subsidised place in a workplace nursery or creche is a benefit in kind and any subsidy is a proper subject for tax. The costs to the employer of subsidising workplace nurseries—or otherwise financing childcare for employees—is allowable against corporation tax.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will now review the policies of taxation in relation to benefits to employees from the provision of workplace nurseries and other child care facilities by employers.

Mr. Major: I refer my right hon. Friend to the reply that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on 3 November at column *361*.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the components of the trade weighted index for pound sterling's exchange value; and what precentage of the weighting is accounted for by currencies linked to the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the "Economic Progress Report" for December 1988, published by her Majesty's Treasury, copies of which have been placed in the Library. Of those countries represented in the index, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, Spain and Denmark participate in the exchange rate mechanism.

Civil Service

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants are in post at the current time; what the figure was 10 years ago; what was the average pay of a civil servant in 1979 and what it is at the present time; what are the figures in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: There were 567,073 civil servants in post on 1 July 1989 compared with 732,275 on 1 April 1979. The average pay of a civil servant, taken as the pay of an administrative officer—the grade with by far the largest number of staff in post—at the top of the scale was £3,627 in April 1979 and £8,305 in October 1989; that represents an increase of 129 per cent. or, after adjusting for inflation, a real increase of 14 per cent.

Capital Account

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the financing of the capital account is made up of *(a)* the sale of United Kingdom businesses to organisations based abroad and *(b)* other categories, for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The value of acquisitions by overseas companies in 1988 financed from overseas shown in "British Business" (19 September 1989, page 20, table 5), is a substantial part of the figures of direct investment by overseas residents within the total capital transactions account shown in table 8.1 of the "UK Balance of Payments", 1989 edition (the CSO Pink Book). Copies of those publications are in the Library.

Medical Insurance

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to hasten the implementation of the provision of the Finance Act to introduce a tax allowance to help elderly subscribers to medical insurance; and what representations he has received from insurance companies expressing concern about their ability to meet customers' demands for tax relief to take effect from 6 April 1990.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue has been consulting the private medical insurers on draft regulations to ensure a smooth introduction of the relief. I understand that all the major insurers are planning to offer contracts by 6 April 1990 that will meet the requirements for the relief.

Departmental Funding

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to limit *(a)* the total sum or *(b)* the proportion of the sums originally voted which may be carried forward by a Deaprtment from one financial year to another as a result of (i) capital or (ii) running costs underspends; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The end-year flexibility scheme for central Government capital expenditure enables Departments to carry forward underspends of up to 5 per cent. of their eligible provision plus any carryover entitlement from the previous year not taken up in a Supplementary Estimate, or £2 million—whichever is the greater. The end-year flexibility scheme for running costs enables qualifying Departments to carry forward underspends of up to 0·5 per cent. of their eligible running costs provision or £50,000—whichever is the greater.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are taking to acquire additional information technology skills from the private sector.

Mr. Ryder: Following a procurement exercise involving 12 potential suppliers and a very thorough evaluation of proposals, HM Customs and Excise has, with the assistance of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, selected Logica Communications and Electronic Systems Limited, to provide staff to assist with the maintenance and enhancement of existing IT systems and the development of new projects, and BIS Applied Systems Limited, to assist in the area of project management and control.

The first project to benefit from those arrangements will be VAT II, which has been set up to develop a replacement for the existing VAT system initially implemented in 1973.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the non-publication of forecasts of overseas sector capital flows has on the process of making projections, in the Autumn Statement or elsewhere, of the future exchange rate.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* Although forecasts of overseas capital flows are not published, the Treasury does look carefully at the capital account as part of the detailed figuring underlying the published forecast.

Endangered Species

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the implications for the enforcement of regulations concerning the wildlife trade and the implementation of CITES of the effect on specialist skills, including intelligence gathering and criminal identification, resulting from the proposed move of the Customs and Excise endangered species branch from London to Southend.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* There is no reason to suppose that the proposed relocation from London to Southend of the small group of Customs and Excise headquarters staff dealing with import and export controls on endangered species will have any significant effect on the level of enforcement.

British Aerospace

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the exchange of letters with British Aerospace was made available by the Inland Revenue to Touche Ross when it acted for the National Audit Office.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* The National Audit Office did not ask the Inland Revenue to make available any papers.

Ivory

35. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to destroy publicly all ivory stocks seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* No. I do not think that it would be sensible to commit Customs to a policy of invariably destroying, whether in public or not, all ivory seized by it as illegally imported. I shall, however, ensure that it continues to dispose of all such goods in a manner acceptable to me and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has overall responsibility for endangered species policy in the United Kingdom. Certainly, none will be disposed of in a way that offends current conservation principles.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Hood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will name each of the chairmen of the nationalised industries; and if he will give details of salaries and other remunerations applicable to each.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[pursuant to his reply 7 December 1989, columns 311-12]:* I regret that there were errors in the table of my earlier reply. The correct information requested is set out in the following table.

Chairman	*Nationalised Industry*	*Salary*[1] £
Sir Robert Haslam	British Coal	160,000
Sir Robert Reid	British Railways Board	90,950
Mr. C. Campbell	British Shipbuilders	21,675
Mr. D. Ingman	British Waterways Board	33,700
Mr. C. Tugendhat	Civil Aviation Authority	60,000
Sir Philip Jones	Electricity Council	94,380
Lord Marshall	Central Electricity Generating Board	111,000
Mr. J. C. Smith	Eastern Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. F. Harris	East Midlands Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. J. Wilson	London Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. B. H. Weston	Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. B. S. Townsend	Midlands Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. D. Morris	North Eastern Electricity Board	80,000
Mr. K. Harvey	North Western Electricity Board	49,005
Mr. G. A. Squair	South Eastern Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. D. A. Ross	Southern Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. W. Evans	South Wales Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. A. W. Nicol	South Western Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. J. Porteous	Yorkshire Electricity Board	57,390
Mr. W. Newton	London Regional Transport	80,000
Mr. M. Joughin	North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board	39,750
Sir Bryan Nicholson	Post Office	102,000
Mr. I. S. Irwin	Scottish Transport Group	59,825
Mr. D. J. Miller	South of Scotland Electricity Board	66,900
Mr. B. Henderson	Anglian Water Plc[2]	43,860
Sir Michael Straker	Northumbrian Water Group Plc[2]	30,638
Mr. W. Grove	North West Water Group Plc[2]	61,275
Mr. J. Bellak	Severn Trent Plc[2]	49,020
Mr. W. Courtney	Southern Water Plc[2]	43,860
Mr. K. Court	South West Water Plc[2]	51,063
Mr. R. Watts	Thames Water Plc[2]	49,020
Mr. J. Jones	Welsh Water Plc[2]	43,860
Mr. W. Hood	Wessex Water Plc[2]	40,850
Mr. G. Jones	Yorkshire Water Plc[2]	54,825

[1] Actual salaries. Some Chairmen are part-time.

[2] The 10 Water Authorities were vested as Companies Act companies owned by Government on 1 September, and privatised on 12 December.

Chairmen are also eligible for performance bonus schemes with a maximum limit of 25 per cent. of salary.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Microwave Ovens

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to encourage retailers to provide an inquiry and advisory service to purchasers of microwave ovens in the light of his Department's recent report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have encouraged the Retail Consortium to ensure that its members stock the updated instructions for the safe use of domestic microwave ovens issued by oven manufacturers.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has recorded any incidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle born since animal proteins were withdrawn from cattle rations.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cattle his Ministry is currently monitoring to assess the possible vertical transmission of bovine spongiform encephalopathy; what the parameters are of this research; and if he will make a statement on progress of the research to date.

Mr. Maclean: Three hundred and thirty progeny of BSE-affected dams and the same number of control animals are being monitored on three of the Ministry's experimental husbandry farms. The study is designed to determine whether maternal transmission occurs either in utero and/or in the immediate period after birth and, if so, at what incidence. The animals will be maintained on experimental husbandry farms until seven years of age unless death or the need to cull intervenes. The brains of all animals will be examined histopathologically and all carcases will be destroyed. Because of the long incubation period for this disease, results will not be forthcoming for some time.

Casualty Animals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to encourage the development of on-farm slaughter facilities for casualty animals.

Mr. Maclean: The legislation already permits on-farm slaughter of casualty animals. It is an offence to transport casualties if by reason of their unfitness it will cause them unnecessary suffering.

Dairy Herd

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to reduce the incidence of campylobacter and leptospira infection in the national dairy herd.

Mr. Maclean: There are no statutory or voluntary measures relating to campylobacter in cattle. However, the veterinary investigation service will, on request, provide assistance in diagnosis.

A chargeable voluntary component in the cattle health scheme provides herds infected with leptospira hardjo with a programme to control or eliminate infection.

Antibiotics

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the use of quinolone antibiotics as prophylactics.

Mr. Maclean: Products containing quinolone are not licensed in the United Kingdom for prophylactic purposes.

Animals and Birds (Imports)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks on the import of live animals and birds will be available after 1992.

Mr. Maclean: It is intended that those from non-EC countries will be imported only via approved frontier inspection posts, for both animal health and welfare purposes. The European Commission has yet to make any proposals to the Council for animal health controls on intra-Community trade in live animals and birds after 1992. The Commission has submitted proposals on the protection of animals during transport but negotiations on these has yet to begin.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what figures are easily available regarding the importation of both pet birds and captive birds for 1988; and how many birds in each category *(a)* were dead on arrival and *(b)* died in quarantine.

Mr. Maclean: Figures have been compiled for the numbers of commercially imported birds arriving at approved quarantine premises during 1988. These will be available very shortly and will include mortalities both on arrival and during the statutory quarantine period.

Voluntary Organisations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which voluntary organisations received grants from his Department for each year since 1986; and for what purposes these were given.

Mr. Gummer: Since 1986 the following voluntary organisations have received grants from my Department for the purposes shown:

(i) *National Proficiency Tests Council*—to enable the Council to devise, promote and maintain standards of proficiency tests in agriculture and horticulture in England and Wales.

(ii) *The National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs*—to help towards the cost of the Federation's activities in agricultural education.

(iii) *Farming and Wildlife Trust*—to make provision for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the countryside.

(iv) *Society for the Responsible Use of Resources in Agriculture and on the Land (RURAL)*—to promote exchanges of views through the organisation of conferences in all aspects of rural land use and the use of resources in agriculture.

(v) *The Countryside Commission for "Operation Silvanus"*—to promote the better management of existing woodlands on farms.

(vi) *British Trout Association*—to promote exports of United Kingdom farmed trout products to targeted third countries.

Lead-contaminated Feed

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to assist livestock producers whose cattle have been cleared following tests for lead-contaminated feed but are unable to obtain slaughtering facilities for their fat cattle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: In all our discussions with the industry on this incident, we have repeatedly assured all concerned that meat derived from animals cleared for slaughter conforms to the rigorous standards laid down by the Department of Health and is perfectly fit for human consumption.

We are urgently carrying out scientific work to see whether the restrictions currently attaching to the slaughter of such animals can be eased without risk to public health. I shall ease the restrictions just as soon as it is shown to be safe to do so.

Sellafield

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will amend the statutory environmental monitoring programme of the Sellafield reprocessing plant as a condition of its authorisation, to require British Nuclear Fuels Limited to take and analyse samples and carry out external exposure rate measurements on the four-mile intertidal stretch of the River Esk in Cumbria and publish the results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: BNFL's statutory environmental monitoring programme already includes gamma dose rate measurements at Hall Waberthwaite in the intertidal stretch of the Esk. It also includes ground level river bank monitoring in the area. The results are submitted to the Ministry and to the Department of the Environment and BNFL publishes an annual report. The Ministry is not aware of any factors which would justify amendment of the programme in this area. However, the programe is continually under review.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he has assessed the public radiation exposure of people who live close to the four-mile intertidal stretch of the River Esk in Cumbria; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will undertake a detailed radiological assessment of public exposure to radioactivity in the four-mile intertidal stretch of the River Esk in Cumbria, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The River Esk has been monitored closely for more than 20 years. The Ministry carefully studies the time spent by people close to the Esk and we have found that the length of time people spend regularly there is very small. We have recently completed a new survey and the report on that work is being prepared for publication.

Our routine monitoring includes a number of locations where regular measurements of external dose rates are carried out. These are locations which are representative of the highest levels of external exposure which are likely to result from public occupancy of intertidal areas. Our

report for 1988 records measurements at 11 locations in the Ravenglass estuary (which includes the Esk) and most locations were monitored monthly. For the Esk six locations were monitored. Detailed statistics of this monitoring including estimates of public radiation exposures at these locations are published annually.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the dates when his Ministry has reassessed habit surveys of members of the public around the Sellafield reprocessing plant in the past 10 years.

Mr. Curry: Habit surveys in respect of discharges from Sellafield have been carried out in each of the last 10 years except for 1980.

Agricultural Training

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the review of agricultural training announced by his predecessor on 20 March is now complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: When my predecessor and his fellow Agriculture Ministers appointed Mr. John E. Smith as chairman of the agricultural training board in March this year and at the same time asked him to undertake a review of agricultural training, the scale and complexity of his task was widely realised. That Mr. Smith has completed this review within the very tight time scale allowed is a real reflection of the commitment with which he has approached the job.

On behalf of my fellow Agriculture Ministers, I should like to pay tribute to Mr. Smith for the expeditious and thorough way in which he has conducted his review, for the breadth of the consultations that he has undertaken in such a short space of time and, above all, for the clarity and incisiveness of his report and of his recommendations. I am arranging for the report to be published straight away and for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

In his terms of reference Mr. Smith was called on to report to Agriculture Ministers and, on their behalf, I have informed Mr. Smith that he can go ahead with the relocation of the board's headquarters from West Wickham in Kent to the national agricultural centre at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire and put in hand the new countrywide structures based on 14 local agricultural training boards in England and Scottish and Welsh training boards. Through this restructuring the Government will be looking for a greater contribution from the industry to the board's costs and I therefore welcome Mr. Smith's own recognition of the industry's responsibilities in this respect.

As other recommendations in the report touch on interests of other colleagues and have longer-term implications, the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland and I will, in conjunction with the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, for Employment and for the Environment, and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, be giving detailed consideration to those proposals.

Plant Breeding Institute

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, in the past 10 years, he or his predecessors, either by direction or informally, secured changes in the accounting conventions followed by the Plant Breeding Institute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The Plant Breeding Institute was a registered charity and a grant-aided institute of the Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC). In 1987 its plant breeding assets were sold, and the remainder of the institute then became part of the AFRC Institute of Plant Science Research (IPSR), also a registered charity. The council's accounting convention follows Treasury rules for Government accounting, revised from time to time, which are in the public domain. The IPSR charity now finances its activities from the proceeds of the 1987 sale of assets. Although it no longer receives grant-in-aid from the AFRC, its activities are managed in line with AFRC's financial plans by virture of a memorandum of understanding established between the AFRC and the IPSR.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Repairs

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the amount of money that is needed to fully repair all the schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Judgments about what constitutes "full repair" vary. The 1987 report of the DES survey of school buildings estimated that the cost of implementing the main structural requirements related to the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 and the other physical requirements in primary and secondary schools in England was about £1·1 billion (although this estimate is subject to sampling error). Since then substantial sums, both capital and current, have been, and continue to be, devoted to improving school premises. The repair of schools in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Vocational Degrees

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made towards increasing vocational degree places at universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Jackson: There is no standard definition of the term "vocational" as applied to degree courses. Many courses have at least some vocational element. Between 1979 and 1987 (the latest year for which figures are available) the number of degrees awarded annually by universities and the Council for National Academic Awards increased by about a quarter, from 101,600 to 127,100. I expect the proportion with a vocational element to have followed broadly the same trend.

Student Unions

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the Government grant allocations to student unions for universities and polytechnics by polytechnic and university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: It is for universities and polytechnics to determine the level of their grants to their student unions. The Government do not make specific allocations for this purpose.

Hyperkinesis

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information and guidelines his Department provides to local education authorities to ensure that head teachers are fully aware of the hyperkinesis condition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No guidance has been issued to local education authorities about hyperkinesis.

Further Education (Salaries)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give figures for the average salaries of further education college lecturers for each of the last 10 years, expressing each annual increase in percentage terms *(a)* in relation to the rise in the retail price index and *(b)* in relation to the rise in average non-manual earnings; and how many further education college lecturers have resigned in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: The average salaries of further education college lecturers on 31 March of each of the last 10 years are given in the table, together with the annual increases in each year relative to the retail prices index and average non-manual earnings.

Average salaries of full-time lecturers[1] in colleges of further education (excluding PCFC institutions), England and Wales

	Average Salary	Annual Percentage Increase	
		Relative to the RPI	Relative to average non-manual earnings
Year ending 31 March	£	Per cent.	Per cent.
1979	6,207	—	—
1980	7,461	9·2	7·6
1981	9,366	3·1	0·2
1982	10,111	−3·6	−6·6
1983	10,681	−3·4	−3·2
1984	11,229	1·1	−3·7
1985	1,856	0·4	−2·4
1986	12,744	0·5	0·3
1987	13,572	3·3	−2·1

[1] Includes all academic staff on grades up to and including Principal.

Actual average salaries for 31 March 1988 and 1989 are not yet available. Lecturers' pay was increased on a staged basis over the period April 1987 to April 1989. The percentage increases in each of the two years relative to the RPI and average non-manual earnings are as follows:

Year ending 31 March	Actual	Relative to the RPI	Relative to average non-manual earnings
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
1987-88	10·3	6·1	1·9
1988-89	6·0	0·0	−4·3

The level of salary increase to be awarded to lecturers in 1989-90 has not yet been settled.

The Department does not collect information specifically on resignations. The table sets out the numbers, in percentage terms, of lecturers leaving full-time service in each of the last ten years.

Annual percentage of lecturers in colleges of further education (excluding PCFC institutions) leaving full-time service in the maintained further or higher education sector in England and Wales

Year ending 31 March	Further education colleges excluding PCFC institutions
	Per cent.
1979	6·0
1980	5·8
1981	5·6
1982	5·4
1983	5·5
1984	6·0
1985	6·8
1986	6·5
1987	7·0

Note: The figures for 1979-85 include lecturers at non polytechnic institutions in the PCFC sector.

These figures include retirements and movement from full-time to part-time service. In a survey by the employers' organisation, LACSAB, of turnover and wastage in further education in the academic year 1987-88, losses to employment outside the sector amounted to 2·4 per cent. of employment.

Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide estimates of the costs and savings, as per annex E of the White Paper, in respect of *(a)* net change in grant, *(b)* net change in benefits, *(c)* gross loan outlay, *(d)* loan repayments and *(e)* public sector borrowing requirement effect for each of the years from 1990 to 2027, as in annex E of Cmd. 520, on the basis that a 30 per cent. age participation rate is attained by 2015, showing the effects of (i) 80 per cent. take-up, (ii) 90 per cent. take-up and (iii) 100 per cent. take-up.

Mr. Jackson: The Department does not currently project student numbers in higher education beyond the turn of the century.

The following tables show annex E revised to take account of the increase in student numbers since Cm. 520 was published. The tables show the effect of take-up rates of 80 and 100 per cent., and of inflation at 3, 5 and 8 per cent.

Table (i)
Top-up loans costings
Revised student number projections
Costs and saving—3 per cent. inflation—80 per cent. take-up
United Kingdom *(£ million, 1990 prices)*

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
1990	0	−68	178	0	110
1991	−24	−69	214	2	118
1992	−46	−70	243	10	118
1993	−66	−69	269	23	110
1994	−86	−69	294	41	96
1995	−105	−69	318	68	77
1996	−126	−69	347	93	59
1997	−149	−72	384	115	48
1998	−174	−75	426	134	42
1999	−199	−77	464	150	39
2000	−221	−78	497	163	35
2001	−240	−78	522	181	22

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
2002	−258	−78	545	206	3
2003	−275	−78	568	225	−11
2004	−292	−78	591	240	−19
2005	−309	−78	613	251	−26
2006	−325	−78	634	260	−29
2007	−340	−78	654	264	−29
2008	−358	−78	669	278	−45
2009	−358	−78	669	303	−70
2010	−358	−78	669	333	−100
2011	−358	−78	669	358	−125
2012	−358	−78	669	379	−146
2013	−358	−78	669	401	−168
2014	−358	−78	669	420	−187
2015	−358	−78	669	436	−203
2016	−358	−78	669	449	−216
2017	−358	−78	669	461	−227
2018	−358	−78	669	470	−237
2019	−358	−78	669	477	−244
2020	−358	−78	669	484	−251
2021	−358	−78	669	492	−258
2022	−358	−78	669	499	−266
2023	−358	−78	669	503	−270
2024	−358	−78	669	505	−272
2025	−358	−78	669	507	−274
2026	−358	−78	669	509	−275
2027	−358	−78	669	510	−276

Table (ii)
Top-Up loans costings
Revised student number projections
Costs and saving 3 per cent. inflation 100 per cent. take-up
United Kingdom *(£ million, 1990 prices)*

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
1990	0	−68	222	0	155
1991	−24	−69	267	3	170
1992	−46	−70	304	12	176
1993	−66	−69	336	29	172
1994	−86	−69	367	53	159
1995	−105	−69	398	85	139
1996	−126	−69	434	116	123
1997	−149	−72	480	144	115
1998	−174	−75	532	168	115
1999	−199	−77	581	187	117
2000	−221	−78	621	204	118
2001	−240	−78	652	226	108
2002	−258	−78	682	257	88
2003	−275	−78	711	282	75
2004	−292	−78	739	299	68
2005	−309	−78	766	314	65
2006	−325	−78	792	325	64
2007	−340	−78	818	331	69
2008	−358	−78	836	347	53
2009	−358	−78	836	379	21
2010	−358	−78	836	416	−16
2011	−358	−78	836	448	−48
2012	−358	−78	836	474	−73
2013	−358	−78	836	501	−101
2014	−358	−78	836	525	−124
2015	−358	−78	836	545	−144
2016	−358	−78	836	561	−161
2017	−358	−78	836	576	−175
2018	−358	−78	836	588	−187
2019	−358	−78	836	596	−196
2020	−358	−78	836	605	−205
2021	−358	−78	836	615	−214
2022	−358	−78	836	623	−223
2023	−358	−78	836	629	−229
2024	−358	−78	836	632	−231
2025	−358	−78	836	634	−233
2026	−358	−78	836	636	−235
2027	−358	−78	836	637	−237

Table (iii)
Top-Up loans costings
Revised student number projections
Costs and saving 5 per cent. inflation 80 per cent. take-up
United Kingdom *(£ million, 1990 prices)*

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
1990	0	−68	178	0	110
1991	−24	−69	214	2	118
1992	−60	−70	261	10	122
1993	−93	−69	304	23	119
1994	−124	−69	343	44	107
1995	−153	−69	381	71	89
1996	−184	−69	424	99	72
1997	−218	−72	475	125	61
1998	−256	−75	533	149	54
1999	−291	−77	586	170	48
2000	−323	−78	631	189	41
2001	−348	−78	664	214	25
2002	−359	−78	669	246	−14
2003	−359	−78	669	273	−41
2004	−359	−78	669	293	−61
2005	−359	−78	669	308	−76
2006	−359	−78	669	318	−86
2007	−359	−78	669	322	−90
2008	−359	−78	669	334	−102
2009	−359	−78	669	360	−128
2010	−359	−78	669	390	−158
2011	−359	−78	669	413	−181
2012	−359	−78	669	429	−197
2013	−359	−78	669	446	−214
2014	−359	−78	669	459	−227
2015	−359	−78	669	469	−237
2016	−359	−78	669	476	−244
2017	−359	−78	669	483	−251
2018	−359	−78	669	488	−256
2019	−359	−78	669	491	−259
2020	−359	−78	669	496	−264
2021	−359	−78	669	502	−270
2022	−359	−78	669	508	−276
2023	−359	−78	669	511	−279
2024	−359	−78	669	512	−280
2025	−359	−78	669	512	−280
2026	−359	−78	669	512	−280
2027	−359	−78	669	512	−280

Table (iv)
Top-Up loans costings
Revised student number projections
Costs and saving 5 per cent. inflation 100 per cent. take-up
United Kingdom *(£ million, 1990 prices)*

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
1990	0	−66	222	0	155
1991	−24	−69	267	3	170
1992	−60	−70	327	12	185
1993	−93	−69	379	29	189
1994	−124	−69	429	55	182
1995	−153	−69	477	89	167
1996	−184	−69	530	124	153
1997	−218	−72	594	156	148
1998	−256	−75	666	186	150
1999	−291	−77	733	212	152
2000	−323	−78	783	236	152
2001	−348	−78	831	267	137
2002	−359	−78	836	308	91
2003	−359	−78	836	341	58
2004	−359	−78	836	366	33
2005	−359	−78	836	385	14
2006	−359	−78	836	399	1
2007	−359	−78	836	402	−3
2008	−359	−78	836	419	−19
2009	−359	−78	836	450	−51
2010	−359	−78	836	487	−88
2011	−359	−78	836	516	−117

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
2012	−359	−78	836	537	−137
2013	−359	−78	836	558	−159
2014	−359	−78	836	574	−175
2015	−359	−78	836	586	−187
2016	−359	−78	836	595	−196
2017	−359	−78	836	604	−205
2018	−359	−78	836	610	−211
2019	−359	−78	836	614	−215
2020	−359	−78	836	619	−220
2021	−359	−78	836	627	−228
2022	−359	−78	836	635	−235
2023	−359	−78	836	639	−240
2024	−359	−78	836	639	−240
2025	−359	−78	836	640	−241
2026	−359	−78	836	640	−241
2027	−359	−78	836	640	−241

Table (v)
Top-Up loans costings
Revised student number projections
Costs and saving 8 per cent. inflation 80 per cent. take-up
United Kingdom *(£ million, 1990 prices)*

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
1990	0	−68	178	0	110
1991	−24	−69	214	2	118
1992	−79	−70	287	10	129
1993	−129	−69	352	23	130
1994	−175	−69	411	45	122
1995	−217	−69	466	75	105
1996	−260	−69	525	107	88
1997	−306	−72	592	139	75
1998	−343	−75	639	169	53
1999	−353	−77	659	196	32
2000	−359	−78	669	222	10
2001	−359	−78	669	252	−20
2002	−359	−78	669	291	−88
2003	−359	−78	669	320	−88
2004	−359	−78	669	339	−107
2005	−359	−78	669	350	−119
2006	−359	−78	669	355	−123
2007	−359	−78	669	351	−119
2008	−359	−78	669	357	−125
2009	−359	−78	669	379	−148
2010	−359	−78	669	406	−175
2011	−359	−78	669	426	−195
2012	−359	−78	669	439	−208
2013	−359	−78	669	454	−223
2014	−359	−78	669	466	−234
2015	−359	−78	669	474	−243
2016	−359	−78	669	481	−249
2017	−359	−78	669	487	−255
2018	−359	−78	669	491	−259
2019	−359	−78	669	493	−261
2020	−359	−78	669	497	−265
2021	−359	−78	669	503	−271
2022	−359	−78	669	509	−277
2023	−359	−78	669	512	−280
2024	−359	−78	669	512	−280
2025	−359	−78	669	512	−280
2026	−359	−78	669	512	−280
2027	−359	−78	669	512	−280

Table (vi)
Top-Up loans costings
Revised student number projections
Costs and saving 8 per cent. inflation 100 per cent. take-up
United Kingdom *(£ million, 1990 prices)*

Year	Change in grant	Change in benefits	Loan outlay	Loan repay-ments	PSBR effect
1990	0	−68	222	0	155
1991	−24	−69	267	3	170
1992	−79	−70	359	12	198
1993	−129	−69	440	29	212
1994	−175	−69	513	57	213
1995	−217	−69	582	94	203
1996	−260	−69	656	134	192
1997	−306	−72	740	173	189
1998	−343	−75	798	211	170
1999	−353	−77	823	245	147
2000	−359	−78	836	277	122
2001	−359	−78	836	315	84
2002	−359	−78	836	363	36
2003	−359	−78	836	400	−1
2004	−359	−78	836	423	−24
2005	−359	−78	836	438	−39
2006	−359	−78	836	443	−44
2007	−359	−78	836	438	−39
2008	−359	−78	836	447	−47
2009	−359	−78	836	474	−75
2010	−359	−78	836	508	−109
2011	−359	−78	836	533	−134
2012	−359	−78	836	549	−150
2013	−359	−78	836	568	−169
2014	−359	−78	836	582	−183
2015	−359	−78	836	593	−194
2016	−359	−78	836	601	−202
2017	−359	−78	836	608	−209
2018	−359	−78	836	613	−214
2019	−359	−78	836	616	−217
2020	−359	−78	836	621	−222
2021	−359	−78	836	629	−229
2022	−359	−78	836	636	−237
2023	−359	−78	836	640	−241
2024	−359	−78	836	640	−241
2025	−359	−78	836	640	−241
2026	−359	−78	836	640	−241
2027	−359	−78	836	640	−241

Student Maintenance Award

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what level of net student maintenance award was paid to mature students aged 50 years and over in each year since 1979-80; and what is to be the estimated level for each year up to 2007-08, at 1988-89 prices.

Mr. Jackson: Mandatory award-holders aged 50 years or over qualify for the main rates of grant appropriate to the location in which they study and may also be eligible for supplementary allowances paid to older students and students with dependants. Data on average net awards paid to this category of student are not collected separately. Nor are the projections for grant levels following the introduction of the top-up loan scheme disaggregated for this category.

Higher Education (Student Numbers)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the numbers of students in higher education for each year from 1990 to 2017 if steady progress to the attainment of 30 per cent. age participation were maintained between 1990 and 2015.

Mr. Jackson: Our latest projection indicates full-time equivalent student numbers rising from about 760,000 in 1988 to about 820,000 in 1992. Numbers are then expected to level off until 1995 as a result of the substantial decline in the relevant age group before rising again to about 890,000 by the end of the century. These totals projected are formed in part by age participation indices for young home initial entrants to higher education of 15, 19 and 23 per cent. for 1988, 1992 and 2000 respectively. Student numbers in higher education have not been projected beyond the turn of the century.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements for repayment of loans under the proposed student loan scheme are to apply in the case of graduates no longer resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jackson: Graduates living overseas will enjoy the same terms as those resident in the United Kingdom. Arrangements will be made for the recovery of outstanding payments from such students. It will be in the interests of all borrowers to repay their loans.

Disabled Students

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will consult disability organisations on the review of discretionary payments to disabled students.

Mr. Jackson: Yes. In addition to my meetings with the all-party disablement group on 28 November and with a group of Members of this House on 9 November, meetings have been arranged between officials of the Department of Education and Science and representative groups.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department monitors the administration of the disabled students allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The administration of the disabled students allowance, within the terms of the mandatory awards regulations, is a matter for local education authorities in pursuance of their duty to make awards. In monitoring authorities' spending on mandatory awards, the Department collects annually figures for the total assessments for the allowance made by each authority and the number of students for whom these are made. In its monitoring of the operation of the proposed student loan system the Government will pay particular attention to the position of disabled students.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether students with disabilities and terminal illnesses will be guaranteed a loan under his proposals for top-up loans for students.

Mr. Jackson: Yes. All students on a relevant course who meet the ordinary residence requirements will have access to the additional resources without regard to other personal circumstances.

Harrow Clinical Research Centre

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he intends to take regarding the proposed closure of the Harrow clinical research centre; what discussions his Department has had with the Medical Research Council concerning the proposed closure; what representations he has had concerning the proposed closure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: In September my right hon. Friend received advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the Medical Research Council's clinical research initiative. The board recommended that the resources now invested in the clinical research centre should be redeployed with phased developments at a number of other centres. This proposal requires more detailed study and my right hon. Friend is expecting to receive further advice from the advisory board in the spring. The Department and the Health Department are to be kept informed of the progress of this work, particularly as regards capital costs, the redeployment of resources and the implications for NHS provision.

School Buildings

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many temporary classrooms there are in schools in *(a)* Somerset, *(b)* Devon, *(c)* Dorset and *(d)* Wiltshire;

(2) what proportion of all primary and secondary schools were built before 1903 in *(a)* Somerset, *(b)* Devon, *(c)* Dorset and *(d)* Wiltshire; and what is the average in England.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is not collected by the Department.

Governing Bodies

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has agreed revised instruments of government for further education and higher education colleges under local education authority control, where the proposed size of the governing body in each college meets the maximum permitted by section 152 (1) of the Education Reform Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: To date, my right hon. Friend has approved 228 instruments of government proposed by local education authorities under section 151 of the Education Reform Act. The governing bodies provided for by these instruments range in size up to 23 members.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those further education and higher education colleges, together with their local education authorities, which originally and initially submitted revised instruments of government in accord with the Education Reform Act 1988 and where the proposed size of the governing body of each college was in excess of 20; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: This information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Brighton City Technology College

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will detail the annual revenue allocations to the Brighton city technology college between 1989-90 and 1995-96 and itemise the headings under which expenditure can and will be made;

(2) if he will give the details of the annual allocation for books and equipment for Brighton city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: Recurrent grant will be paid from the date of opening of the Brighton city technology college and will be comparable to spending on maintained schools in similar areas. Recurrent grant will cover all the school's normal running costs, including books and equipment.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the teacher-pupil ratio established for Brighton city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: The teacher-pupil ratio in city technology colleges will be comparable to the ratio in maintained schools in similar areas. As yet, no firm teacher-pupil ratio has been determined for the Brighton city technology college.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the proposed uses of the £2·5 million capital sum allocated to Brighton city technology college for 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will itemise future capital allocation to the school until 1995-96.

Mrs. Rumbold: To date the only capital payments for the establishment of the Brighton city technology college have been incurred on the purchase of the Woodingdean site. A detailed feasibility study is currently being undertaken which will give a clearer idea as to the capital requirements of the college.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide details of the anticipated regime of inspections, auditor assessment and value for money scrutinies to verify the proper expenditure of public funds on Brighton's city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: The accounts of the Brighton City Technology College Trust will be fully audited as a condition of the funding agreement which my right hon. Friend intends to sign with the sponsors of the college. The agreement will define the terms under which grant will be made.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide details of the likely annual expenditure by Brighton city technology college on new buildings, building repairs and building maintenance between 1989 and 1995-96.

Mrs. Rumbold: A detailed feasibility study is currently being carried out on the establishment of the Brighton city technology college. The study will give a clearer idea on expenditure needs and cashflow requirements.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what criteria expenditure of public funds on Brighton city technology college was assessed as a higher priority than an increase to East Sussex county council education allocation for capital spending on new buildings, classroom replacement, repairs and maintenance and new equipment.

Mrs. Rumbold: The CTC programme dos not compete for funds with LEA capital allocations. It is funded from resources that would not otherwise be available to education. It is an investment we are prepared to make because the best practice developed at CTCs will permeate the whole education service. The programme has also generated an unprecedented response from industry; already over £43 million has been given.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps have been taken by his Department to ensure that *(a)* Greenleaf Planters Ltd., *(b)* South Weald Properties Ltd. and *(c)* other private sector investors in the Brighton city technology college will be able to meet the percentage of the private sector investment that the Government currently expect them to find.

Mrs. Rumbold: As a prelude to the funding agreement I intend to sign with all principal sponsors of city technology colleges, there has been an exchange of letters with the sponsors of the Brighton CTC setting out their commitments and the conditions under which their sponsorship has been accepted.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the dates and locations of meetings between his departmental officials, representatives of the Michael Faraday Trust, Brighton Steiner school and East Sussex county council officials.

Mrs. Rumbold: There has been no single meeting including all the parties listed by the hon. Member. However, the chairman of the CTC Trust and representatives of the sponsors for the Brighton CTC met elected members and officials of East Sussex county council in July in London. In addition officials of my Department have had a number of routine meetings with representatives of the sponsors and the Michael Faraday Trust, in London and Brighton.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when officials from his Department first made contact with the Michael Faraday Trust and representatives of the Brighton Steiner school to discuss locating a city technology college in Woodingdean, Brighton.

Mrs. Rumbold: The first meeting of officials and sponsors wishing to establish a city technology college in Brighton was held on 19 May. Since then, the sponsors have set up the Michael Faraday Trust.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when sanction was first given and by whom for the authorisation of public expenditure commitments for the setting up of the Brighton city technology college.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Education and Science authorised negotiations to begin on the setting up of the Brighton CTC in May this year.

Craft and Design

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if it is his intention to bring craft and design education into the curriculum for Scottish schools; and whether he will draw up plans to ensure that design and technical subjects are part of the curriculum by 1992.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply.

Craft and design technical subjects already feature in the curriculum of Scottish schools. Courses are available leading to awards at the ordinary, standard and higher grades of the Scottish Certificate of Education. A review of the primary and early secondary curriculum is currently under way to identify and give guidance on good practice. Craft and design and technical subjects will be covered in this review.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Vietnam

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about non-Government organisations which are providing development assistance to Vietnam, and the amounts of assistance in each case.

Mrs. Chalker: A number of British NGOs are active in Vietnam. They are independent agencies and receive no Government funding for their programmes there. Consequently, the Government do not maintain records of their activities in Vietnam. The agencies would no doubt be willing to make this information available to the hon. Member.

Ethiopia

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further plans he has to facilitate transportation of food supplies to famine-striken areas of Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: The £2 million tranche of emergency aid for Ethiopia, which I announced on 27 November is being channelled through British voluntary agencies largely for the purchase of trucks for food transport.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he has considered the use of Royal Air Force helicopters to drop food supplies to famine-stricken areas of Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will consider repeating the successful Operation Bushell undertaken in 1984, using Royal Air Force Hercules aircraft, to air drop supplies to famine-stricken areas of Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: Within Government-held areas supplies are at present being delivered by road. As for areas in northern Ethiopia not held by the Government, there are at present no agreed arrangements for delivery, either by road or by air, of food supplies from the Government side. If such access were agreed road transport would be by far the most effective means of moving supplies in the volumes required. The UN operated an extremely effective airlift into Tigray in 1984-85 and again in 1987-88. If airlift operations proved necessary, the UN has funds to hand, some of which we contributed, for this purpose.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Westland helicopters have been supplied to India in the British Government's aid package; and if he will make a statement as to the effectiveness of this package.

Mrs. Chalker: The British aid programme grant funded the supply of 21 Westland WH30 helicopters, together with spares, at a cost of £65 million. The helicopters were delivered on schedule at the agreed cost. They are operating mainly in the Indian oil and natural gas industry.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Anglo-Australian Understanding

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will support the proposed exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall in the week commencing 15 January on the theme of Anglo-Australian understanding.

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for this exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall for a week from 15 January 1990.

Falkland Islands

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given to the development of windpower farms, oil exploration and the possibility of radioactive waste disposal on the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Sainsbury: There have been no proposals to use the islands for the disposal of radioactive waste.

Wind power generation was examined in Lord Shackleton's reports of 1976 and 1982 but considered to be inadequate for the islands' needs. Experiments on the islands have not yet shown that wind power generation will be an economical proposition. However, the Falkland Islands development corporation is recommending soon that a proper study of the wind regime in the islands be undertaken.

No decisions have yet been taken on a possible regime to control exploration and development of mineral resources.

Tamil Community

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held by Her Majesty's high commission in Sri Lanka with representatives of the Tamil community.

Mr. Sainsbury: The high commission is regularly in contact with members of all communities in Sri Lanka.

Antarctica

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held with environmental organisations since the Paris convention in October concerning the future of Antarctica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: FCO officials frequently meet representatives of wildlife link to discuss Antarctica matters. The last meeting was in September. No request for a further meeting has been received since then.

Diego Garcia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings have been held with representatives of the people of Diego Garcia; if there are plans to allow full resettlement of the island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The commissioner for the British Indian ocean territory, who was in Mauritius for other purposes, saw a delegation of former plantation workers from the Chagos Islands at their request on 20 September. Those concerned are increasingly integrated into the Mauritian community. There are no plans for resettlement of the islands.

Television Films

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sums his Department has paid to the Fox network and the Discovery channel in the United States for *(a)* the production and *(b)* the screening of a series of television films on Britain.

Mr. Sainsbury: "Focus on Britain" is a series of programmes for American television produced by the British consulate general in Los Angeles in association with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The series is designed to help promote British interests—principally exports and services—in the United States. Seventy-five per cent. of production and other costs are met by sponsorship from British companies and organisations. Twenty-five per cent. is paid for by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

No money has been paid to either Fox Television or the Discovery Channel for production costs. Fox Television was paid a total of $252,525 for airtime in 1988 and $121,175 in 1987. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's 25 per cent. share of these amounts was $92,425.

The Discovery Channel (a cable network seen in over 40 million United States homes) paid to show "Focus" programmes in 1989 and payment has also been received for in-flight showings from Virgin Atlantic Airlines.

Indian Immigrants

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long people are waiting on average for *(a)* interviews and *(b)* second interviews in queues 1, 2, 3 and 4 at each British post on the Indian sub-continent; what were the comparable figures for 1988, 1987 and 1986; and what are the projected waiting times in 1990.

Mr. Sainsbury: Waiting times to first interview for settlement applications in the month of October in the four years 1986 to 1989, which are given in the table, show a reduction in waiting times.

Few applicants in the queues require a further interview. The waiting times between first and second interviews vary considerably depending upon how quickly the applicant returns with the additional documentation requested.

I cannot, at this stage, anticipate what waiting times will be in 1990.

Queue lengths for settlement applications

		October							
		1986		1987		1988		1989	
Post	*Queue*	*Actual*	*Estimated*	*Actual*	*Estimated*	*Actual*	*Estimated*	*Actual*	*Estimated*
New Delhi	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3
	3	8	8	8	7	6	5	6	5
	4	12	11	10	10	11	9	9	8
Bombay	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1
	2	6	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
	3	9	10	9	9	9	9	9	9
	4	10	12	10	10	10	10	10	10
Dhaka	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	2	8	8	7	7	7	7	3	3
	3	8	8	7	7	7	7	3	3
	4	22	20	21	21	23	23	11	9
Islamabad	1	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	2
	2	7	9	8	9	11	12	4	5
	3	13	14	17	16	20	18	14	9
	4	15	16	18	26	20	29	23	13
Karachi	1	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1
	2	6	6	5	5	5	3	2	2
	3	11	11	10	10	10	7	2	2
	4	13	13	13	13	13	13	4	4

Settlement queues are organised as follows:
Q1 Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years, special compassionate cases.
Q2 All spouses, and all children under 18 years.
Q3 Fiancé(e)s and other applying for the first time for settlement.
Q4 Re-applicants.

The estimated waiting time is the time given to an applicant as an indication of the time he or she must wait before their interview. Actual waiting time is the time an applicant will have waited since lodging his or her application.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to improve the arrangements at the British High Commission in Dhaka for interviewing those applying for settlement in the United Kingdom; and if he will arrange for security glass to be removed from interviewing booths.

Mr. Sainsbury: The arrangement for interviewing settlement applicants in Bangladesh are satisfactory and we have no plans to change them. Glass screens are provided for the security of interviewers and interpreters. They are no different from those in many public and commercial offices in this country and will not be removed.

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements he is making for blood samples, needed for DNA testing purposes to be collected in Sylhet.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no plans to make arrangements for blood samples to be taken in Sylhet.

Contras Demobilisation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what co-operation Her Majesty's Government will give to the United Nations in order to make the agreed process of demobilisation of the Contras effective.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Nations has not sought our assistance in this matter.

SCOTLAND

Fisheries

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to eliminate the illegal use of monofilament gill nets in Scottish waters.

Mr. Lang: Orders prohibiting *(a)* the use of all gill nets for fishing for salmon and sea trout within half a mile of the shore and *(b)* the carriage of monofilament gill nets in British fishing boats within six miles of the Scottish coast came into force in 1986.

This and earlier legislation is enforced by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland by means of boardings and inspection of vessels and surveillance both at sea and from the air. In addition any such nets found unattended are confiscated.

Poultry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of premises requiring inspection under the provisions of the Testing of Poultry Flocks Orders in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is estimated that as at June 1989 there were 4,623 flocks in Scotland falling within the various categories described in the poultry flock orders.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Rifkind: In 1989, my Department has employed five firms for the provision of accountancy-related services. In commissioning such work, steps are taken in accordance with departmental guidelines and account is taken of the best evidence available about the competence of firms, both at the time of invitation to tender and of appointment.

Health Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the estimated increases in *(a)* personnel and *(b)* finance to implement the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients," for the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An additional £3·95 million has been allocated to the NHS in Scotland for 1989-90 to assist in the early stages of implementing the White Paper proposals. For 1990-91, my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 6 December that the provision for spending on health in Scotland is planned to increase by £220 million over the current year. This will bring the provision to over £3 billion (£3,041 million) for the first time. By 1992-93, total health expenditure will be fully £500 million higher than in the current year. In accordance with normal practice, allocations to health boards for 1990-91—including recognition of White Paper initiatives—will be determined and notified to boards in the early part of next year. It will be for boards to decide on their personnel requirements in the light of local circumstances. We fully expect that the initial extra costs will be outweighed in the longer term by improvements in the operation of services and the better management of resources.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the key aspects of health authorities' environmental policy and practices which he monitors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In Scotland the lead responsibility for environmental matters rests with the departments of environmental health of district and islands councils.

Health boards are responsible for monitoring their own environmental health policies and practices and for issuing medical advice as necessary. There are regular meetings between representatives of local authorities, health boards and the Scottish Office to discuss environmental health issues.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many students will be enrolled at colleges under his budgetary control in the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(2) what are the projected student numbers for all the Scottish central institutions in the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Lang: The projected student numbers at the colleges in receipt of grant-in-aid will be set out in the Scottish commentary on public expenditure to 1992-93, which will be published in the new year.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the existing and projected academic staff numbers for all the Scottish central institutions in the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Lang: The results of the 1989 census of academic staff in colleges of further and higher education in Scotland are not yet available. Projections of academic staff numbers are not made centrally.

New Towns

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to allow new town district councils to purchase vacant houses from their respective development corporation at any point in the period prior to the dissolution of the development corporation.

Mr. Lang: The potential role which district councils play in the ultimate disposal of development corporation housing stock will be considered by the Government during the consultations with the development corporations, district councils and representative tenant groups in the course of winding up each corporation, as set out in paragraph 5.10 of the White Paper "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead" (Cmnd. 711).

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the current market value of the housing stock owned by each of the Scottish new towns and the number of houses owned by each of the new towns.

Mr. Lang: It is not possible to calculate an absolute market value for the housing stock of the new town development corporations, and the Government have no plans to put it on the market. The number of houses owned by each of the Scottish new town development corporations, as at 30 November 1989, was:

	houses
East Kilbride	11,415
Livingston	8,475
Cumbernauld	7,159
Glenrothes	6,388
Irvine	4,003

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he gives to development corporations as to whether to consult sitting tenants prior to any changes in the management of the new town housing stock.

Mr. Lang: None.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the county councils and district councils in Scotland which do not conform to regulations in respect of emergency control centres in accordance with the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The progressive establishment of local authority emergency control centres features in regular discussions between the Scottish Home and Health Department and local authorities. Almost all Scottish authorities have designated emergency control premises, some of which are fully operational. Others require further work to meet the minimum standards set in departmental guidance.

Fire Service

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the time of firemen is reckoned to be devoted to emergency call-outs.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is not available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number currently employed by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government, who have been directly related to the collection of (i) domestic rates and (ii) the poll tax in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The collection of domestic rates was the responsibility of regional and islands councils as is the collection of the community charge. Figures for the numbers of local government staff involved in these functions are not held centrally. Central Government staff are not involved in the collection of the community charge any more than they were involved in the collection of domestic rates. The numbers of such staff primarily involved in policy issues affecting these matters has fluctuated within the period, generally within the range of eight to 10.

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of poll tax payers by region, in Scotland at the latest date; what is the number who are *(a)* one instalment behind, *(b)* two instalments behind, *(c)* three instalments behind, and *(d)* the account is statutorily in arrears.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of people included on the community charges registers as liable to pay the community charge as at September 1989 was as follows:

Regional/Islands Council	*Number liable (to nearest 100)*
Borders	78,000
Central	206,400
Dumfries and Galloway	111,400
Fife	269,000
Grampian	378,000
Highland	147,800
Lothian	604,700
Strathclyde	1,762,200
Tayside	295,600
Orkney	14,300
Shetland	16,000
Western Isles	22,300

The other information requested is not held centrally.

Sand Eels

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken to limit sand eel fishing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The sand eel fishery off Shetland has been closed since 1 July 1989. A licensing scheme has been introduced in the Minch to prevent fishing pressure on those sand eel stocks becoming excessive.

Officials will be discussing the latest scientific evidence on the state of sand eel stocks with the fishing industry next month. Decisions on the 1990 fishing season will then be taken.

Postgraduate Students

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the courses which applied for acceptance under the postgraduate students allowances scheme in 1989-90, indicating which were successful.

Mr. Lang: The details the hon. Member requires will take some time to assemble and I shall write to him as soon as possible.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of students on post-graduate courses at Scottish universities and central institutions have been *(a)* Scottish, *(b)* from the the rest of the United Kingdom and *(c)* from overseas, in every year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The percentages are given in the table.

Session	*Place of domicile*		
	Scotland	*Rest of United Kingdom*	*Overseas*
1979-80	47	18	35
1980-81	52	17	31
1981-82	53	16	30
1982-83	51	18	31
1983-84	51	18	31
1984-85	50	19	32
1985-86	48	19	33
1986-87	45	19	36
1987-88	46	18	36
1988-89	44	19	36

Notes:
1. The figures relate to full-time courses.
2. In 1979-80 only university courses are covered.
3. The percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Natural Heritage

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *188-89*, if he will indicate how he has responded to requests for assurances concerning the independence, duties, funding, staffing and location of the proposed Natural Heritage Agency for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has stated publicly that the proposed Scottish natural heritage agency will have the same independent status as the present Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission for Scotland, will have resources commensurate with the needs of conservation in Scotland, and will have similar duties to NCC and CCS. Staff in NCC and CCS have been assured by Government of an offer of employment on terms and conditions not less favourable taken as a whole than they have at present. It is too early to decide on the location of the proposed new body.

More detailed proposals on these and other issues will be included in the further consultation.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department is taking to *(a)* prevent further damage to water, wildlife and trees in particular caused by pollutants such as acid rain, *(b)* sponsor further research on this matter and *(c)* help in restoring water, wildlife and trees to their original healthy state.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Agriculture (Research and Development)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has decided a future strategy for agricultural research and development in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has today published a paper entitled "Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development". It reports on the successful implementation of the proposals in the strategy paper published by the Department in December 1985, reviews the developments which underlie the formulation of a revised strategy for the future, sets out the objectives of the Department in funding agricultural and related research and development, and explains how these objectives will be met in the years ahead.

Copies of the paper have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Microwave Ovens

Mr. Michael: To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps he has taken to ensure that strict health and safety standards are observed in respect of all microwave ovens located in the Palace of Westminster.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: All microwave ovens provided in the House for approved purposes are supplied with full operating instructions and are checked annually. Those under the control of the Refreshment Department are operated by staff who are aware of the correct procedures. In the light of current concern I shall, however, refer this matter to the relevant House authorities for further consideration.

THE ARTS

Arts (Leicester)

85. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next proposes to visit the city of Leicester to inspect arts facilities.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans at present to visit Leicester, which I last visited in September 1988.

Museums and Galleries

88. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of the Office of Arts and Libraries' budget has been allocated to museums and galleries for 1990-91.

Mr. Luce: One hundred and eighty two million pounds or 37 per cent. of my Office's budget for 1990-91 has been allocated to museums and galleries.

89. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to deal with the repair and refurbishment of museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: I announced on 16 November that the provision for the building and maintenance programmes at the national museums and galleries which I sponsor will

increase by 34 per cent. to some £64 million in 1992-93. This will bring the total provision for building and maintenance over the next three years to over £180 million.

New Libraries

90. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many new libraries have been established in the last three years.

Mr. Luce: This information is not kept centrally, but I understand that recent research suggests that between January 1987 and December 1989, over 75 new library buildings or substantial extensions to buildings were completed. Capital expenditure on libraries by local authorities in England, which includes spending on new buildings, has increased from £23 million to over £41 million in the three years to 1988-89.

Disabled People

91. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to improve access to arts venues by the disabled.

Mr. Luce: As I announced last December, I have given £150,000 to the Carnegie Trust ADAPT fund to improve the accessibility of arts venues to the disabled. I am pleased to report that the question of accessibility is receiving much attention from arts orgsnisations. Additionally, I am aware that the Arts Council and the Museums and Galleries Commission both have disability officers to ensure that the needs of the disabled are fully considered.

Arts Funding

92. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations on arts funding he has received following the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to say that I have received a number of letters of appreciation from chairmen and directors of institutions which have benefited from the revised allocations I was able to announce on 16 November.

Arts Funding

93. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the breakdown between the public and private sector of funding of the arts in the last financial year of which records are available and 1978-79.

Mr. Luce: Central Government expenditure on the arts has increased from £129 million in 1978-79 to £439 million in 1989-90 (a growth of 240 per cent.). There are no comprehensive figures for private funding of Arts activities but I welcome the evidence that it has been expanding, particularly in the areas of sponsorship and of sales.

Arts Council

94. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he will next meet the chairman of the Arts Council; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman frequently to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Museum Staff

95. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will estimate the number of staff in post at museums now; and what was the figure 10 years ago; what has been the average real increase in rates of pay since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The most recent available figures for museum employment in the United Kingdom are for 1984 when the census of employment showed some 28,000 people employed in museums and galleries. Numbers of staff in post at the national museums and galleries which I sponsor are currently 5,413, compared with some 4,200 in 1979, at which time the national museums and galleries on Merseyside were not include in the figures.

Estimates of average real pay increases for museum staff are not available. However, for all non-industrial grades in the Civil Service, with which staff in the national museums and galleries are analogous for pay and grading purposes, real salaries have increased by around 20 per cent. since 1979.

Live Music

96. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his policy on the encouragement of live music.

Mr. Luce: Through the funding of the Arts Council, it remains the Government's policy to ensure that as many people as possible have access to performances of live music, of a high standard of quality.

Creative Activity

97. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on levels of support for schemes to involve children and young people in creative activity.

Mr. Luce: The Secretary of State for Education and Science and I are jointly funding a booklet about ways in which the arts can stimulate a child's imagination and widen the boundaries of classroom learning. It will be circulated free to all supported schools in England, Scotland and Wales in the new year. In addition, within my area of my responsibility, the Arts Council, the regional arts associations and the national museums and galleries fund a range of schemes aimed at introducing children and young people to the arts.

Kent Opera Company

98. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received regarding the withdrawal of grant funding to the Kent Opera Company.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of representations about the future of Kent Opera. This is, however, a matter for the Arts Council.

Young Musicians

99. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what support he is giving to schemes, events and opportunities for young musicians.

Mr. Luce: Both the Arts Council and the regional arts associations fund a range of schemes designed to encourage and promote young musicians.

Wilding Proposals

100. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many jobs he estimates will be affected in the east midlands if the Wilding proposals are implemented.

Mr. Luce: I have not yet taken any decisions about Mr. Wilding's recommendations.

Arts Council

101. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the effect of inflation upon the grant to the Arts Council over the last three years.

Mr. Luce: Over the three years 1987-88 to 1989-90, the Arts Council's grant will have increased by 14·5 per cent. During the same period, inflation, as measured by the GDP deflator, will have increased by an estimated 20·8 per cent. I have taken these figures into account in deciding the Arts Council's grant for the next three years when it will increase by a further 22 per cent.

Fund Raising (Tax Incentives)

102. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what consideration he has given to the survey conducted by Touche Ross management consultants on the impact of tax incentives on arts and museum fund raising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: A variety of suggestions have been put to me on taxation incentives for the arts and the Touche Ross report has been an informative contribution. The introduction of new taxation incentives is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Women's Arts and Crafts

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to women's arts and crafts to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Luce: Yes. I am glad to sponsor the "Great American Embroidery Exhibition" in the Upper Waiting Hall and I have written to the hon. Lady confirming my intention.

WALES

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the present financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically reviewed and *(b)* open to competition by advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by the Department of Trade and Industry in their inquiries under the Companies Acts.

Mr. Peter Walker: At the present time six accountancy firms are employed either solely or jointly by my Department. Firms are invited to tender for the provision of advisory services on the basis of their suitability to provide the relevant advice. In making appointments, consultations and enquiries are undertaken as necessary and where appropriate in the light of advice given by Treasury on consultancy appointments. The figures do not include accountancy firms that I have appointed to act as auditors to non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department.

Quangos (Appointments)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy, on making appointments to the chairmanship of quangos in Wales, to ensure that such appointments are not used as stepping stones for potential parliamentary candidates.

Mr. Peter Walker: I appoint chairmen of non-departmental public bodies on the basis of their personal qualities and experience.

Poultry Testing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly on 11 December, what is his estimate of the additional cost falling on county councils in Wales in respect of their enforcement of the new Testing of Poultry Flocks Order.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not available on the resources that county councils in Wales are allocating to work in connection with the two new orders requiring registration and testing of poultry flocks.

Cancer Treatment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussion he has had with north Wales health authorities concerning the payment to Mersey regional health authority of money for cancer treatment for north Wales patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. The funding of English health authorities, including Mersey region, to provide treatment to patients from Wales under the arrangements introduced in the White Paper "Working for Patients" is presently the subject of discussions between officials of the Welsh Office and the Department of Health.

Hypothermia

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of deaths where hypothermia was mentioned as a cause; and what is his estimate of the total number of deaths where hypothermia was the underlying cause of death in Wales in each year from 1978 to 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: The numbers of registered deaths of residents of Wales caused by hypothermia or where hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificate are shown in the table:

Year	Deaths where hypothermia was: mentioned on the death certificate	recorded as the underlying cause of death
1978	46	n/a
1979	73	31
1980	41	16
1981	57	n/a
1982	53	25
1983	29	12
1984	37	17
1985	60	33
1986	49	24
1987	41	19
1988	36	12

Note:
For 1979 onward based on 9th Revision ICD Codes 991.6 and 778.3.

Baby Cots

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *259*, whether he will provide comparable figures on intensive care baby cots for 1983-84 and 1979-80;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *358*, whether he will provide comparable figures on intensive care baby cots for 1979-80 and for the latest available year.

Mr. Peter Walker: The answer of 29 November, *Official Report* column *259*, was based on information derived from a one-off enquiry undertaken to inform the advisory group on perinatal intensive care services in Wales. As a consequence comparable figures for earlier years are not available. The more general quarterly bed-use inquiry provides comparable statistics relating to special care baby cots for the years requested, and these are shown in the table:

Special Care Baby Unit Cots
(average daily available)

	1979-80	1983-84	1988-89
Clwyd			
HM Stanley	19·0	19·0	15·0
Ysbyty Maelor	24·0	24·0	22·0
East Dyfed			
Bronglais	2·0	2·0	2·0
West Wales General	8·18	8·0	11·0
Gwent			
Nevill Hall	15·0	15·0	15·0
Royal Gwent	25·0	25·0	20·0
County	18·0	—	—
Gwynedd			
St. Davids	21·0	21·0	21·0
Mid Glamorgan			
Bridgend General	15·0	15·0	—
Princess of Wales	—	—	15·0
East Glamorgan	10·04	10·0	10·0
St. Tydfils	8·0	—	—
Merthyr General	—	8·0	8·0
South Glamorgan			
UHW	25·0	24·38	24·84
St. Davids	16·0	16·05	16·0
West Glamorgan			
Morriston	16·0	14·67	15·97
Neath General	15·0	15·0	10·0
Pembrokeshire			
Withybush	—	13·0	13·0

Full-time Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the staying-on rate in full-time education in each of the counties of Wales in 1987-88 and 1983-84 of those aged *(a)* 16 years, *(b)* 17 years, *(c)* 18 years and *(d)* all ages.

Mr. Peter Walker: The percentage of 16, 17 and 18-year-olds and all ages staying on in full-time education at schools, tertiary and further education colleges, and universities for the academic years 1987-88 and 1983-84 are shown in the table:

	16	17	18	16-18
1987-88[1]				
Clwyd	49	32	21	34
Dyfed	54	40	25	40
Gwent	49	33	18	33
Gwynedd	52	37	23	38
Mid Glamorgan	47	31	16	31
Powys	57	39	21	39
South Glamorgan	53	35	22	36
West Glamorgan	52	35	22	36
1983-84[1]				
Clwyd	52	34	19	35
Dyfed	53	39	23	38
Gwent	49	31	17	32
Gwynedd	51	34	22	35
Mid Glamorgan	49	26	14	29
Powys	55	41	19	38
South Glamorgan	46	31	18	32
West Glamorgan	51	33	18	34

[1] Pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 as a percentage of 15 year old pupils one, two and three years earlier.

Radiation

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he has assessed the public radiation exposure of people who live close to the area immediately around the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will conduct an aerial radioactivity survey of the whole of north Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he will undertake a detailed radiological assessment of public exposure to radioactivity in the area immediately around Trawsfynydd nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Earlier this year, as part of a research project for the Welsh Office, whole body monitoring of volunteers from north Wales (including some from the vicinity of Trawsfynydd) took place at Ysbyty Gwynedd. This was a follow up to an exercise which took place in October 1987.

The preliminary results of this monitoring have shown the levels of radioactivity present in the body to be low and in fact, to have fallen significantly in comparison with the earlier measurements. As such they present no cause for concern. The individuals who took part in this survey have been made aware of the results of the tests.

Additionally, the aquatic environment monitoring report No. 21 prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, showed that in 1988 the most highly exposed group around the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station received only 7 per cent. of the internationally recommended dose limit of 1 millisievert per year.

Consideration has been given to a detailed aerial survey of the areas of north Wales where restrictions on the movement of sheep remain in force. It is felt unlikely that such a survey would add significantly to the data already held on levels of radioactivity in sheep, soil and vegetation in those areas.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many children he estimates spent the Christmas holiday in bed and breakfast accommodation in Wales other than as tourists during each of the years 1983 to 1988;

(2) how many families he estimates spent the Christmas holiday in bed and breakfast accommodation in Wales in each of the years 1983 to 1988 inclusive, other than as tourists;

(3) how many families in Wales he estimates will spend the 1989 Christmas holiday period in bed and breakfast accommodation other than as tourists;

(4) how many individuals he estimates will be in bed and breakfast accommodation in Wales other than as tourists during the Christmas 1989 holiday period;

(5) how many people he estimates spent the Christmas holiday in bed and breakfast accommodation in Wales for each of the years 1983 to 1988 inclusive, other than as tourists.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information on the number of household accommodation temporarily under part III of the Housing Act 1983 in bed and breakfast accommodation is collected only with respect to the last day of each quarter. Information is not available on type of household or of the number of children within household. Available information for the 31 December of each year is shown in the table. Estimates for the 31 December 1989 will not be available until April 1990.

Households accommodated in Bed and Breakfast accommodation[1]

	Number
1983	17
1984	31
1985	20
1986	35
1987	45
1988	41

[1] Under part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what factors he has identified within the process of food production as making a significant contribution to the increased number of food poisoning cases reported in each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 6 December.

South Glamorgan Women's Workshop

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what submissions he has made, to the European Commission, whether via normal interdepartmental channels or directly to the European Commission, to seek continuation of the present level of funding plus allowances for inflation for the South Glamorgan women's workshop; and what response has been received.

Mr. Peter Walker: European social fund support for the South Glamorgan women's workshop in 1989 is a matter for the Department of Employment. However my Department has submitted an indicative funding proposal to the European Commission in respect of European social fund support for the workshop in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992 in the context of the proposed integrated development operation for industrial south Wales. This integrated development operation programme has still to be approved by the Commission.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he asked the Welsh Language Board to draw up a strategy for the Welsh language; on what date he received such a strategy; whether he has accepted the strategy so prepared by the Welsh Language Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I established the Welsh Language Board in June 1988 with a remit to consider all matters relating to the Welsh language. The board sent its strategy document to me on 23 May 1989. The board has subsequently published further, more detailed proposals, the practical implications of which are currently being considered.

Cleddau Bridge

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of central Government assistance in each year since 1970 to the former Pembrokeshire county council and Dyfed county council towards the cost of the construction and maintenance of the Cleddau bridge, Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Peter Walker: No central Government assistance has been specifically directed towards Cleddau bridge. Dyfed and Pembrokeshire county councils have received unhypothecated capital and revenue resources from central Government in support of their expenditure including that associated with Cleddau bridge.

Hospice Movement

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he has any plans to alter the funding of the hospice movement in Wales on lines similar to those recently announced for the funding for Scotland;

(2) whether, in any new funding plans for the hospice movement in Wales, he will make it his policy to include help for both units that provide a bedded service and those that provide day care only.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am considering plans to offer financial assistance for terminal care in Wales and will be making a statement in due course.

Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers and percentages of the unemployed totals removed from all Welsh unemployed registers as a result of changes that took effect in August in the redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

Mr. Peter Walker: Latest estimates suggest that in Wales about 500 miners have decided to take advantage of the change in the redundant mineworkers payment scheme. It is of course entirely optional for the redundant mineworkers to decide whether or not to register as unemployed.

Travel-to-work Areas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the travel-to-work areas in Wales which had *(a)* over 10 per cent. unemployment and *(b)* between 5 and 10 per cent. unemployment in October 1989, are (i) development areas and (ii) intermediate areas.

Mr. Peter Walker: Two development areas had over 10 per cent. unemployment and nine had rates between 5 and 10 per cent. in October 1989. All 11 intermediate areas were in the latter category.

Baglan-Lonlas Motorway

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when it is now proposed that a start will be made on the Baglan-Lonlas motorway section; and if he will give further consideration to the need to divide the work into two parts and build a bridge to relieve the existing conditions.

Mr. Peter Walker: Tenders for the Earlswood-Lonlas section were received on 15 December and provided they are of satisfactory construction should start before the end of this financial year. Combining the remaining contracts would not achieve an earlier completion of the motorway. An improvement scheme at Baglan roundabout is currently under way, and others at Briton Ferry and Earlswood roundabouts are expected to start early in 1990. All are designed to improve traffic flows on the A48 trunk road.

Neath and Port Talbot Hospital

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when it is now proposed that a start will be made on the new Neath and Port Talbot district hospital.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is for the West Glamorgan health authority to decide when it wishes to start work on this proposed hospital, subject to the necessary departmental approvals. The authority is currently considering the Department's response to its draft submission for approval in principle.

Urban Programme

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish information on the achievements of the urban programme and urban development grant for 1987-88.

Mr. Grist: I am pleased to announce the publication of the urban programme and urban development grant annual report for 1987-88. The report details the contribution both grant mechanisms are making towards easing the problems of economic and social deprivation in Wales. Copies of the report have been placed in the Vote Office and House Library.

EMPLOYMENT

British American Tobacco (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to respond to the effects of the recent BAT factory closure in Liverpool.

Mr. Nicholls: The services of the local jobcentre will be available to those who lose their jobs at the BAT factory in Liverpool. My Department, through its employment service and Training Agency, operates a wide range of employment, enterprise and training measures to help those made redundant find new jobs, retrain or set up businesses of their own.

I understand that this closure has not yet taken place.

Unemployed Claimants

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether unemployed claimants are assessed as showing good cause for rejecting the offer of an otherwise suitable vacancy from the employment service if they can show that their mortgage repayments were such that they would represent an unreasonably high proportion of the wages they would derive from the employment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether unemployed claimants are assessed as showing good cause for rejecting the offer of an otherwise suitable vacancy from the employment service if they can show that the necessary child care costs they would incur were such that they would represent an unreasonably high proportion of the wages they would derive from the employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Is is for the adjudicating authorities to decide whether a person can show good cause for refusing to apply for or accept a particular vacancy. The Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment No. 2 Regulations 1989 require them to take into account the expenses that would necessarily and exclusively be incurred by the claimant for the purposes of the employment, if they would represent an unreasonably high proportion of the expected remuneration from the employment. However, mortgage repayments and child care costs are general financial commitments and not expenses for the purposes of the employment.

A claimant does not have good cause for refusing any employment if the reasons relate to their income or outgoings, or those of any other member of their household.

Enterprise Allowance and TVEI

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure on *(a)* the enterprise allowance scheme, *(b)* the technical and vocational education initiative and *(c)* work-related further education.

Mr. Eggar: Records are kept on the basis of the standard financial year for accounting for Government expenditure which runs from 1 April to 31 March.

The figures provided for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are based on actual amounts spent by the Department of Employment Training Agency (Ex MSC, Ex Training Commission) and are taken from published accounts.

The figures for 1989-90 are based on the cash limit in the estimate.

The figures for 1990-91 are based on PES 88.

£ million at cash prices

Enterprise allowance scheme[1]		*Technical and Vocational education initiative*	*Work-related further education*
1987-88	195·8	57·8	112·0
1988-89	196·7	92·1	111·4
1989-90	187·0	117·3	101·5
1990-91	185·9	139·1	103·4

[1] Note for EAS
(a) The scheme transferred to the Employment Service 26 October 1987. The figure shown for 1987-88, however, is for the full year.
(b) The scheme was transferred back to the Training Agency in April 1989.

Earnings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the highest and what is the lowest rates of pay for jobs currently advertised at Burnley job centre; and what are the national average figures.

Mr. Eggar: On 14 December 1989, the highest rate of pay for jobs advertised at Burnley jobcentre was up to £240 per week and the lowest rate £66·40 per week.

National average figures for vacancies advertised at jobcentres are not kept and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors there were in the Health and Safety Executive on 1 December 1979, 1 January 1980 and 1 December 1989, in the agriculture, general factory, specialist factory, explosives, industrial air pollution, mines and quarries, and nuclear inspectorates; and what was the total number of Health and Safety Executive inspectors on each of these dates.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of inspectors in *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive's inspectorates; and *(b)* the total number of inspectors in HSE on 1 December 1979, 1 January 1980 and 1 December 1989 were as follows:

	1 December 1979	*1 January 1980*	*1 December 1989*
(a) Total inspectors in Inspectorates			
Agricultural	188	188	162
Factory	709·5	703·5	582
Specialist[1]	211	210	184·5
Explosives[1]	13	13	11
Industrial Air Pollution[2]	48	48	—
Mines and Quarries[3]	115	114	—
Mines	—	—	13
Quarries	—	—	47
Nuclear Installations	93	92	150
(b) Total inspectors in HSE[4]	1,449·5	1,442·5	1,221·5

[1] Specialist inspectors (including Explosives inspectors) are currently in HSE's Technology Division. Prior to 1 July 1985 specialists formed part of HSE's Factory Inspectorate.
[2] Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate transferred to the Department of the Environment on 1 April 1987.
[3] On 1 October 1989 the Mines and Quarries Inspectorates were separated.
[4] Include those working outside their Inspectorates on eg line management duties, contributing to policy or technical standards work.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money was received by the Health and Safety Executive for each financial year since 1979; and how much was asked for by the Health and Safety Executive in each of those years.

Mr. Nicholls: Gross financial provision to the Health and Safety Commission for each financial year since 1979, expressed at 1989-90 price levels, is as follows:

	£(000)s
1979-80	108,363
1980-81	121,934
1981-82	122,363
1982-83	118,265
1983-84	122,426
1984-85	119,576
1985-86	119,000
1986-87	116,315
1987-88	117,718
1988-89	117,086
1989-90	118,290

Figures have been adjusted for purposes of comparison, to remove provision during 1981-82 to 1984-85 for HSE's dispersal to Bootle and provision for the industrial air pollutant inspectorate until it was transferred to the Department of the Environment in 1987.

Discussions regarding funding for the Health and Safety Commission are confidential and take place in the context of the annual public expenditure survey.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of staff employed by the Health and Safety Executive on 1 December 1979, 1 January 1980 and 1 December 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of staff, including casuals, employed by the Health and Safety Executive on 1 December 1979, 1 January 1980 and 1 December 1989 was as follows:

1 December 1979	*1 January 1980*	*1 December 1989*
4,226	4,206·5	3,682

Women's Employment

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what submissions he has made to the European Commission, whether via normal interdepartmental channels or directly to the European Commission, to seek continuation of the present level of funding plus allowance for inflation for women's employment and workshop schemes; and what response has been received.

Mr. Eggar: The level of funding for these programmes will depend on the Commission's European social fund allocation to the United Kingdom and the priorities of its

Community support framework for objectives 3 and 4 of the funds. The Commission has announced annual allocations for the United Kingdom for 1990-1992 some 19 per cent. lower than in 1989, and has yet to agree its Community support framework. When it does my Department will seek equitable allocations for all United Kingdom programmes according to the needs of our labour market.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the responsibility of the training and enterprise councils for the continued development of the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Eggar: All training and enterprise councils will be working closely with their local education authorities to help develop and implement the technical and vocational education initiative. The LEA is contracted to deliver TVEI by the Training Agency.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the relationship between the local careers service and the local training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Eggar: In drawing up its business plan every TEC will want to consult the careers service to ensure that the training needs of young people in the local area will be met.

Tourism

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish a table showing the sums of money paid out in section 4 grants to the tourist industry in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: The total section 4 assistance paid out by the English Tourist Board to tourism projects in England was:

Financial year	*£ million*
1984-85	8·44
1985-86	7·81
1986-87	9·50
1987-88	11·86
1988-89	13·19

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Breath Testing

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), on 5 December, *Official Report*, column 131, he will set out the grounds on which a police officer may stop a motor vehicle.

The Attorney-General: For the purposes of my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East on 5 December, I had in mind the power contained in section 163 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. The divisional court has ruled that the police, in the exercise of powers under section 163 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, are not prohibited from the random stopping of cars provided that the officer does not behave oppressively or capriciously.

Trials (Delays)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what is the longest period in recent years between offence and trial; and if he will give details of the case.

The Attorney-General: Statistics relating to the period of the time between the date of an offence and the date of a trial are not collected. Accordingly, the information which is sought is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Nursing Homes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he takes to ensure that private and voluntary residential and nursing homes charge fees at a reasonable level.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The levels of fees charged are a matter between proprietors and residents or their relatives.

Residential Care

Mr. Ronnie Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of board and lodging expenditure for residential care accommodation in Northumberland in the last financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information in the form requested is not available.

Transitional Payments

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many transitional payments have been lost as a result of a new claim being made; and what is the saving in benefit payments.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information is not collected in the form requested.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Six outside accountancy firms have been employed by the Department since April 1989 on work which is normally undertaken by their management consultancy divisions. Employment is subject to central guidance and guidelines prepared by the Department. The integrity and status of firms is taken fully into account during the competitive selection process.

Residential Homes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to determine the number of elderly persons who are *(a)* residents of

independent sector residential nursing homes and *(b)* in receipt of benefit and unable to meet the full costs of that accommodation and are being subsidised by relatives to the extent of (i) up to £10 weekly, (ii) £10 to £20 weekly and (iii) above £20 weekly.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The fees residents contract to pay for the services they receive in independent homes are a matter between the resident (or his or her relatives) and the home. In those cases where the agreed fees exceed the level of help available through income support, payments can be made from other sources towards the shortfall and these are ignored in calculating benefit entitlement.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds are currently denied benefit for not taking up YTS places at the Durham office.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not collected because refusal to take up the offer of a place on a youth training scheme need not, of itself, deny benefit to 16 and 17-year-olds.

Social Fund

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the percentage rate of refusals for *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans, *(c)* crisis loans and *(d)* total, for each month of the operation of the social fund since April 1988; and what he estimates the future percentage rate of refusals to be between now and April 1990.

Mr. Scott: Details of the refusal rates for the three types of payment are in the Library. The total refusal rate for the three types of payment can be derived from the numbers of applications decided and awards made which are also available in the Library. Estimates of future refusal rates are not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each year since 1978 the grants for simple insulation measures made available under single payments and the social fund.

Mr. Scott: The information that is available is shown in the table.

Single payments for draughtproofing

	Total amount paid £	*Number of payments*
December 1981	14,526	584
December 1982	55,940	2,586
December 1983	181,337	8,921
December 1984	608,317	23,544
February 1986	1,827,932	63,503
May 1987	4,488,535	128,255

Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry.

1. Single payments commenced in November 1980 and the first data were collected in December 1981.
2. The data relate to all payments made during the 12 months prior to the inquiry. However, they exclude payments made to claimants who ceased to receive supplementary benefit prior to the date of the inquiry, therefore the figures quoted may be an undercount of the actual payments made.
3. Breakdown of single payments for 1987-88 is not available.
4. Since April 1988, provision for draughtproofing has been made mainly through Community Insulation Projects funded by the Training Commission, now the Training Agency. Payments for simple measures may also be available from the social fund.

Halliburton Limited

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to the undertaking in the Under-Secretary of State's reply to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 25 July, *Official Report*, column *641*, and her letter dated 6 September, reference POS (3)2487/51, he will now instruct his overseas branch to approach the liaison officer in Italy in order to establish *(a)* whether Halliburton Manufacturing and Services Limited or any of its related companies paid the correct tax and social security contributions in Italy in respect of Mr. A., and *(b)* whether any prosecution against the company in question has been undertaken by the Italian authorities.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The overseas branch of the Department has no jurisdiction over any action that may be taken by the Italian authorities. However, inquiries have been made with the authorities in that country and they have advised that they are pursuing the question of payment of contributions with the company. They are not, as yet, in a position to give any more information.

Income Support

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants will be removed from transitional protection in April 1990 but will not benefit fully from the uprating announced on 25 October because their weekly income will not increase by the full amount of the uprating.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Based on the May 1988 annual statistical it is estimated that there will be 280,000 such claimants.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate what proportion of individuals have taken up their entitlement to community charge benefit in Scotland and in each region in Scotland.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Up-to-date figures for those receiving community charge rebates will be available shortly and I will write to the hon. Member. Estimates of those entitled to community charge rebates can be obtained only when data from the relevant family expenditure survey become available.

Pensions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioner households have been dependent on state pensions and benefits for at least 75 per cent. of their income in each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The latest information available in the form requested is taken from the 1986 family expenditure survey. Information up to that date is as follows:

Year	*Per cent*
1979	62
1980	61
1981	61

Year	Per cent
1982	61
1983	59
1984	60
1985	58
1986	58

Source: Family Expenditure Survey.
Note: A pensioner tax unit is a single pensioner or a married couple where the man is over pension age.

DEFENCE

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition by advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mr. Neubert: The number of contracts awarded by the Ministry of Defence and covered by the provisions of the EC Supplies Directive, for which the current threshold is £142,000 (or £92,000 if the requirement is also covered by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), was 503 in calendar year 1988. Of these, 396 were awarded following advertisement in the EC Official Journal and 107 were considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous suppliers. The figures for calendar year 1989 will not be available until early 1990. Figures could only be provided on a financial year basis at disproportionate cost; The EC statistics for which MOD figures are kept being collected on a calendar year basis.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act;

(2) how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Neubert: Two outside acountancy firms are currently employed by the Ministry of Defence on accountancy type tasks. Their employment accords fully with current guidelines. The firms themselves were subject to a full and rigorous scrutiny before being contracted by the Department to carry out the tasks in question.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he can give of the number of nuclear tests carried out by the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Soviet Union, France, China and other countries in each year since 1985 inclusive.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on Friday 15 December at column *883*.

Tucano

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Tucano aircraft have been delivered to the Royal Air Force; and what is the percentage performance status of the contract.

Mr. Alan Clark: Thirty-one aircraft had been delivered to the RAF by 30 November 1989. The percentage performance status of the contract is 39 per cent.

Mentor Interactive Training

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been placed with Mentor Interactive Training.

Mr. Alan Clark: Mentor Interactive Training has a number of contracts to provide computer based and interactive video training facilities to several MOD training establishments.

BL755 Cluster Bomb

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to place contracts for a replacement of the BL755 cluster bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: Proposals for the replacement of the BL755 are currently under consideration.

First World War (Executions)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he is giving to the possible exoneration of some 300 British soldiers, executed by firing squad for alleged military indiscipline in world war I; if he will procure a copy of the book "Shot at Dawn" by Julian Putkowski and Julian Sykes for his Department's library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The events covered in the book "Shot at Dawn" by Julian Putkowski and Julian Sykes must be seen in their historical context. The use of the death penalty in world war I was governed by a penal code which reflected the attitudes of the time. Those attitudes have changed but it would be wrong to judge the historical events of 75 years ago against current attitudes and perceptions. There are no plans to re-open the cases of those men executed. Two copies of the book are held in the Ministry of Defence library.

Operations (Western Europe)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the total numbers of British forces, planes and tanks deployed, by country, in western Europe, and the equivalent figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of United Kingdom regular forces deployed, by country, in western Europe as at 1 April 1989 are as follows:

Deployment of United Kingdom regular forces, by country, in Western Europe, as at 1 April 1989

Country	Total
German Federal Republic (excluding West Berlin)	64,294
West Berlin	3,754
Belgium	906
Greece	1
Denmark	26
France	22
Italy (including Sardinia)	350
Netherlands	629
Norway	811
Portugal	67
Spain	229
Turkey	16
Unspecified	29
Total	71,134

The equivalent figures for each year since 1979 until 1988 are not held in the same detail and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I am able, however, to offer figures of United Kingdom forces deployed, broken down between the Federal Republic of Germany and elsewhere in western Europe. They are as follows:

Deployment of United Kingdom regular forces in the Federal Republic of Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe 1979-88

Year	Federal Republic of Germany	Elsewhere in Western Europe	Total
1979[1]	64,618	5,580	70,298
1980	64,713	5,847	70,560
1981	69,109	6,051	75,160
1982	70,493	6,237	76,730
1983	67,424	6,031	73,455
1984	65,605	6,550	72,155
1985	66,586	6,343	72,929
1986	66,918	5,982	72,900
1987	66,836	6,328	73,164
1988	66,750	6,450	73,200

[1] 1 July.

The figures cover all United Kingdom regular forces, male and female. Army personnel from BAOR on emergency tours in Northern Ireland are added back to the Federal Republic of Germany numbers but personnel recorded as on short tours elsewhere are not included.

All United Kingdom regular army armoured and armoured reconnaissance regiments within western Europe are based in BAOR. The figures for numbers of regiments deployments in BAOR since 1979 are shown in the next table. It is not our policy to give more detailed information on numbers of tanks deployed in particular locations.

Numbers of United Kingdom regular army armoured and armoured reconnaissance regiments deployed in BAOR 1979 to 1989

Year	Number of Armoured Regiments	Number of Armoured Reconnaissance Regiments	Total
1979	8	5	13
1980	8	5	13
1981	9	4	13
1982	9	4	13
1983	9	4	13
1984	10	3	13
1985	11	2	13
1986	11	2	13
1987	11	2	13
1988	12	2	14
1989	12	2	14

RAF front line units within western Europe are based in the Federal Republic of Germany. There were 12 squadrons of aircraft deployed in RAF Germany between 1979 and 1982, 13 from 1983 to 1985, 14 in 1986 and 15 from 1987 to the present day. It is not our policy to give more detailed information on numbers of aircraft deployed in particular locations.

Military Advisers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the total numbers, by country, of British service personnel stationed in non-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries as advisers; what is the period for which they are stationed; and what are the equivalent figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Some 550 service personnel are on loan or seconded to the Governments of 33 countries outside the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Details about specific countries are generally in confidence between Her Majesty's Government and the Governments of the countries concerned.

Greenham Common

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to return the land at Greenham common to public use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) on 13 April 1989 at column *653*.

Earnings

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out *(a)* the percentage in real-term increases and *(b)* the actual percentage increase in the pay of the following in each year since 1964 (i) Army private, (ii) Army sergeant, (iii) Army WOII, (iv) second lieutenant, (v) captain and (vii) lieutenant-colonel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I regret that the available records do not enable the question to be answered for years prior to 1970.

Since the introduction of the military salary in April 1970, the average increases in armed forces' pay for all ranks compared with the retail price index have been:

Pay revew in	Equivalent percentage increase for full year	Retail price index
1971	[1]—	9·4
1972	10·0	7·1
1973	6·5	9·1
1974	13·0	16·0
1975	29·5	24·2
1976	9·6	16·5
1977	5·0	15·9

Pay revew in	Equivalent percentage increase for full year	Retail price index
1978	13·0	8·2
1979	32·5	13·5
1980	16·8	18·0
1981	10·3	11·9
1982	6·1	8·6
1983	7·2	4·8
1984	[2]4·9	5·0
1985	7·1	6·1
1986	[3]5·6	3·4
1987	4·9	4·1
1988	6·4	4·9
1989	6·8	n/a

[1] There was no formal review in 1971 but an interim award of 7 per cent. was made in August 1971.
[2] A staged increase, the full amount awarded was 7·6 per cent.
[3] A 7·5 per cent. increase deterred until 1 July 1986.
n/a Not yet available.

It would not be possible to break the figures down to show percentage increases in pay for each of the ranks requested without disproportionate cost.

Belize

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost in the latest year for which figures are available of the British garrison in Belize, including assistance in the Belize defence force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated cost of maintaining a garrison in Belize in 1989-90 is £29 million. It is not our practice to disclose the total cost in military assistance to individual countries.

Air Miss (Tranent)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to send a copy of the report of the joint air miss working group on the incident involving a military aircraft and a civil passenger flight over Tranent on the evening of 2 August to the hon. Member for East Lothian as soon as that report becomes available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will send a copy of the report as soon as it is available.

Colonel Richard Lea

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which occasions Colonel Richard Lea has been suspended from duty since June 1984; and what were the reasons for suspension.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to comment on cases which involve disciplinary action taken against individuals who are no longer serving.

Tornado

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of training a Tornado pilot.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current cost of training a Tornado pilot to the point where he joins an operational squadron is approximately £4·4 million.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether in the last 10 years he or his predecessors, either by direction or informally, secured changes in the accounting conventions followed by Royal Ordnance or Royal Naval dockyards, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: After 13 years of operation as a trading fund the Royal Ordnance was privatised from 1 April 1987. The Royal Naval dockyards were vote funded until April 1987 when they were transferred to commercial management. During these periods the broad accounting conventions followed were those required by legislation and consequential regulations appropriate to their status.

WE177

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *357*, what amounts of money have been paid to *(a)* British Aerospace and *(b)* Hunting Engineering in connection with the study of possible procurement options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is commercially confidential.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *357*, what is the nature of the arrangements that have been concluded with the United States Government enabling an exchange of information on the subject of the study of possible replacement options for the WE177 nuclear bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: The arrangements are in the form of a memorandum of understanding concerning co-operation on a tactical air-to-surface missile feasibility study.

Thailand

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *358*, what was the annual number of visits made by British service personnel to Thailand for each year over the last four years; and what was the purpose of each of these visits.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Cambodia

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *357*, whether any assessment has been made of the ability of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front and the National Sihanoukist Army to control in an appropriate manner classified information that they receive.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 7 November at column *543*.

Staff (Length of Service)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average length of service of *(a)* industrial and *(b)* non-industrial staff employed by his Department.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Civilian Staff (Overtime)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of overtime that has been paid out to all his Departments' civilian staff for each year for the last 10 years.

Mr. Neubert: I will write to the hon. Member.

Chieftain Tank

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what importance he attaches to cost-effectiveness in the choice of a replacement for the Chieftain tank.

Mr. Alan Clark: Cost-effectiveness is one of the principal factors under consideration in the choice of the next generation main battle tank.

HEALTH

Ambulance Service

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of running each ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested, derived from the 1988-89 annual accounts of the regional health authorities (RHAs) and district health authorities in England which manage and account for these services, is shown in the table.

Total revenue expenditure on patient transport (i.e. ambulance) services—1988-89

Regional/district health authorities	*£*
Northern Regional Health Authority	9,652,274
South Tees	4,063,738
East Cumbria	4,198,245
Durham	4,292,461
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	13,811,675
Hull	6,813,348
York	4,062,366
Trent Regional Health Authority	7,496,560
South Derbyshire	5,938,750
Leicestershire	5,349,592
North Lincolnshire	4,645,797
Nottingham	6,577,756
Cambridge	3,618,856
East Suffolk	3,396,348
Norwich	6,057,536
North Bedfordshire	2,942,325
East Hertfordshire	5,753,787
Mid Essex	9,148,786
Eastbourne	5,485,420
Medway	9,766,199
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	46,029,885
East Surrey	7,398,616
Chichester	1,157,371
Mid Downs	1,612,104
Worthing	1,423,770
East Dorset	4,502,789
Winchester	7,696,549
Swindon	3,836,516
Isle of Wight	939,210
West Berkshire	3,814,271
Aylesbury	3,246,717
Northampton	3,208,202
Oxfordshire	3,192,442
Bristol and Weston	5,356,017
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	3,740,707
Exeter	3,325,197
North Devon	1,273,991
Plymouth	1,839,102
Torbay	1,875,101
Gloucester	3,710,954
Somerset	3,028,723
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	14,485,006
Worcester	4,544,593
Shropshire	2,815,530
Mid Staffordshire	6,184,806
South Warwickshire	2,855,550
Chester	5,613,353
South Sefton	9,065,193
North Western Regional Health Authority	16,408,654
Preston	9,029,976
Total—England	306,282,714

Notes:

1. The figures are provisional (as yet subject to audit).
2. The South West Thames Regional Health Authority accounts for all the expenditure relevant to the London Ambulance Service. Generally the other Regional Health Authorities shown manage and account for the service provided to particular conurbations within their respective regions.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department's evaluation of the Cornwall air ambulance service includes the possible consequences for the service of the granting of self-governing status to hospitals from the jurisdiction of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no reason to suppose tht the possible NHS trust status of the hospitals served by the Cornwall air ambulance will affect either its need or effectiveness.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the criteria for assessing the skills of emergency ambulance staff required to use paramedical skills gained from extended training to National Health Service training authority standard; what comparison has been made with payments made to other National Health Service staff using paramedical skills; and in offering an additional £500 to emergency ambulance staff, what accounrt has been taken of the amount of overtime they are obliged to work.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Selected, qualified ambulance staff who volunteer for extended training, are trained and certified as fit to practice in the skills of extended ambulance aid by NHS consultants. They must requalify annually. The objective of this training is to save life and reduce morbidity, and mortality. A clinical audit carried out in 1988 indicated that of 28,000 patients who received some form of ambulance aid, some 95 per cent. were still alive on arrival at hospital. There are no comparable payments made to other NHS staff. The additional £500 to be paid to fully qualified staff will be part of the annual salary and will count in full when calculating overtime and other benefits.

Prescriptions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table, using the PACT database, showing the expenditure on prescriptions for each family practitioner committee area, together with the totals for each National Health Service region for the 1988-89 financial year; and if he will express that expenditure as a figure per head of population for each area and region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested cannot be derived from PACT but is available to the Department as set out in the table.

Total cost of prescriptions dispensed by chemists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors

	April 1988-March 1989	
	Total cost (£ thousands)	*Total cost per head (£)*
Cleveland	28,092	50·79
Cumbria	24,043	49·15
Durham	30,680	51·41
Northumberland	14,950	49·60
Gateshead	10,075	48·85
Newcastle	13,732	49·11
North Tyne	11,282	58·49
South Tyne	7,873	50·56
Sunderland	16,187	54·67
Northern RHA	156,913	51·09
Humberside	43,177	50·77
North Yorks	33,452	46·91
Bradford	22,626	48·75
Calderdale	9,755	49·78
Kirklees	16,707	44·51
Leeds	35,071	49·42
Wakefield	16,183	51·94
Yorkshire RHA	176,971	48·88
Derbyshire	41,294	44·68
Leicester	38,876	43·90
Lincoln	31,465	54·01
Nottinghamshire	43,023	42·70
Barnsley	12,256	55·48
Doncaster	15,069	51·67
Rotherham	11,379	45·19
Sheffield	24,837	47·01
Trent RHA	218,199	46·50
Cambridgeshire	27,433	42·10
Norfolk	36,831	49·48
Suffolk	28,874	45·22
East Anglia RHA	93,139	45·78
Bedford	22,807	42·97
Hertfordshire	41,008	41·59
Barnet	12,713	42·17
Brent and Harrow	20,442	44·99
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	28,080	44·03
Hillingdon	10,167	43·84
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	15,484	52·43
North West Thames RHA	150,701	43·84
Essex	68,037	44·48
Barking and Havering	16,285	42·51
Camden and Islington	15,483	44·02
City and East London	26,517	47·17
Enfield and Harringey	18,451	40·71
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	20,533	46·24
North East Thames RHA	165,307	44·39
East Sussex	35,896	50·36
Kent	69,585	45·77
Bexley and Greenwich	17,862	41·08
Bromley	12,009	40·27
Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	29,858	43·56
South East Thames RHA	165,210	45·24
Surrey	41,926	41·94
West Sussex	35,115	49·92
Croydon	12,737	40·16
Kingston and Richmond	13,242	44·84
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	25,272	42·88
South West Thames RHA	128,291	44·16
Dorsetshire	34,655	52·85
Hampshire	67,109	43·49
Wiltshire	23,357	41·93
Isle of Wight	6,837	52·68
Wessex RHA	131,957	45·73
Berkshire	30,869	41·32
Buckinghamshire	25,087	39·99
Northamptonshire	24,396	42·78
Oxfordshire	23,279	40·21
Oxford RHA	103,630	41·06
Avon	40,246	42·17
Cornwall	24,587	53·38
Devon	49,330	48·31
Gloucester	22,021	41·75
Somerset	21,633	47·27
South Western RHA	157,817	46·13
Hereford and Worcester	28,835	42·98
Salop	18,186	45·38
Staffordshire	46,578	45·10
Warwickshire	22,812	47·07
Birmingham	51,029	51·35
Coventry	14,879	48·59
Dudley	12,884	42·34
Sandwell	15,640	52·79
Solihull	9,313	45·42
Walsall	13,739	52·38
Wolverhampton	12,774	51·22
West Midlands RHA	246,669	47·38
Cheshire	45,845	47·97
Liverpool	26,515	56·46
St. Helens with Knowsley	17,544	50·70
Sefton	15,047	50·56
Wirral	18,170	54·27
Mersey RHA	123,121	51·22
Lancashire	75,826	54·87
Bolton	12,216	46·34
Bury	9,470	54·12
Manchester	23,340	52·34
Oldham	10,480	47·74
Rochdale	10,891	52·65
Salford	13,916	59·06
Stockport	14,546	50·00
Tameside	10,835	49·97
Trafford	11,847	54·91
Wigan	16,258	52·85
North Western RHA	209,625	52·94

The figures include prescriptions dispensed by retail chemists, applicance contractors and dispensing doctors.

Total cost includes the basic price of the drug less discount plus dispensing costs and fees.

Figures are based on OPCS estimates of resident populations for mid year 1988.

Health Spending

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the average and *(b)* the range of expenditure per patient between general practitioner practices in each family practitioner committee area of the Northern health region in the year 1988-89, using the PACT database.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the average and range of prescribing costs can only be made available without disproportionate expense for the last quarter. This is set out in the table. This information cannot be directly derived from PACT which is not a database.

Northern Regional Health Authority

	Average basic price/patient	*Range of basic prices/patients*		*Quarter Ending*
		Lowest	*Highest*	
	£	£	£	
Cleveland FPC	11·46	6·64	42·80	July 1989
Cumbria FPC	10·95	2·53	19·21	August 1989
Durham FPC	11·87	6·90	20·21	August 1989
Gateshead FPC	10·56	7·80	14·85	June 1989
Newcastle FPC	10·15	2·94	14·71	July 1989
Northumberland FPC	10·85	7·41	16·13	June 1989
North Tyneside FPC	12·54	6·42	21·45	June 1989
South Tyneside	11·00	8·35	13·60	June 1989
Sunderland FPC	12·05	7·45	17·66	August 1989

Notes:

1. The figures are based on patient list sizes of 500 or more of prescribing doctors within the FPC. Lists of less than 500 and of dispensing doctors are not included.
2. The figures are net ingredient cost (basic price) of prescriptions dispensed in response to prescriptions written by practices within the FPC. They take no account of discount, dispensing costs or fees and therefore do not represent actual expenditure.
3. The FPCs are divided into three streams for reporting purposes. Each stream has a different quarterly cycle. Aggregated annual data is not available.

Hypothermia

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many old age pensioners have died as a result of hypothermia in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

Number of deaths with mention of hypothermia on the death certificate for males aged 65 and over, and females aged 60 and over, in England and Wales from 1979 to 1988.

Year	*Number of Deaths*	
	Males	*Females*
1979	238	477
1980	165	341
1981	175	411
1982	204	345
1983	149	314
1984	165	312
1985	238	485
1986	254	513
1987	156	338
1988	162	249

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of deaths where hypothermia was mentioned as a cause; and what is his estimate of the total number of deaths where hypothermia was the underlying cause of death in England in each year from 1978 to 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

Number of deaths from hypothermia as a mention on the death certificate; and also as an underlying cause[1] of death in England from 1978 to 1988.

Year	*Mentioned*	*[1]Underlying cause*
1978	646	n/a
1979	789	404
1980	555	245
1981	628	n/a
1982	611	300
1983	508	209
1984	516	249
1985	762	407
1986	785	411
1987	517	249
1988	404	181

[1] Assigned to the 9th revision (1979) International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes 778.3 and 991.6.
1981: Not available due to industrial action by registration officers.

Residential Homes

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private residential homes have been registered in the Durham area in each year since 1984.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in the form requested. The table gives the total number of privately run residential care homes registered with Durham social services authority under the Registered Homes Act 1984 as at 31 March of each year.

Year	*Number of homes*
1985	14
1986	[1]23
1987	[1]34
1988	44

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private residential homes have been registered in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority area since 1984.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in the form requested. The table gives the total number of privately run residential care homes registered with Lancashire social services authority under the Registered Homes Act 1984 as at 31 March of each year.

Year	Number of homes
1985	334
1986	402
1987	[1]482
1988	[1]538

[1] Provisional.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to bring an end to the differential pricing of pharmaceutical products within the member countries of the European Community with a view to ending the current practice of parallel importing of such products from Europe.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Differential pricing of pharmaceutical products between EC member states results from a variety of factors. The issue is being addressed by the Community through the implementation of directive 89/105/EEC, which is concerned with transparency of pharmaceutical pricing arrangements. Parallel importing, which reflects different price levels in different countries, results from the establishment of a single European market with free movement of goods between member states, which the Government fully support. Parallel imports of medicines which satisfy United Kingdom standards as to their safety, quality and efficacy can be expected to continue so long as there are significant pricing disparities.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will seek to introduce legislation to extend the patent life of pharmaceutical products by a period which would further encourage innovation and better enable research based pharmaceutical companies to recoup their research and development costs on new inventions before they are exploited by non-innovative companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

I fully appreciate that the pharmaceutical industry invests substantially in research and development in this country and that effective patent protection is important to enable that investment to be recouped and to encourage further innovation. I am also aware of preliminary proposals for legislation under consideration within the EC Commission which would have the effect of extending the term of patents for pharmaceutical products. We are carefully considering these proposals in terms of their likely impact not only on the pharmaceutical industry, research-based and generic, but also on the price and availability of pharmaceuticals in this country.

Environmental Policies

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the key aspects of health authorities' environmental policies and practices which he monitors.

Mr. Freeman: Health authorities are responsible for monitoring their environmental policies and practices. The Department monitors as the need arises for all or individual authorities.

Radiation

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 12 December (1) what numbers of claims for excessive dosage of radiation have been settled; what ranges of payments have been made; and how many cases remain to be settled;

(2) in respect of patients damaged by excessive radiation treatment at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital, if he will list how many settlements have been made, how many settlements remain to be made and what is the highest and the lowest settlement made to date;

(3) if he will list the number of payments and the total of payments made to staff who were removed from their posts following these overdoses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These are all matters for the Exeter health authority and, as far as they affect patients, for their representatives. Two physicists, who were dismissed following the incidents, received severance payments, the details of which are confidential to the two parties involved.

Schoolchildren (Diet)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why he has decided not to accompany the publication of his report on "The Diets of British Schoolchildren" by a press conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is not the usual practice of the Department to hold press conferences or press briefings on every occasion that a report is published. Publication of reports is accompanied by a press release relayed to all national newspapers and other media together with an extensive mailing to a range of magazines. Such a press release accompanied publication of this report in June 1989.

Sugars

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) why it was decided that the publication of his Department's report on sugars and health would not be accompanied by a press conference; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the publication of the COMA report on sugar and health was accompanied by a press conference.

Mr. Freeman: A press briefing, open to all journalists, was held on Tuesday 12 December on publication of the report of the panel on dietary sugars.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what weight he gave to Professor Don Naismith's participation in a sugar industry deputation against the British Medical Association's view on sugar consumption when considering his appointment to the COMA panel on sugars and health; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what weight he gave to Professor Harry Keen's speeches on sugar industry platforms and his research funding from the sugar industry when considering his appointment to the COMA panel on sugars and health; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what weight he gave to Professor John Durnin's speeches on sugar industry platforms and his participation in a sugar industry deputation against the British Medical Association's view on sugar consumption, when considering his appointment to the COMA panel on sugars and health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's chief medical officer takes great care when choosing members for the committee on medical aspects of food policy (COMA) and its panels to ensure that advice is comprehensive, balanced and objective. The panel on dietary sugars, consisting of 12 members, was chosen to take account of the whole spectrum of scientific opinion regarding sugars and health. The report produced by the panel was agreed by all panel members.

I understand that Professor Naismith was not a member of the deputation to which the hon. Member refers.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, by London health authority, the current number of beds taken out of use for budgetary purposes and the equivalent numbers for each year since 1983.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available centrally.

NHS Reform

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been spent on publicising and implementing the Government's plans for the National Health Service prior to the Second Reading of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The estimated cost of informing the public about the Government's plans to improve the Health Service is £450,000. A further £2,110,000 is estimated to have been spent on informing people working for the NHS. £85 million has been allocated to assist the implementation of the proposals in the financial year 1989-90. It is not possible to distinguish expenditure made before the Second Reading of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Bed and Breakfast

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many *(a)* families and *(b)* individuals he estimates will spend the 1989 Christmas holiday period in bed and breakfast accommodation in England and Wales other than as tourists;

(2) how many *(a)* families and *(b)* people he estimates spent the Christmas holiday in bed and breakfast accommodation in England and Wales in each of the years 1983 to 1988 inclusive, other than as tourists;

(3) how many children he estimates spent the Christmas holiday period in bed and breakfast accommodation in England other than as tourists during each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These are questions for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what factors he has identified within the process of food production as making a significant contribution to the increased number of food poisoning cases reported in each of the last four years: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Food poisoning organisms can enter the food production chain at any point during processing, distribution, sale and consumption. The food industry has a legal responsibility to ensure that food produced and sold is fit for human consumption.

The increase in the number of reported cases may reflect in part both heightened public awareness of food poisoning and recent changes in the system for recording and collating data operated by the public health laboratory service.

We have sought advice from the committee on the microbiological safety of food on the increasing incidence of foodborne illness.

Influenza Vaccine

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that in case of influenza vaccine shortage, groups seen to be medically at risk receive priority;

(2) what priorities for vaccination he has accorded to hospital nurses and doctors and hospital patients.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's memorandum "Immunisation Against Infectious Disease" carries advice on those individuals where protection by influenza immunisation should be considered because of special risk. These include health service staff, those suffering from certain illnesses, and the elderly and children over four years of age living in residential homes and long-stay hospitals, where use of the vaccine is not contraindicated. This advice was confirmed in the chief medical officer's letter issued on 19 September. Both documents were sent to all doctors.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he took to ensure sufficient influenza vaccine prior to the present outbreak.

Mr. Freeman: The joint committee on vaccination and immunisation met on 23 March 1989 to discuss the requirements for influenza vaccine for the 1989-90 season. Manufacturers were contacted during April 1989 to obtain details of the estimated number of doses of vaccine which would be made available for the United Kingdom market, and to ensure that a buffer stock would be available to the Department of Health for allocation to users if necessary. Negotiations with the manufacturers were completed by the middle of June 1989. Advice to general practitioners giving details on the use of the vaccine, and categories considered to be "at risk" was issued on 19 September 1989, prior to the commencement of the normal vaccination programme in October 1989. When during the last few days the recorded incidence of influenza cases showed a considerable increase over the corresponding figures recorded during 1988, manufacturers were contacted immediately to negotiate further supplies of the vaccine.

Hospital Funding

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what special funding is provided by his Department to assist hospitals in the proximity of airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: None. It is for health authorities to determine how the resources available should be

distributed to their hospitals in line with national policy guidelines and their assessment of local needs and priorities.

Cornwall Air Ambulance Service

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources his Department are providing to evaluate the Cornwall air ambulance service; and when he expects the evaluation to be finalised.

Mr. Freeman: The Department will be evaluating the Cornwall service as part of a larger evaluation of helicopter ambulances. The evaluation, which will be undertaken by one of the Department's funded units will be adequately resourced and will begin in spring 1990 and run on to early 1994.

Ophthalmology Consultants

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of consultants in ophthalmology in each district health authority in England.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Cataracts

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of people currently awaiting cataract operations in each district health authority in England.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Doctors and Dentists (Pay)

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to revise the evidence relating to deprivation payments given to the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body by his Department; whether he intends submitting new evidence; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends to remove deprivation payments from the remit of the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is a long standing agreement between the parties concerned that the contents of the evidence to the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body are not made public before the Government have announced their decisions on the recommendations made by the review body.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he is expecting the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body to report; and when he will be announcing his decisions on their recommendations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body has been asked to report to my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, in time for decisions to be announced before the start of the next financial year.

GP Contract (Kent)

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will reconsider the general practitioner contract negotiated locally in Kent.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The GPs' new contract is a national contract applying to all GPs in Great Britain.

ENVIRONMENT

Recycled Paper

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to ensure that all public inquiries established by Her Majesty's Government publish as high a proportion as possible of their documents on recycled paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Government Departments already use recycled paper for a range of document production, including some publications such as public inquiry reports.

There are a number of technical constraints which currently prevent a wider application of recycled paper. To overcome these constraints, working groups representing Government Departments and individual suppliers have been established to draw up specification standards for recycled papers, particularly in high volume areas.

Monofilament Nets

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will raise the question of nylon monofilament nets and their effects on the populations of dolphins, porpoises and other cetaceans with other European Environment ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Measures to enable better protection of cetacean populations are among the topics being discussed in preparation for the third north sea conference in March 1990. Better information on interaction between fishing activity and cetaceans is one of the research needs identified, but I understand that there is no evidence at present to suggest that the use of monofilament fishing nets is posing a significant problem for cetacean populations in United Kingdom waters. The European Community is already pursuing a co-ordinated approach to the subject of pelagic drift netting on the high seas which has given rise to great concern.

Groundwork Foundation (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to establish a groundwork foundation and trust in Nottingham; how it will be financed; what is its purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Groundwork Foundation is currently discussing with the local authorities in Nottingham the possibility of establishing a groundwork trust in the city. The proposal is still in its early stages and the area to be covered by the trust has not yet been decided. The core costs of groundwork trusts are funded by my Department, local authorities and the private sector. The Groundwork Foundation has allocated £40,000 in 190-91 to the proposed Nottingham groundwork trust from funds provided by the Department. I understand that the level of financial support from the local authorities and the private sector is still to be determined. The role of the trust will be to bring together the public, private and voluntary sectors in Nottingham to tackle the area's environmental problems for the long term benefit of the local community.

Air Pollution

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make information available about levels of air pollution in urban areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Following the incident of elevated ozone levels in the summer, the Government decided to make available the data collected on the Warren Spring laboratory ozone measurement network on a daily basis during incidents. We have now decided following recent adverse winter conditions that levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), carbon monoxide (CO) and sulphur dioxide (SO_2) collected in the same way will similarly be made available. A daily summary will be issued when any one of the WHO guidelines is exceeded. These are:

SO_2 : 122 parts per billion (ppb)
CO : 25 parts per million (ppm)
NO_2 : 210 ppb.

This is a further example of our determination to improve public access to environmental information. Levels of these pollutants reached in the United Kingdom fortunately do not pose significant threats to human health and we do not, of course, want to alarm people unnecessarily. Nevertheless we believe that people should have the facts and judge for themselves.

We already have major action in hand to reduce these pollutants. Action on car exhaust emissions agreed in the European Council last June will drastically reduce emissions of CO and oxide of nitrogen from all new cars after the end of 1992 and will ensure a downward trend in the levels of these pollutants in towns and cities. The new standards will cost the motorist some £1·5 billion per year compared with current ones. We are pressing the Commission to bring forward new standards to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from heavy diesel vehicles. We also have major commitments to reduce emissions of SO_2 and oxides of nitrogen from power stations and are encouraging a few remaining local authorities who have not yet introduced smoke control programmes in affected areas to do so to ensure compliance, by April 1993 at the latest, with European directive limits on smoke and sulphur dioxide.

Air quality standards and criteria for monitoring them are set by European Community directives for smoke and SO_2, for NO_2, and for lead in air. Only one breach (outside derogation areas) has occurred this year. It is of the NO_2 directive, for which the criterion is that a level half that of the WHO guideline must not be exceeded for more than 175 hours in a year. This breach occurred because an indoor source of NO_2 interfered with the monitor in question. No other breach is anticipated.

Council of Environment Ministers

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy at the next Council of European Environment Ministers to propose that the European Commission produce an annual report on the state of the environment in the European Community, to be published in January each year, to be widely publicised and circulated.

Mr. Trippier: Under the proposal to establish a European environment agency, it is stipulated that a report on the state of the environment in the European

Community should be published by an agency every three years. Unanimous agreement on the three-year cycle for publishing such a report was reached at the last Council of European Environment Ministers in November.

Recycling

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation requiring planning consents for retail stores to include practicable provision for the collection of re-usable materials.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do not at present propose to introduce such legislation but planning authorities should bear in mind the benefits to the local community in arranging for such facilities to be considered where practicable at an early stage in the planning of retail facilities.

Pollution

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to give effect to the undertaking given by the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) concerning the laying of regulations under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are committed to the implementation of the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 and as soon as practicable we will undertake consultation on the regulations necessary to bring the Act into force.

Christmas Novelty Sprays

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has any plans to ban the use of chlorofluorocarbons as propellants in Christmas novelty sprays; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has on the use of chlorofluorocarbons in novelty Christmas sprays; and if he will advise consumers not to purchase such products.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government are actively seeking international agreement to the phase out of all CFCs by the year 2000. I understand that the aerosol industry intends 90 per cent. of all its products to be CFC free by the end of the year. In the case of these Christmas novelties, I also understand that the alternative propellants available this Christmas are flammable. Because of the way these products are often used, safety factors prohibit the use of flammable material. It is proposed that one of the new generation propellants will be used in these products next year. British consumers have already shown that they can decide for themselves whether they wish to buy products which damage the ozone layer.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to require local planning authorities to consider design energy consumption of buildings when reaching planning decisions.

Mr. Howard: No. Such steps would be unnecessary. The energy consumption aspect of building design is covered by part L of the Building Regulations 1985.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make home improvement grants claimable by private sector tenants without a repairing lease.

Mr. Howard: No. Where a tenant is not required by the terms of his lease to undertake works of repair or improvement the responsibility will rest with the landlord. It is therefore appropriate for the landlord to apply for grant and for any payment to be based on an assessment of his resources.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 11 December, *Official Report*, column 493, to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, concerning a complaint by Mr. R. Gorman of 14 Welby street, Manchester in which he states that a reply to a letter to him dated 31 July was sent on 14 October, he will investigate why this reply has never reached the right hon. Member; and if he will now ensure that a reply does reach the right hon. Member.

Mr. Chris Patten: Investigations within my Department have shown that the letter was dispatched on 14 October. I apologise for any inconvenience and I am now sending the right hon. Member a copy of my letter.

Toxic Waste (Wath upon Dearne)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will immediately notify the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States of America of the necessity for the toxic waste sent to the United Kingdom by or the behalf of the FMC Company of the United States of America to be returned from Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham, to that company; and whether this action would be in accordance with the current and binding international agreement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Environmental Protection Agency is already aware of our view that the waste at Wath upon Dearne should be returned to the United States of America and are currently considering the scope for action under American legislation. There is no binding international agreement. Although the Basel convention could cover the particular circumstances of this case, it is not yet in force.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether at any time his Department or any public agency has considered the possibility of the disposal in the United Kingdom of the toxic waste bulk at Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As part of its contingency planning Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has considered possible treatment facilities for the material at Wath upon Dearne. It however remains our policy that this material should be returned to the United States of America.

Animals and Birds (Imports)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences for the purposes of importing birds under the CITES regulations were granted in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Details of all United Kingdom trade in CITES species, including but not separately identifying birds, are submitted annually to the European Commission and are included in the Commission's annual report on trade in endangered species. I have arranged for copies of the 1986 and 1987 reports to be placed in the Library of the House. The United Kingdom figures for 1988 have been submitted to the Commission, but have not yet been published by it.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are applied by him in granting import licences under CITES; and whether he takes into account the character of the applicant, as demonstrated by relevant criminal convictions concerning importation without a licence or the breaking of previous licences.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Applications for import licences are considered on their merits, in the light of advice from our scientific advisers and in accordance with the EC regulations which implement CITES within the European Community. Failure on the part of an applicant to comply with the conditions of a previous licence, or a conviction for offences under import or other relevant legislation, would be regarded as a relevant factor to be considered if further applications for import licences were submitted.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conveniently available figures he has as to how often identification experts were called out in 1988 to pass judgment on mammals, birds, reptiles and fish in relation to the implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: At the request of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, my Department arrange for identification experts to be called out on four occasions in 1988 to inspect animals covered by the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. However, in implementing the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, HM Customs and Excise may also seek assistance in identifying species direct from private consultants. Details of the number of such cases are not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Nature Conservancy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he intends to introduce, following the proposal to break up the Nature Conservancy Council, to enable the United Kingdom Government to meet their obligations under the Berne convention on the conservation of european wildlife and natural habitats.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None. The Government fully meets their obligations under the Berne convention and intend to continue to do so.

Accounting Conventions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether in the last 10 years he or his predecessors, either by direction or informally, secured changes in the accounting conventions followed by water authorities, the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since 1982-83 water authorities' historical cost accounts have been supplemented by Accounts prepared under the current cost convention. There have been no changes in the last 10 years in the accounting conventions followed by the Property Services Agency or the Crown Suppliers.

Somerset House Vaults

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the sale of the Somerset house vaults to the Quill Group;

(2) on what basis the Property Services Agency offered to rent vaults under Somerset house for £200 per annum or to buy them for £50,000;

(3) what guidance the London residuary body received from his Department concerning its future requirements for storage within the vaults below Somerset house;

(4) when he intends to reply to letters concerning the sale of the Somerset house vaults from the hon. Member for Dagenham, the Quill Group and Mr. Ian Walmsley;

(5) whether the London residuary body made any efforts to sell the vaults below Somerset house before offering them at auction;

(6) which officials of the Property Services Agency represented the Agency at the two auctions involving vaults beneath Somerset house;

(7) why his Department withdrew access to vaults below Somerset house from representatives of the Quill Group;

(8) why officials of the Inland Revenue's accommodation department reversed an earlier assurance that they had no objections to the Quill Group obtaining access to vaults below Somerset House.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* I understand that the Quill Group were the successful bidders at an auction in September, but failed to complete the contract with the London residuary body. No guidance was issued by my Department in connection with this sale.

In accordance with their normal practice for the disposal of surplus property the London residuary body entered into discussions with the occupying tenant. The Government have held a lease of these vaults for over 80 years. The Property Services Agency acts on my behalf as tenants. The lease is governed by the Landlord and Tenant Acts and the rent, fixed in 1907, is £185 a year.

In earlier negotiations with the London residuary body a PSA offer of £50,000 for the freehold interest was unsuccessful and both parties agreed that it would be in the best interests of both taxpayers and the London ratepayers, if the vaults were exposed for sale at public auction.

Following their successful purchase at auction in September the Quill Group instructed agents to open negotiations with the PSA for a new lease, the 1907 lease now having expired, seeking a rent of £90,000 per annum.

On being advised by the auctioneers that the vaults were to be auctioned again on 4 December, the PSA's professional decision as prudent managers of the Government Estate was to take this further opportunity to purchase and, on this occasion, it was successful.

Both auctions were attended by the professional head of the estates services branch of the PSA's London region estates division, accompanied by a principal grade estate surveyor.

I am writing to the hon. Member explaining these complex matters more fully and I shall also send him a copy of the letter which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) sent to Mr. Harris of the Quill Group on 30 November.

Home Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses and flats have been subjected to insulation measures under the home insulation scheme for each year since the home insulation scheme started and for each region and the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* The number of grants paid under the homes insulation scheme for 1986, 1987, 1988 and the first two quarters of 1989 appear in table 2.21(d) of "Housing and Construction Statistics Part 2", No. 38; figures for earlier years are in table 7.9 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inspectors have left Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution *(a)* since its formation, *(b)* since 1 January 1988 and *(c)* since 1 January 1989.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Seven inspectors have left Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in total since its formation including six since 1 January 1989.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inspectors were employed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution *(a)* at its formation, *(b)* on 1 January 1988, *(c)* on 1 January 1989 and *(d)* at the latest available date; and what should be its establishment.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution employed 75 professional staff at its formation; 90 on 1 January 1988; 100 on 1 January 1989 and 105 at present. The inspectorate's complement is 135 professional posts.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the inspectors at Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution have been employed by the inspectorate since its formation.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* A total of 35 inspectors have been recruited into Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution since its formation.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the inspectors now employed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are based in London; and at what centres the other inspectors are based.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution employs 104 professional staff; 46 professional staff are currently based in London but over half of these will be posted to the new regional offices when they become operational next year. Other staff are based in Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Chelmsford, Chester, Darlington, East Grinstead, Lancaster, Leeds, Lincoln, Luton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Preston and Sheffield.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions have been instigated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in 1987, 1988 and 1989 for *(a)* air pollution and *(b)* toxic waste disposal.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution undertook three successful prosecutions for air pollution in 1987-88 and two in 1988-89 (records are kept for financial years). HMIP has no regulatory powers under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in relation to toxic waste disposal. Enforcement responsibility lies with waste disposal authorities.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report drafted by the late director of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, Mr. Brian Ponsford.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* The report on Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution prepared for the Department's management information system (MINIS 10) was placed in the Library on 15 November.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about staff morale within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Staff in Her Majesty's Inspectorate are responding in positive and constructive ways to the demands placed on them at a time of fundamental organisational change. This was evident at the inspectors' conference held in late November, and is exemplified by a letter written by inspectors to a national newspaper on 11 December. I appreciate such efforts by staff to dissociate themselves from remarks attributed to unnamed inspectors in recent press reports. The committed professionalism of the staff in the inspectorate plays a vital role in maintaining and improving environmental standards.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's annual report 1988-89 to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on Wednesday 13 December to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mr. Taylor) at column *734*.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to increase the establishment of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* The staff complement of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution was increased from 219 to 240 with effect from 2 October 1989. An additional 10 posts have already been approved for 1990-91 and the objectives of HMIP and the resources it needs to fulfil them effectively are being kept under close review.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of the recent reorganisation within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on his plans to introduce integrated pollution control.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* The reorganisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution was intended to facilitate the integration of the four regulatory functions which were combined when it was formed. It provides the organisational structure appropriate for the effective implementation of integrated pollution control. I am pleased that such good progress has been made to date.

Community Charge Video

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress being made in the production of a video on the poll tax in British sign language for deaf people.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* The Department has corresponded with four bodies—the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, the British Deaf Association, the British Association of the Hard of Hearing and the Royal Association in Aid of Deaf People—on the potential demand for a video in BSL on the community charge and the most effective way of making it. We await one substantive response.

Community Charge Leaflet

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that deaf-blind people have access to the information in the poll tax leaflet.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* Proposals for making information on the community charge available to the blind through braille and moon, which are currently being pursued with the Royal National Institute for the Blind, should assist some of the deaf-blind. We are considering other means of informing deaf-blind people, such as the production of a video specifically for the deaf.

In addition, carers—including those who care for deaf-blind individuals—are one of the groups we intend to address before the new system comes into effect with information on the community charge benefit scheme and transitional relief.

Environmental Audit

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to conduct an annual environmental audit within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* It is already my policy to take environmental concerns into account in the activities of my Department. I am considering whether procedures to achieve this should be strengthened.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received recent representations from trade unions opposing privatisation of the Property Services Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* My right hon. Friend met the PSA trade unions on 26 September. No other direct representations from trade unions have been received.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the figures for sewage sludge dumped in British coastal waters for each of the last three years.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

Disposals to sea of sewage sludge from the United Kingdom under licences issued under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 were as follows:

	'000 tonnes (wet weight)
1986	9,735
1987	9,016
1988	9,856

About 95 per cent. of the content is water.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessments his Department has made as to the environmental impact of dumping sewage sludge in British coastal waters.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

The Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for monitoring disposals to sea from England and Wales. An extensive field assessment programme is conducted at each of the designated disposal sites; each site is visited at least biennially although some sites are studied more frequently. In addition, licensees are required to carry out an approved programme of dumpsite monitoring as a condition of their licences. Detailed monitoring reports have been published for a number of sites and copies of these are in the Library. The results of these investigations have shown that the disposal of sewage sludge has caused no detrimental environmental impact at any of the designated sites.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what controls his Department imposes on the heavy metal content of sewage sludge dumped at sea.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

Licences to deposit sewage sludge at sea provide for annual limits on the quantity of individual metals in the waste. A requirement is placed on licensees to monitor the composition of sludge as dumped and to report levels to the licensing authority. The composition of sludge is checked directly by sampling by the licensing authority.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to provide a financial incentive to commercial and industrial firms for the recycling and re-use of materials; and if he has investigated the feasibility of, and problems associated with, the kerbside collection of materials from domestic and commercial refuse for recycling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do not intend to introduce such legislation; although proposed legislation on pollution control and waste disposal will provide a market incentive for recycling. We are however contributing, with

the Department of Trade and Industry and the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment, to the evaluation of the UK2000 recycling city project in Sheffield which includes a kerbside collection scheme for recyclable domestic refuse.

ENERGY

Coal Mining (Productivity)

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the increase in labour productivity in the coal mining industry since 1983-84.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal's productivity has increased by over 75 per cent. from pre-strike levels.

Greenhouse Effect

18. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on the report of the Energy Select Committee on the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government's response to the select Committee's report was submitted on 8 November and has since been published by the Committee. We continue to monitor carefully this matter and take decisions accordingly.

35. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment has been made by his Department of the implications for energy policy of global warming caused by the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has produced a report entitled "An Evaluation of Energy Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Measures to Ameliorate Them', as a contribution to the work of the intergovernmental panel on climate change. A copy of the report is available in the Library of the House.

Offshore Oil and Gas

19. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the trade unions involved in the offshore oil and gas industry; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State an I met members of the AEU parliamentary group and the AEU executive on 28 November for a discussion on offshore safety.

Electricity Privatisation

20. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress towards his announced timetable for the privatisation of the electricity industry.

42. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of plans for the electricity privatisation share issue and related matters.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government remain on target to complete the privatisation of the industry within this Parliament.

75. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what provisions he has made to ensure a level playing field between fossil fuel industries, including coal, and nuclear fuel supplies to electricity generation subsequent to vesting day.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Coal will continue to be the major fuel for electricity generation for many years to come. The non-fossil fuel obligation will ensure that nuclear power continues to play a strategic role in ensuring security of supply and that renewable sources of energy will be able to fulfil their potential as soon as practicable.

68. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the total cumulative cost to his departmental public expenditure so far of consultancy, advertising and advice relating to privatisation of the electricity supply industry

Mr. Michael Spicer: The total cumulative cost to my Department (as at 30 November this year) is £12·4 million.

46. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what provisions he has made to ensure a proper valuation of the electricity supply industry's land and property assets before vesting day.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Valuers have been appointed to value the land and property of each of the electricity supply industry bodies.

31. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a further statement on the likely cost implications for major industrial users of the privatisation of electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Major industrial users will be able to negotiate with the supplier or generator of their choice. The introduction of competition should enable such customers to obtain competitive contracts. There will thus be a downward pressure on costs and prices.

Coal Imports

21. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest figures for coal imports *(a)* by countries and *(b)* by quantity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: During the period January to October 1989, 9·5 million tonnes of coal have been imported into this country. The table gives a breakdown by country of origin.

January to October 1989

Country of origin	*Quantity (thousand tonnes)*
United States of America	3,879
Australia	1,822
Poland	830
Colombia	682
Canada	622
China	405
South Africa	323
Federal Republic of Germany	225
Netherlands	169
USSR	163
Panama	106
Venezuela	86
Belgium	62
Others	175
Total	9,549

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

59. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the volume of coal imports into the United Kingdom for the current year; and if he will meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss levels of coal imports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government do not produce estimates of coal imports for the current year. In the period January to October 1989 coal imports were 9·5 million tonnes.

My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

30. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of the coal burned in the United Kingdom in 1988 was imported.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A total of 11 per cent. of coal burned in the United Kingdom in 1988 was imported.

Electricity Council

22. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the Electricity Council; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Electricity Council regularly to discuss various matters of mutual interest.

62. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Electricity Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) today.

Coal Industry (Pollution)

23. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps are being taken to assist the coal industry in reducing environmental pollution and using energy more efficiently.

43. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps are being taken to assist the coal industry in reducing environmental pollution and using energy more efficiently.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government will provide up to £8 million towards the cost of British Coal's work on the topping cycle at Grimethorpe. This offers a 20 per cent. reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared with coal fired stations which should make a significant contribution to combating the "greenhouse effect".

Sizewell B

25. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the cost of completion of Sizewell B and the average operating cost per kilowatt hour.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the CEGB. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how frequently he intends to review the ongoing construction costs of Sizewell B.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB is providing my Department with six-monthly progress reports on Sizewell B, including construction costs. Nuclear Electric will continue this arrangement and has made clear that it is committed to completing the station to time and present cost estimates.

British Coal

26. **Mr. Steve Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much the Government have invested in British Coal since 1979.

40. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much the Government have invested in British Coal since 1979.

Mr. Wakeham: Since 1979 the Government have financed over £6·5 billion of new investment in the coal industry and continue to invest at a rate of over £2 million every working day.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on how many occasions in the past 10 years the auditors of British Coal or the National Coal Board have drawn his attention to inadequacies in their accounts.

Mr. Wakeham: In each of the years 1979-80 to 1988-89 there has been a qualification of the accounts of British Coal by their auditors.

British Coal's accounts have been qualified by its Auditors from 1983-84 to 1988-89 owing to the uncertainty over the recoverability out of future earnings of the total net book amount of the corporation's tangible fixed assets. British Coal's accounts were also qualified from 1983-84 to 1986-87 owing to the uncertainty over the amount of liability arising from future claims for surface damage; and from 1979-80 to 1983-84 over provision for liabilities under the mineworkers' pension scheme and the voluntary early retirement scheme.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of the British Coal Corporation regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

57. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the manpower employed by British Coal over the next three years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is not possible to predict manpower requirements over future years since this will depend on the performance of individual collieries and the success British Coal has in meeting the requirements of its customers. Manpower requirements are however, a matter for British Coal and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

36. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters will be discussed.

65. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Alternative Energy Projects (Cornwall)

27. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the funding of alternative energy projects in Cornwall.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department is funding an extensive renewable energy R and D programme on projects in Cornwall and elsewhere. The major projects in Cornwall include:

The Cornwall Energy Project by Cornwall County Council; The Geothermal Hot Dry Rock Project by the Camborne School of Mines;

The Proposed Wind Farm at Cold Northcott by the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Energy Efficiency

28. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what improvements have been made in energy efficiency in the last 10 years.

32. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what improvements have been made in energy efficiency in the last 10 years.

73. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what improvements have been made in energy efficiency in the last 10 years.

Mr. Wakeham: The nation has substantially improved its energy efficiency over the last 10 years. Our energy ratio —the amount of primary energy used to produce each £1,000 of gross domestic product—has improved from 1·24 tonnes of coal equivalent in 1979 to 1·01 tonnes of coal equivalent in 1988; and average reduction in energy intensity of 2 per cent. per year.

45. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress is being made with the promotion of energy efficiency in Government Departments.

70. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress is being made with the promotion of energy efficiency in Government Departments.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave to my hon. Friends for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on 13 November 1989 at column *95*. The next meeting will take place on 31 January 1990.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each year since 1978 the collective estimated expenditure on energy efficiency measures in the domestic sector consistent with the figure of £73 million given for 1987-88 in paragraph 3.7 of the National Audit Office's "National Energy Efficiency", breaking the figure for each year down into assistance for *(a)* owner-occupiers, *(b)* private sector tenants and *(c)* council tenants.

Mr. Wakeham: The main components of £73 million for 1987-88 quoted by the National Audit Office consisted of direct expenditure on domestic energy efficiency measures through the homes insulation scheme and the community insulation programme (the latter also supports training objectives and so cannot be attributed entirely to energy efficiency measures). Expenditure under these schemes is given below for each financial year from 1981-82. A breakdown of the figures in the form requested is not available.

	Homes insulation scheme (£ million)	*Community insulation programme (£ million)*
1981-82	24·3	n/a
1982-83	30·0	n/a
1983-84	25·5	5·5
1984-85	25·3	8·6
1985-86	28·0	19·4
1986-87	26·5	36·6
1987-88	24·8	45·2
1988-89	9·9	n/a

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the progress since June 1987 of the building research energy conservation support unit in *(a)* concentrating on the elderly and disadvantaged and *(b)* private sector housing research and development activities.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Since June 1987 the building research energy conservation unit, working for the Energy Efficiency Office:

1. Has completed 12 demonstration projects to promote more efficient energy use in sheltered accommodation and the refurbishment of older housing.

2. Is currently preparing a number of good practice guides and case studies for low income housing under the best practice programme.

3. Has developed a strategy under the best practice programme designed to achieve large scale improvements in energy efficiency in private sector housing. The results of the first of these initiatives is Wimpey's new "Superspec" home which my right hon. Friend opened earlier this month and which is built to standards considerably beyond those required to meet the 1990 building regulations for energy efficiency.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the relationship between the provision of information on energy efficiency by the privatised electricity distribution boards and the role of the Energy Efficiency Office.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Officials of the Energy Efficiency Office (EEO) have already had discussions with officials of the Office Of Electricity Regulation (OFFER) whose role is to supervise the obligations of licensees to promote energy efficiency under the terms of the Electricity Act 1989.

I have no doubt that the present constructive co-operation between regional energy efficiency offices and electricity boards will continue. For instance REEOs are members of judging panels of competitions on energy efficiency organised by electricity distribution boards. Electricity boards and the EEO frequently co-operate in the sponsorship of seminars and exhibitions on energy efficiency.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether the new scheme of grants towards basic insulation measures announced on 22 November will extend to *(a)* cavity wall insulation and *(b)* double glazing;

(2) whether the new system of grants for house insulation announced on 22 November will involve contributions to the cost by the recipients of grants.

Mr. Wakeham: Details of the new scheme of grants will be announced in due course.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what conclusions the Energy Efficiency Office has reached about questions of productivity of neighbourhood energy action projects under employment training; and if he will place a copy of its conclusions in the Library.

Mr. Wakeham: The most recently available information on productivity was included in the Neighbourhood Energy Action publication "Energy Efficiency and Employment Training—One Year On". I have asked Neighbourhood Energy Action, from whom the report is publicly available, to send a copy to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps the Energy Efficiency Office has taken to persuade the cavity wall trade associations to develop and provide to consumers a common protection package backed by insurance guarantees; and if he will introduce legislation to achieve this objective.

Mr. Wakeham: With the encouragement of the Energy Efficiency Office, the Office of Fair Trading and the National Cavity Insulation Association are discussing the production of a revised code of professional practice; it is expected that this will give a wide range of consumer safeguards additional to current arrangements. I am hopeful that agreement can be reached on a satisfactory code without legislation.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest international energy efficiency league table.

Mr. Wakeham: The following table lists IEA member countries in order of energy ratio in 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, measured in tonnes of oil equivalent per $1,000 GDP at 1985 prices.

	Energy ratio
Japan	0·26
Switzerland	0·28
Italy	0·33
Denmark	0·34
West Germany	0·42
United Kingdom	0·43
Spain	0·43
Austria	0·44
United States of America	0·44
Norway	0·46
Australia	0·48
Ireland	0·50
Netherlands	0·51
Sweden	0·54
Belgium	0·55
Greece	0·57
Portugal	0·62
New Zealand	0·63
Canada	0·64
Turkey	0·80
Luxembourg	0·85

Sources: Energy Balances of OECD Countries; OECD Main Economic Indicators.

These energy ratios are determined by many factors, including climate and industrial structure.

16. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any further proposals to promote the more efficient use of energy.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Energy Efficiency Office will continue to promote regularly the adoption of energy efficiency measures through all its programmes.

Neighbourhood Energy Action

33. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the director of Neighbourhood Energy Action; and what matters will be discussed.

76. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the director of Neighbourhood Energy Action; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend met the director of Neighbourhood Energy Action on 14 November to hear first hand about NEA's work and again on 22 November when he saw first hand, one of the community insulation projects which they help to co-ordinate. He expects to meet the director again shortly, but a date has yet to be arranged.

Electricity Supply

34. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to review the 15 and 25 per cent. limits on the generators' direct sales to electricity supply customers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I have no plans to do so.

Nuclear Energy

37. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for future research and development of nuclear energy.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government, in conjunction with the nuclear industry, will need to assess future nuclear R and D requirements in the light of the prospects for nuclear power, both nationally and internationally from the mid-1990s.

High-voltage Cables

38. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the health implications of high-voltage cables.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Research into the problem of possible effects on human health of electric and magnetic fields from electricity power lines has failed to demonstrate a clinical effect upon human health from fields at electricity power frequencies.

A considerable worldwide research effort is continuing on the subject. The CEGB has been funding a programme of work over many years, much of it at independent laboratories, and research will continue when the electricity supply industry is privatised.

Officials at the Department of Energy, the Department of Health, and the National Radiological Protection Board are keeping a watch on the research which is under way. We are by no means complacent, but at present we do not see evidence for serious concern.

South of Scotland Electricity Board

39. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 13 November 1989 at column 14.

53. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the South of Scotland electricity board; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no plans at present to meet Mr. Miller.

National Power

41. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chief executive designate of National Power: and what matters were discussed.

64. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chief executive designate of National Power; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I regularly meet the chief executive of National Power to discuss matters of common interest.

CEGB

44. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters were discussed.

69. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I regularly meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss matters of common interest.

European Fast Reactor

47. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what contribution the United Kingdom will be making to the European fast reactor over the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The fast reactor programme carried out by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority contributes to R and D work in support of the European fast reactor conceptual design. The United Kingdom is also contributing towards the cost of this conceptual design work.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

48. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc; and what was discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend last met Mr. Harding on 16 November when they discussed a range of matters concerning British Nuclear Fuels plc.

British Gas (Disconnections)

49. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps have been taken by British Gas to ensure that the number of disconnections for debt are kept to a minimum.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The number of British Gas customers disconnected for debt is now lower than at any time since records were first kept in 1977. This reflects the agreement which British Gas reached earlier this year with the Director General of Gas Supply on new methods of debt collection with a view to reducing the number of disconnections. I am sure that Ofgas and the Gas Consumers Council will continue to work with British Gas to ensure that this excellent result continues.

Nuclear Electric plc

50. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman-designate of the new Nuclear Electric plc; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I intend to meet the chairman-designate of Nuclear Electric whenever necessary to discuss matters of concern to Nuclear Electric.

Severn Barrage

51. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has reviewed the projected completion date for the Severn barrage in the light of his recent discussions regarding nuclear energy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Further work on the Severn barrage is continuing. This includes some site specific environmental work and a study of the organisation and financing issues for a barrage. Only when this work is complete will it be possible to review projected completion dates.

Home Insulation

52. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action is being taken to assist low-income households with home insulation.

29. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action is being taken to assist low-income households with home insulation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) earlier today.

Piper Alpha

54. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he anticipates that the inquiry into the Piper Alpha disaster will be concluded.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for Lord Cullen.

Nuclear Power

55. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last discussed nuclear power with his French counterpart.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There have been no meetings since that described in the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister of State gave on 10 April at column *328*.

Electricity Boards

56. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairmen of the 12 area boards; and what matters will be discussed.

67. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the 12 area boards; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the area board chairmen regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Association for the Conservation of Energy

58. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met a representative for the Association for the Conservation of Energy; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend met Mr. Norman Adsetts OBE, chairman of the Association for the Conservation of Energy, on 29 November. They reviewed the work which ACE and energy efficiency office have jointly undertaken to promote energy efficiency, such as the current series of joint seminars for industrialists and buildings professionals, and discussed the need to ensure that this constructive co-operation continues.

PWR Stations

60. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many representations he has had to date from local authorities in areas of proposed pressurised water reactor stations regarding requests for compensation for preparing of their submissions on the issue.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The only such representation which my right hon. Friend has received is in relation to the Central Electricity Generating Board (Combwich) Compulsory Purchase Order 1988, into which a public local inquiry commenced on 13 June 1989. Following the CEGB's decision to withdraw the compulsory purchase order a number of parties involved, including the consortium of opposing local authorities, has applied for my right hon. Friend to make an order requiring the CEGB to meet their costs arising from the public local inquiry.

We are awaiting any recommendation the inspector may make to the Secretary of State on the award of costs before proceeding with consideration of these requests. We have writen to all those requesting costs to advise them of this course of action.

UKOOA

61. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the representatives of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I meet the representatives of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association (UKOOA) regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Director General of Electricity Supply

63. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the Director General of Electricity Supply; and what matters will be discussed.

66. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Director General of Electricity Supply; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the Director General of Electricity Supply regularly to discuss various matters of mutual interest.

Eastern Europe (Energy Needs)

71. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what advice and assistance is being offered by his Department to the countries of eastern Europe on how they might control and manage their energy needs more effectively.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 8 December at column *444*.

In addition the Government have financed a reconnaissance mission led by the consulting arm of CEGB, through the know-how fund to look at the requirements of the electricity supply industry in Poland. It is expected that further assistance will be made available when the recommendations of the report have been considered. We would expect to help other countries with the modernisation of their power industries in accordance with their needs and when funds become available. A know-how fund for Hungary—£25 million over five years—begins operating in April 1990.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

72. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on Government support for flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are committed to ensuring that the sulphur dioxide reduction requirements of the EC large combustion plants directive are met. The retrofitting of power stations with flue gas desulphurisation equipment will assist in achieving this. The choice of equipment to be used is a matter for the industry itself.

Alternative Energy Sources

74. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what measures he is taking to promote the use of alternative energy sources.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We are supporting a major research and development programme aimed at developing commercially viable and environmentally acceptable renewable technologies to contribute to future energy supply. Over £50 million is earmarked for expenditure over the next three years. Our plans to provide a special place in future for non-fossil fuel energy in the context of a privatised electricity supply industry should give a significant boost to renewable sources of energy. Around 600MW of capacity is being set aside exclusively for renewables during the 1990s as part of the non-fossil fuel obligation. There are clear signs that the obligation has already provided considerable encouragement to the development of renewables.

Technology transfer plans have been developed for each technology classed as economically attractive such as passive solar design of buildings and landfill gas. A wide range of promotional material has been produced to aid commercial deployment and raise awareness about the potential of renewable technologies. This includes our "Review" journal, information bulletins, project profiles and summaries of the results of research programme, technical reports, technical workshops and videos.

Gas Industry

77. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations have been received about opening up competition in the gas industry.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) earlier today.

Fabrication Sector

78. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the value of business opportunities for the United Kingdom fabrication sector within the single European market post-1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We expect new orders in goods and services on the UKCS in the early 1990s to be between £2·5 billion to £3 billion per annum, of which fabrication represents around 20 per cent. The UKCS will continue to represent some 70 per cent. of the offshore market in the Community. Given the competitiveness of United Kingdom fabricators, I would expect our industry to continue to win a substantial proportion of the work available in the Community.

Electricity Standing Charges

79. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much was raised in electricity standing charges in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Electricity Council. I shall ask the chairman of the council to write to the hon. Member.

Hinkley Point C

80. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of Hinkley Point C.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Hinkley Point C public inquiry closed on Friday 1 December. It is now for the inspector to prepare his report and submit it to my right hon. Friend.

Low-sulphur Coal

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the level of reserves of low-sulphur coal in Britain.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Coal reserves in England generally have medium to high levels of sulphur—on average about 1·6 per cent. Reserves in parts of Wales and Scotland have a relatively lower sulphur content. Their recoverability is for the British Coal Corporation to assess.

Marchwood Engineering Laboratories

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will reconsider the future of Marchwood engineering laboratories, following his decision not to privatise nuclear power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Marchwood site has been allocated to Power-Gen. The Government do not intend to reopen the existing split of assets between National Power and PowerGen.

Wind and Wave Power

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the future of research into wind and wave power.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Energy paper No. 55 "Renewable Energy in the UK: The Way Forward" was published in 1988 and gives our view on the development strategy for the renewable energy technologies to the year 2000, including wind and wave. It remains our intention to carry out the research programme as outlined in the energy paper.

British Gas

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many directives have been issued to British Gas since privatisation of gas on energy efficiency.

Mr. Wakeham: None. However condition 14 of British Gas's authorisation as a public gas supplier requires it to provide guidance to customers on the efficient use of gas. My Department promotes the efficient use of gas and other fuels through the activities of the Energy Efficiency Office, and my officials have regular discussions with British Gas on energy efficiency matters.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with British Nuclear Fuels Limited about feasibility studies of replacement for the Chapelcross and Calder Hall power stations.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet the Chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc regularly and discuss a range of matters concerning the company. The feasibility study was one of the matters touched upon at my last meeting on 16 November.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to lift the requirement for his consent to be given before any nuclear power station is built in any county in Britain.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall bring into force in due course section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 under which my consent will be necessary before any power station, nuclear or otherwise, of a capacity greater than 50MW, can be constructed in England and Wales. Smaller stations will be subject to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Acts.

In addition, a licence to install and operate a nuclear reactor must be obtained from the Health and Safety Executive under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965.

The construction of power stations in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will direct British Nuclear Fuels Limited to publish details of the feasibility studies it is conducting into replacements for the Chapelcross and Calder Hall power stations.

Mr. Wakeham: The feasibility study is a commercial document and publication will be a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Energy Labelling

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will introduce legislation to bring in compulsory energy labelling.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 13 November 1989 at column *95*.

Coal Reserves

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's current estimate of the total coal reserves in Britain.

Mr. Wakeham: The British Coal Corporation is responsible for estimating coal reserves. Its estimate of coal in place in the United Kingdom (that is, in seams over 60 cm thick and less than 1,200 m deep, minus coal which has already been worked) is 190 billion tonnes. Strictly recoverable reserves (that is, coal in known coalfields which could be extracted with existing technology) are estimated by the corporation at 45 billion tonnes. The amount of these reserves that would actually be workable would of course depend on economic circumstances at the time. Recoverable reserves from existing mines and certain new mine projects, including the extractable and saleable coal which is sufficiently proved, of adequate thickness and quality, and in a suitable mining environment, are currently assessed at between 3 billion and 5 billion tonnes.

Accounting Conventions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether in the last 10 years he or his predecessors, either by direction or informally, secured changes in the accounting conventions followed by British Coal, British Gas, any electricity board, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., Nirex, Amersham International, British National Oil Corporation, Britoil or Enterprise Oil, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: The accounts of British Coal, British Nuclear Fuels, British National Oil Corporation, Britoil, Enterprise Oil, Nirex and Amersham International have been prepared under the historic cost convention throughout the period in question.

Boards in the electricity industry began producing accounts under the current cost convention from 1980-81, as did the Atomic Energy Authority from 1980-81 and British Gas from 1981-82. Previously accounts for these organisations had been prepared under the historic cost convention. The decision to prepare accounts under the current cost convention was taken by the organisations concerned, in the light of best accounting practice at the time.

Halliburton Ltd.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, following the correspondence and discussions between the Minister of State and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton, he will now issue instructions that no tenders will be considered by his Department from any subsidiary company of Halliburton Manufacturing and Services Ltd., until *(a)* its company secretary replies to the further letter sent to him by the hon. Member on 9 October about his constituent Mr. A and *(b)* the company offers appropriate compensation to Mr. A for all expenses and financial loss suffered by Mr. A since his road accident in Italy in December 1983.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 December 1989

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Disclosure Guidelines

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General whether his guidelines as to the disclosure of unused material or potential witnesses apply in summary cases and those indictable offences that are to be tried summarily.

Mr. Attorney-General: No; the guidelines apply only to cases to be tried on indictment.

However, in any case, whether tried on indictment or summarily, if the prosecution have taken a statement from a person whom they know can give material evidence but decide not to call him as a witness, they are under a duty to make that person available to the defence and should supply the defence with the witness's name and address.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

USSR (Human Rights)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics regarding the persecution and abuses of human rights suffered by members of the Ukrainian Christian Democratic Front; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to take every opportunity to underline to the Soviet authorities the need to implement early and effective legislative reform which will guarantee the rights of all Soviet citizens. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will stress this point when he meets Mr. Shevardnadze in London on 19 December.

BBC World Service

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the British Broadcasting Corporation world service to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for this exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall for a week from 2 April 1990.

San Salvador

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions were taken by Her Majesty's Embassy in San Salvador to alleviate suffering during the recent heavy fighting.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Our chargé has emphasised to the Salvadorean authorities the importance of proper respect for human rights in all circumstances and the need to facilitate relief work. He is making every effort to ensure that British relief workers can pursue their work in safety. On 20 November we gave £100,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross for emergency relief work in El Salvador.

ENERGY

Commissioners for Energy and Competition

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the European Commissioners for Energy and Competition; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Wakeham: I and my colleagues have contact with these and other Commissioners from time to time and discuss a range of issues.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the accountancy firms advising the Government on the sale of British Coal have at any time since June 1979 been *(a)* criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors or *(b)* criticised by any disciplinary committee of the accountancy profession for lacking in professional conduct, efficiency or competence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No accountancy firms have so far been appointed to advise the Government on the sale of British Coal.

Press Releases

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many departmental press releases have been issued in the past year; how many have dealt with *(a)* nuclear energy, *(b)* coal, *(c)* oil, *(d)* gas and *(e)* renewable energy technologies; and which academic institutions routinely receive these press releases.

Mr. Wakeham: From 1 December 1988 to 12 December 1989 my Department issued 218 press releases, of which nine dealt with nuclear energy; nine with coal; 79 with oil; 13 with gas; and 12 with renewables.

The following academic institutions routinely receive press releases:

Birmingham Polytechnic
Dundee Polytechnic
Heriot-Watt University
Institute of Energy
Institute of Petroleum
Institute of Purchasing and Supply
Institute for Scientific Information
Journal of the Institute of Water Engineers and Scientists
Sunderland Polytechnic
The Open University
The College of Petroleum Studies
University of Dundee
University of Glasgow
University of Keele
University of London
University of Sussex
Oakham School Science Faculty
National Technical University—Athens

National Energy Foundation

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will arrange a meeting with the new National Energy Foundation, based in Milton Keynes; and if he has made any assessment of the benefits to his energy conservation policy that may arise from the work on energy audits in housing being developed by the National Energy Foundation.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall be meeting trustees and the director of the National Energy Foundation on 20 December. I look forward to discussing at that meeting their progress on developing a scheme for the energy labelling of houses.

Energy Surveys

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in implementing the European Commission directive on the introduction of energy surveys on the United Kingdom housing stock.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government do not consider that the draft directive proposed in 1987 is appropriate. The Energy Efficiency Office supports the development of voluntary energy labels for housing and I consider this to be the best way forward.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many projects of the building research energy conservation support unit are *(a)* completed and *(b)* under way.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The building research energy conservation support unit manages projects for the Energy Efficiency Office under the energy efficiency demonstration and R and D schemes started in 1979, and the best practice programme which replaced them in 1989. On 15 December 1989 the figures were:

	Number
(a) Projects completed	82
(b) Projects under way	60

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the Central Electricity Generating Board has yet submitted for his approval under section 63 of the Electricity Act a transfer scheme for the allocation of assets to the nuclear companies; whether the term nuclear companies includes for this purpose, the new publicly owned Nuclear company; and whether the Central Electricity Generating Board has discretion as to whether to transfer unused sites to the nuclear company or to another successor company.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB is required, under section 66 of the Electricity Act 1989, to make a scheme for the division of all its property, rights and liabilities to its successor companies. The new publicly owned nuclear company will be regarded as a successor company. The scheme, presently being prepared by the CEGB, will include unused sites.

Oil and Gas Exports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give a breakdown between oil and gas exports both *(a)* in terms and *(b)* in value at constant prices on the same basis as that provided in his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *767-68*; and if he will provide equivalent figures for 1989 up to the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wakeham: The breakdown between oil and gas exports on the basis requested is:—

Exports (f.o.b.)

	Quantity (thousand tonnes)		*Value (£ million at 1985 prices*[1]	
	Oil	*Gas (coal equivalent)*	*Oil*	*Gas*
1988	89·037	82	15·018	8
1989 (10 months to October)	53·809	7	9·304	2

Source: Customs and Excise. Overseas Trade Statistics (including subsequent revisions to oil exports figures).

[1] Figures at 1985 constant prices have been derived by applying the unit value for exports in 1985 to the relevant volumes in 1988 and 1989. The figures for gas are estimated.

The standard international trade classification in use for years up to and including 1987 does not enable the breakdown between exports of petroleum gases and natural gas, and therefore between oil and gas, to be made for those years.

Natural Gas

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list the countries from which Britain imported natural gas in 1988 together with the tonnages for each such country;

(2) what was the tonnage of natural gas brought ashore from the United Kingdom continental shelf in 1988; and how much came from *(a)* gas fields and *(b)* oil fields.

Mr. Wakeham: The main countries from which Britain imported natural gas in 1988 were Norway (15·4 million tonnes of coal equivalent) and Algeria (0·1 million tonnes of coal equivalent).

The tonnage of natural gas brought ashore from the United Kingdom continental shelf in 1988 was 45·9 million tonnes of coal equivalent from gas fields and 14·2 million tonnes of coal equivalent from oil fields.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's estimate of the likely exports and imports of natural gas in each year till 1995.

Mr. Wakeham: The United Kingdom imports approximately 20 per cent. of its gas from Norway and small amounts of liquefied gas from Algeria and elsewhere. This proportion is expected to decline over the next three or four years as imports are replaced by indigenous supplies. Gas exports are at present small and their future size will depend on market opportunity.

Fuel Exports and Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide equivalent figures about fuel exports and imports to those given in the tables in his answer of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *767-68*, for 1989 up to the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wakeham: The equivalent information for fuel exports and imports for the 10 months to October 1989 following my previous answer on 9 November is as follows:

Table 1

Thousand tonnes

1989	Exports (fob) Coal	Exports (fob) Oil	Imports (cif) Coal	Imports (cif) Gas (coal equivalent)	Imports (cif) Oil
January to October	1,672	53,813[1]	9,594	12,410	48,969

Table 2

£ million at 1985 prices[2]

1989	Exports (fob) Coal	Exports (fob) Oil	Imports (cif) Coal	Imports (cif) Gas	Imports (cif) Oil
January to October	64	9,306[1]	510	933	7,851

[1] Contains a small amount of natural gas exports.

[2] Figures at 1985 constant prices have been derived by applying the unit value for exports in 1985 to the relevant volumes in 1988 and 1989. The figures for gas are estimated.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Child Care

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to amend the Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948 as amended by section 60 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1960 to incorporate stricter criteria regarding the standards, training and qualifications of registered child carers.

Mr. Needham: The Nurseries and Childminders Regulation Act 1948, as amended by section 60 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, does not extend to Northern Ireland. However, similar provisions are contained in the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968. The Great Britain legislation has recently been modified and updated in the Children Act 1989. Consideration is being given to the relevance for Northern Ireland of various provisions in the Children Act 1989, including those relating to the registration of childminders, and revised provisions will be included in a proposal for a draft Order in Council which will replace the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to encourage both private and public sector employers to provide more good quality day care facilities for children under five years old.

Mr. Needham: The ministerial group on women's issues, on which my noble Friend represents Northern Ireland interests, has been looking at child care needs and how best to ensure a growth in the provision of high quality day care facilities so that parents are enabled to balance their family responsibilities with employment opportunities. Consideration is given to the relevance to Northern Ireland of any initiatives endorsed by the group —for example, further encouragement to employers to use the tax reliefs available to provide child care facilities.

The Government encourage the growth of child care provision in Northern Ireland by funding women to set up childminding businesses under the enterprise allowance scheme and, under the job training programme, assist females to retrain for work by providing a weekly allowance of up to £50 to meet child care costs. They would also welcome any proposal to extend certain private sector initiatives such as the child care voucher schemes to Northern Ireland.

In the public sector, day care facilities for staff already exist in some health and social services and educational facilities. The Northern Ireland Civil Service is considering with the trade unions whether day care facilities for under-fives can be provided for its staff.

Consideration is being given to the need to improve the registration and enforcement arrangements for child-minders, playgroups and day nurseries in Northern Ireland legislation, in the light of new provisions introduced for England and Wales in the Children Act 1989.

Fire Brigade Training School, Jordanstown

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the planning procedures which have been followed in respect of the planning application for a fire brigade training school or depot at Jordanstown, Newtownabbey, County Antrim.

Mr. Needham: On receipt of the planning application on 25 May 1988, it was advertised and neighbour notification letters were issued. The usual consultations, including several with Newtownabbey borough council, were carried out before the issue of refusal of planning permission on 6 April 1989. An appeal was lodged against the Department of the Environment's refusal. The appeal hearing was held on 19 October 1989, and a final decision is awaited from the independent planning appeals commission.

Hypothermia

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of deaths where hypothermia was mentioned as a cause; and what is his estimate of the total number of deaths where hypothermia was the underlying cause of death in Northern Ireland in each year from 1978 to 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The information is as follows:

	Any mention	Underlying cause
1978	[1]5	5
1979	[1]13	13
1980	[1]18	18
1981	[1]10	10
1982	[1]17	17
1983	[1]10	10
1984	[1]11	11
1985	28	16
1986	32	14
1987	21	7
1988	18	7

[1] Prior to 1985 hypothermia was not coded as an associated cause of death.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans for the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute to become an executive agency under the Next Steps programme.

Mrs. Chalker: I have decided that it would be right for the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute to become an executive agency. I believe that the freedoms and disciplines which agency status will bring will further enhance the institute's contribution to the British aid programme and development of the poorer countries, and will reinforce its position as an international centre of scientific excellence. We are planning for ODNRI to become an agency on 1 April 1990. Mr. Anthony Beattie, the present director of the institute, will be appointed as the agency's first chief executive.

PRIME MINISTER

Methodist Conference

Q37. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to meet the president of the Methodist Conference.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

NATO

Q48. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with NATO Heads of Government.

The Prime Minister: The NATO Heads of Government meeting on 4 December, at which President Bush gave an account of his talks with President Gorbachev, was a very successful meeting. We reaffirmed the importance of NATO for our security, for arms control, and for stability in Europe, and welcomed President Bush's statement that United States forces and nuclear weapons will remain in Europe as long as the Allies want or need them. At the same time, there was universal support for the momentous changes taking place in eastern Europe.

Ambulance Dispute

Q83. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the ambulance staff dispute.

The Prime Minister: NHS management has made a final offer to the ambulance unions. Nobody will receive a basic pay increase of less than 9 per cent., and some will get over 16 per cent. As a result qualified ambulance men and women are already eligible for back pay ranging from over £600 to £850. Leading ambulance men and women in London trained in paramedical skills are eligible for back pay of up to £1,290. For the first time, staff with extended training and using paramedical skills will receive extra pay of £500 a year. There will also be a review of the 1986 salaries structure which could mean additional payments.

The demands of the trade union side of the Ambulance Council are unreasonable and I am very disappointed that it continues to take action against patients and has rejected the NHS chief executive's very reasonable suggestion of a truce over Christmas and the new year. Over 96 per cent. of NHS staff have settled their pay without recourse to industrial action. The unions should accept the very fair offer on pay and resume normal working.

Economic and Monetary Union

Q92. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on European economic and monetary union in the light of the Strasbourg summit.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made in this House on 12 December at column 857-59.

Crisis at Christmas

Q120. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit the Crisis at Christmas centre in London during Christmas.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Cereals

Q155. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the recent decision of the Agricultural Council to disregard the stabiliser regime for cereals; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I do not accept that the stabiliser regime for cereals is being disregarded. Recent decisions by the Agriculture Council will in fact tighten up its operation and should therefore secure further savings.

Church Lawford

Q224. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Church Lawford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Constitution

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of Wednesday 13 December, which Minister would be responsible for putting proposals on a constitutional separation of powers to Parliament in respect of *(a)* a democratically elected second Chamber, *(b)* an Executive elected separately from Parliament, *(c)* a written constitution and *(d)* judicial review of the constitution.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no such proposals.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she has written to Mr. V. P. Singh, the new Indian leader; and if she will make a statement on relations between the new Indian Government and the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Yes. In my message to the new Indian Prime Minister I said that our two countries had an excellent relationship.

We look forward to working closely with the new Indian Government to strengthen our close links.

National Health Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister why she has refused to discuss the Government's National Health Service plans with the medical royal colleges, the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the joint consultants committee and the Royal College of Midwives; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has said on many occasions that he welcomes constructive views on how to implement our proposals for the Health Service. He remains willing to engage in constructive dialogue with the leaders of the health professional bodies. That is why he, his fellow Ministers and senior officials in the Department of Health have met the leaders of the medical profession to talk about the proposed reforms on over 100 occasions since the White Paper was published. We are convinced —as are many people working in the NHS—that change is essential if the service is to prosper. I see little purpose in having a separate meeting.

Doctors and Dentists (Remuneration)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the chairmanship of the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration.

The Prime Minister: Sir Graham Wilkins' period as chairman comes to an end at the end of the current review. I have appointed Sir Trevor Holdsworth to succeed him. The Government are very grateful to Sir Graham for his long and valuable work, first as a member of the review body since 1979 and latterly as chairman.

Engagements

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with Mr. Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister.

ENVIRONMENT

Cleaning Contracts

109. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implementation of cleaning contracts in schools.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the Local Government Act 1988, local education authorities are required to invite competitive tenders for school cleaning when they wish to carry out this work using their own employees. The successful tenderer is required to perform the contract to the specification set by the authority and for the price quoted.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of total water shares has gone to *(a)* small investors, *(b)* United Kingdom institutions, *(c)* foreign investors and *(d)* others;

(2) what provision was considered to ensure that small shareholders were allocated more than half the total water shares available.

Mr. Howard: Under the offer arrangements for the water offers, 26·55 per cent. of the available shares were initially allocated to the United Kingdom retail public offers (including shares reserved for employees and bonus shares), 54·95 per cent. of the available shares were allocated to the institutions; and 18·5 per cent. were allocated to overseas offers in Japan, continental Europe, Canada and the USA.

In view of the heavy demand in the retail public offers, various clawback arrangements were triggered to increase the size of the retail public offers. As a result the final allocations were 46·875 per cent. to the retail public offers; 39·25 per cent. to the institutions and 13·875 per cent. to the overseas offers.

The retail public offers were significantly oversubscribed in each of the 10 offers and applications had to be scaled down. In deciding a basis for scaling down, preference was given first to employees, pensioners and customers of each company, with 2·4 per cent. of the retail public offers being allocated to employees and pensioners and 57·5 per cent. to customers. Preference was also given to small applications over large. For example, applicants in the retail offers at the minimum application band all received a 100 per cent. allocation. Applicants applying for 10,000 or more shares, in contrast, received from 6·4 per cent. to 40 per cent. of the shares they applied for and, in the case of one company, no allocation.

Toxic Algal Blooms

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on toxic algal blooms; and what steps he is taking to reduce this problem.

Mr. Howard: Algal blooms are a common occurrence in many waters during the summer although sampling results this year showed that toxic forms of algal blooms were present in a number of reservoirs, lakes and similar waters in England and Wales. The NRA, which is now responsible for monitoring such waters, informed site owners and appropriate environmental health officers. The problems have subsided with the onset of colder weather. The NRA is conducting investigations into the cause of the problems this year, and will be considering the need for measures to reduce the risk of their recurrence.

EC Habitats Directive

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that the proposed European Commission habitats directive will be

effectively applied in England, Scotland and Wales following the proposed fragmentation of the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I would refer my hon. Friend to the statement made in this House by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 23 November—*Official Report* columns *17-18*—which set out the arrangements that will apply after the reorganisation of the NCC for a statutory joint committee dealing inter alia with issues that have an international dimension. I am confident that any future European Commission directive on habitats—if agreed by the Council of Ministers—could be applied effectively within this framework.

House of Commons (Lighting)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *323*, why there has been no lighting on the stairs leading from the Committee Corridor for the last 14 days.

Mr. Chope: From the limited description it is not possible to identify which of the five stairs to the Committee Corridor the hon. Member has in mind. A check on 13 December identified only two bulbs, each on separate stairs, which needed replacing, plus three emergency lights. But I hope the hon. Member understands that it is not necessary to use the formalities of a parliamentary question in order to have a light bulb replaced.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has on the future policy on effective control of hazardous toxic and dangerous wastes and their disposal; what provisions are currently in force; what are the penalties for illegal dumping of such wastes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Environmental Protection Bill contains measures to reform the whole of waste management legislation. The new duty of care on waste producers and the stronger powers for licensing authorities will apply to all wastes but will be especially relevant to those wastes which are dangerous or difficult to dispose of—known as special waste. Current provisions for licensing of disposal facilities will be greatly enhanced. The maximum penalty available on indictment for illegal deposit of special waste is five years imprisonment and an unlimited fine. The Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 SI 1709, which control the movement of special waste from producer to disposer are under review and a consultation paper will be issued shortly.

Swap Contracts

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have entered into swap and swap option contracts; and if he will provide an estimate of the notional value of each local authority's involvement at the end of the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is not collected by the Department.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to improve staffing and resources of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 18 December by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for which matters concerning the policy and operations of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution he is responsible to Parliament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is part of the Department of the Environment and reports jointly to the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many posts remain vacant in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; what are the reasons for the shortfall; what steps he is taking to fill the vacancies; and how many and which of the vacancies are in the senior management level of the inspectorate.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution staff complement was increased from 219 to 240 from 2 October 1989. Vacant posts at 1 November 1989 numbered 41, most of which were professional posts. It is difficult to establish precisely the reasons for the shortfall. It reflects, inter alia, the limited pool of necessary specialist skills and experience available, and market rates of pay. To fill the vacant posts Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is undertaking a recruitment campaign offering exceptional salary increases of 28·5 per cent. over those offered in the last recruitment round. There is one vacancy currently at senior management level in the inspectorate.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to ensure that Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has sufficient personnel fully to implement its responsibilities for the radiation monitoring network.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As a result of an open competition the Department hopes to fill the final remaining post on the radiation monitoring network team.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those local authorities which in 1987-88 were responsible for more than £35 million of expenditure.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows. Total expenditure is defined as rate fund revenue account expenditure on services plus debt charges and net contributions to other accounts (such as the housing revenue account), less interest receipts and specific and supplementary grants.

Local Authorities whose total expenditure in 1987-88 exceeded £35 million

	£ million
Avon	392·6
Bedfordshire	234·0
Berkshire	283·4

	£ million
Buckinghamshire	268·2
Cambridgeshire	238·1
Cheshire	435·6
Cleveland	301·1
Cornwall	181·7
Cumbria	225·3
Derbyshire	416·5
Devon	392·2
Dorset	230·8
Durham	257·8
East Sussex	249·5
Essex	599·1
Gloucestershire	207·8
Hampshire	578·8
Hereford and Worcester	251·8
Hertfordshire	365·2
Humberside	408·1
Isle of Wight	51·3
Kent	570·7
Lancashire	616·9
Leicestershire	383·7
Lincolnshire	220·1
Norfolk	273·6
Northamptonshire	237·8
Northumberland	127·7
North Yorkshire	278·5
Nottinghamshire	450·5
Oxfordshire	203·6
Shropshire	169·3
Somerset	181·6
Staffordshire	428·6
Suffolk	230·9
Surrey	334·3
Warwickshire	194·1
West Sussex	273·6
Wiltshire	216·2
Bolton	126·6
Bury	82·6
Manchester	316·5
Oldham	116·0
Rochdale	114·4
Salford	130·5
Stockport	119·9
Tameside	110·7
Trafford	92·4
Wigan	149·3
Knowsley	93·6
Liverpool	309·2
St. Helens	91·7
Sefton	130·8
Wirral	166·8
Barnsley	104·1
Doncaster	140·8
Rotherham	119·8
Sheffield	265·4
Gateshead	103·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	159·3
North Tyneside	100·4
South Tyneside	80·8
Sunderland	153·3
Coventry	159·9
Dudley	125·2
Sandwell	152·2
Solihull	80·3
Walsall	129·6
Wolverhampton	141·2
Bradford	254·6
Calderdale	97·2
Kirklees	196·6
Leeds	308·4
Wakefield	144·3
ILEA	975·4
City of London	71·7
Camden	156·7
Greenwich	93·3
Hackney	144·3
Hammersmith and Fulham	105·5
Islington	103·8
Kensington and Chelsea	49·3
Lambeth	152·7
Lewisham	120·2
Southwark	130·6
Tower Hamlets	125·8
Wandsworth	100·7
Westminster	91·6
Barking and Dagenham	75·2
Barnet	135·9
Bexley	101·6
Brent	184·8
Bromley	114·3
Croydon	144·2
Ealing	173·1
Enfield	128·9
Haringey	154·2
Harrow	100·2
Havering	104·8
Hillingdon	118·5
Hounslow	118·2
Kingston-upon-Thames	62·5
Merton	73·1
Newham	177·5
Redbridge	98·4
Richmond-upon-Thames	61·8
Sutton	78·0
Waltham Forest	154·5
Bristol	35·3
Leicester	36·6
Metropolitan Police Police Authority	446·9
Greater Manchester Police Authority	88·1
Merseyside Police Authority	59·3
South Yorkshire Police Authority	35·3
Northumbria Police Authority	46·3
West Midlands Police Authority	84·4
West Yorkshire Police Authority	65·1
London Fire/CD Authority	180·2
Greater Manchester Fire	41·9
West Midlands Fire	40·1
Greater Manchester Transport	76·1
Merseyside Transport	62·4
South Yorkshire Transport	45·5
Tyne and Wear Transport	55·8
West Midlands Transport	55·5
West Yorkshire Transport	58·7

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the most specific detail available those people who are mentally or physically disabled who will be exempt from the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Any physically disabled person who has his sole or main residence in an NHS hospital or a residential care home, a nursing home, a mental nursing home, a private hospital or a hostel and is receiving treatment there, will be exempt from the personal charge. So far as mental disability is concerned, any person who is in receipt of an invalidity pension, severe disablement allowance,

unemployability supplement, an unemployability allowance, an attendance allowance or a constant attendance allowance, and who has a certificate from a registered medical practitioner stating that his or her intelligence and social functioning is severely impaired will be exempt from the personal community charge. It is not possible to be specific about the particular disorders which may lead to such conditions being fulfilled.

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make regulations on the final form of the community charge bill.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department has sent out today a letter to all charging authorities which encloses draft regulations which would provide for the final form of the bill and the explanatory notes which will accompany the bill. The purpose of sending this material out now is to enable authorities to arrange for the printing of these documents forthwith, if they wish. A copy of the letter and enclosures have been placed in the Library. I expect to lay the regulations in January.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he intends to give to those people, nominated as responsible individuals, who are in receipt of community charge changes of circumstances forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Changes of circumstances forms are a convenient way of helping people to comply with their statutory duty to inform the community charges registration officer of any change in circumstances which affects their register entry. The responsibility for ensuring that they comply with the appropriate regulations lies with registration officers.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to monitor the issuing of changes of circumstances forms by community charge registration officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Every individual has a duty to inform the community charges registration officer of any change of circumstances which affects his or her register entry. There is, however, no duty to volunteer such information about any other person. A responsible individual has a duty to provide information about people other than him or herself only in response to a specific request from the registration officer.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the percentage of income represented by rate support grant for *(a)* the City of Durham and *(b)* Basildon for (i) 1978-79 and (ii) 1988-89.

Mr. Chope: The percentages for each authority are not comparable between years because of changes to the rate support grant system in 1981-82. Nevertheless, the information is as as follows:

Rate support grant as percentage of rate fund revenue account income

	Per cent. 1978-79	*Per cent. 1988-89*
City of Durham	64	29
Basildon	52	16

Water Pollution

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the division of responsibility for controlling water pollution between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Howard: Currently the National Rivers Authority has responsibility for controlling water pollution under powers in the Water Act 1989, although additional controls are exercised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, advised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, to limit inputs of certain dangerous substances to sewers.

Under our proposals for integrated pollution control wastes released to all environmental media from certain industrial processes would be controlled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The National Rivers Authority would, however, have powers to ensure that these controls were exercised so as to protect the aquatic environment. The authority would continue to have primary responsibility for discharges to water from all other sources.

These arrangements were announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 28 February following extensive consultation. They will be introduced through the Environmental Protection Bill which we shall shortly be introducing. They will entail close co-operation between the two regulatory bodies, and a memorandum of understanding will be drawn up to cover the detailed interface of their respective responsibilities.

Waste Disposal

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has received any representations from the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors on environmental pollution matters; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he last met the waste disposal organisation NAWDC; and what was discussed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have regular contact with NAWDC at all levels on environmental matters concerning waste management. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside last met it on 25 September to discuss, in particular, legislative proposals.

World Conservation Monitoring Centre

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department has made to the world conservation monitoring centre at Cambridge.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The world conservation monitoring centre is funded jointly by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Wide Fund for Nature, and the United Nations Environment Programme from their respective subscription incomes, including those from the United Kingdom Government and private sources. The centre also earns income from providing services to customers in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. My Department does not at present directly fund any work at the centre.

Stocken Hall, Rutland

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment upon what dates since April 1988 inspectors from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission visited Stocken hall, Rutland, to inspect the condition of the buildings; what similar visits have been paid by officials of his Department since January; and what action has subsequently been taken.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: An inspector from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission last visited Stocken hall in April 1988. Officials from my Department carried out a brief external inspection in April 1989. On learning in October that a proposed sale of the hall had fallen through, my Department asked the commission to inquire into its condition.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment upon what date the planning appeal by Endersby Developments Ltd. regarding Stocken hall, Rutland, was withdrawn; and whether his Department has received details of any subsequent planning applications relating to this building.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The appeal was withdrawn on 21 August 1989. There have been no subsequent planning applications and we understand that sale to a new purchaser is imminent.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken since 12 April to bring about the immediate protection of Stocken hall, Rutland; whether he has yet authorised the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission to serve a notice under section 101 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The owners have done some urgent repairs to weatherproof the hall. My Department has therefore not yet authorised the commission to serve a notice under section 101, but has asked it to monitor the situation closely.

Homes Insulation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give for each year since 1978 the total spending on the homes insulation scheme.

Mr. Chope: Information on the total spending on the homes insulation scheme in 1986, 1987, 1988 and the first half of 1989 appears in table 2.21 of "Housing and Construction Statistics part 2", No. 38. Figures for earlier years appear in table 7.7 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether inclusion of the homes insulation scheme within the home improvement grant scheme will make it more or less difficult to retain the same priority for loft insulation work.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The new system of renovation grants to be introduced under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 will enable local authorities to assist householders to carry out a wide range of measures to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. It will be a matter for individual authorities to decide on the particular priority for loft insulation work within these measures. Additionally, the Secretary of State for Energy proposes to introduce a scheme of grants for basic insulation measures through community insulation services for low-income householders in the forthcoming Social Security Bill.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the details of the means-testing for the new improvement grants payable from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Chope: Details of the test of resources will be included in regulations which are currently being prepared and will be laid before the House in due course.

Theatre Royal, Chatham

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he decided not to exercise his powers with regard to the demolition order on the grade II listed building the Theatre Royal, Chatham, for which a privately developed complex of uses is being planned locally.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: An application for listed building consent to demolish the Theatre Royal, Chatham was referred to my right hon. Friend by Rochester upon Medway city council to give him the opportunity of calling in the application for his own decision. Having obtained expert advice from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage) my right hon. Friend decided that, in view of the poor condition of the building and the fact that the site was included in proposed shopping redevelopment for the improvement of Chatham town centre, he would not be justified in taking the matter out of the hands of the local planning authority.

Map Errors

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he still proposes to take legislative action to amend the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to enable the correction of errors on definitive maps.

Mr. Chris Patten: The judgment in the Court of Appeal on 23 November in the case of R v Secretary of State for the Environment ex parte Simms and Burrows, has confirmed that the Act already includes the power to make orders to correct errors or mistakes, as Parliament intended. There is therefore no need for amending legislation; we will be issuing further advice to surveying authorities as soon as possible.

Public Housing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the contribution made by the federal and state governments in Germany to the building of new publicly owned housing in the latest year for which figures are available; and what is the net contribution made by central Government in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* A full comparison on an objective basis between the United Kingdom and Germany is not available.

Most dwellings in Germany (Federal Republic) that have been built with public subsidy are owned by non-profit-making bodies or by private companies and individuals. Some are owner-occupied. Total public expenditure for "social" dwellings (the German term) was estimated at 5,130 million DM in 1986. Separate figures for the share in this total of federal and state governments are not immediately available. In the United Kingdom central Government housing subsidies paid to local authorities are not divided into financing new building and other categories of expenditure. Central Government subsidies in 1986-87 to local authorities and public corporations were £811 million. This does not include subsidies to housing associations.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department monitors the operation of rules laid down in respect of the assigning of contracts, the sale of assets, or the partnership arrangements for implementing development plans, by urban development corporations; if he has any plans to improve these arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* Urban development corporations are subject to annual audit by external auditors appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Auditors are required, inter alia, to report on whether corporations have complied with normal public sector procedures for letting contracts, disposing of assets and partnership arrangements. The Department liaises closely with UDCs on their progress; this includes appropriate guidance, monitoring, and approval of projects under financial delegation arrangements.

Drinking Water

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to ensure that drinking water meets the standards laid down in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* In addition to the continuing role of local authorities in checking the quality of water supplies in their areas, the new drinking water inspectorate, shortly to be established by my right hon. Friend, will seek to ensure that drinking water standards are met.

Algae

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will issue guidance that the practice of back-washing blue-green algae, filtered from reservoirs, into streams, be discontinued and safer methods of disposal be introduced;

(2) if he will list the reports he has received of poisoning of people, domestic and farm animals that have been linked with the contamination of reservoirs and streams with toxins produced by blue-green algae;

(3) what changes he proposes in farming practices to reduce the growth of blue-green algae in lakes and reservoirs;

(4) what proposals he has to discourage the formation and to reduce the growth of blue-green algae in lakes and reservoirs.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* These are primarily matters for the NRA which is responsible for monitoring the quality of inland waters in England and Wales. Sampling of waters this year established that toxic forms of blue green algae were present in a number of reservoirs, lakes and similar waters. With the onset of colder weather, the problems have subsided. The NRA is conducting investigations into the cause of this year's problems with a view to establishing the need for possible preventive measures to be taken in the future.

"Getting out of the Greenhouse"

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain a copy of the Friends of the Earth publication, "Getting Out of the Greenhouse," for his departmental library.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Friends of the Earth have already been kind enough to send a copy of this publication to the Department.

Homelessness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* families and *(b)* individuals he estimates will spend the 1989 Christmas holiday period in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England and Wales other than as tourists.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The latest estimate of households accepted as homeless under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act and living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England is 11,880 at end September 1989. No estimate is available either of the number of individuals this represents or the number in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at later dates.

For Welsh figures I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* families and *(b)* people he estimates spent the Christmas holiday in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England and Wales in each of the years 1983 to 1988, inclusive, other than as tourists.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Estimates for England of the number of households accepted as homeless under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the 1985 Housing Act and living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at 31 December in each of the years 1983 to 1988 inclusive are as follows:

Year	*Number of households*
1983	2,700
1984	3,670
1985	5,360
1986	8,990
1987	10,370
1988	10,970

No estimates are made of the number of people this represented.

For Welsh figures I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many children he estimates spent the Christmas holiday period in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England and Wales other than as tourists during each of the years 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The number of children among the homeless households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England are not reported by local authorities and my Department has no estimates.

For information about Wales I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each year since 1978 *(a)* the spending by local authorities under the energy conservation programme and *(b)* the number of dwellings thereby receiving energy efficiency improvements.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Information on activity under the energy conservation programme in 1986, 1987, 1988 and the first quarter of 1989 appears in table 2.21 of "Housing and Construction Statistics", No. 38. Figures for earlier years appear in table 7.7 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

The table relates to activity where the only work carried out to the dwelling is under the energy conservation programme. Local authority dwellings may also be insulated when other general renovation work is carried out, but these cases cannot be separately identified.

DEFENCE

Ferranti

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the chair of Ferranti; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 November 1989 at column *237*.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress on the European fighter aircraft project development.

Mr. Alan Clark: The main development contracts for the European fighter aircraft were signed in November 1988. Since then work on the first prototype has progressed satisfactorily; and the first full-scale development engine is expected to be run next year. The selection of equipment for EFA is also proceeding; and to date only the choice of radar has presented significant difficulties.

British Aerospace

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence upon what subjects he has recently received representations from British Aerospace.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend and I, and Ministry of Defence officials, maintain contact with the senior management of all major defence contractors, including British Aerospace. The details of our discussions are always confidential.

EH101 Helicopter

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present status of the EH101 helicopter programme; and who is now personally supervising the contract.

Mr. Alan Clark: The RN anti-submarine warfare variant of the EH101 helicopter is in the sixth year of full development, whilst the RAF utility variant is in the project definition phase. Following normal practice the programmes are managed by a project director with the Ministry's Procurement Executive.

TOGS System

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects to take delivery of the TOGS system; and what is the present delay time of the contract with United Scientific;

(2) whether he intends to involve any penalty clauses on the TOGS system contract with United Scientific.

Mr. Alan Clark: Deliveries of these equipments are continuing behind schedule and we are seeking redress under the terms of the contract with Avimo.

Battle Tank

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to proceed with the purchase of a new main battle tank in the time scale originally envisaged and in the same number.

Mr. Alan Clarke: As I told the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) on 14 December, *Official Report*, columns *822-23*, it is our intention to reach a decision on a tank to replace Chieftain by the end of 1990. The precise number of tanks to be ordered has yet to be be decided.

Chieftain Tanks

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what criteria the selection of a Chieftain replacement will be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend, the former Secretary of State, on 20 December 1988, *Official Report* columns *259-60*.

Scottish Landholdings

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the extent of land held in Scotland by his Department in *(a)* September 1988 and *(b)* September 1989; and if he will break this down by region and island authorities.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Landholdings statistics relate to 1 April each year. The table shows the position at 1 April 1988 and 1 April 1989, indicating land and foreshore holdings:

Region or Island Authority	1 April 1988 Land/Foreshore Holdings (acres)	1 April 1989 Land/Foreshore Holdings (acres)
Borders	Nil	Nil
Central	197	197
Dumfries and Galloway	10,620	10,400
Fife	3,181	3,269
Grampian	5,387	5,361
Highland	12,854	12,853
Lothian	2,923	2,870
Strathclyde	9,103	9,082
Tayside	3,874	3,599
Orkney	9	8
Shetland	120	111
Western Isles	3,310	3,314
Totals	51,578	51,064

Nuclear Weapons (Transport)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received representations from Clydesdale district council complaining about the transport of nuclear weapons through the Clydesdale constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am aware of one letter from Clydesdale district council which was concerned in part, though not exclusively, with nuclear weapon movements, and was sent to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland in May this year. A copy was passed to the Ministry of Defence and a reply was sent at official level.

Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's relationship with and contribution to the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR) is the NATO reserve forces organisation which represents the reserve officers of member states.

The Ministry of Defence provides some financial assistance towards office expenses, administration and subscription fees for United Kingdom participation in CIOR through the Reserve Forces Association, which has filled the role of the official United Kingdom representative since 1972.

Military Service

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration has been given by his Department to the introduction of short-term military service for young people.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to introduce any further short-term forms of military service.

Recruitment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's recent report "Manpower and Recruiting in the Lean Years of the Nineties".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: An abridged version of the MARILYN report was placed in the Library on 8 June 1989.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the amounts spent by his Department on recruitment advertising in the years 1985-86 to 1988-89; and what is estimated for 1989-90 for *(a)* the Regular Army, *(b)* the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve and *(c)* the Home Service Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Spending on recruitment advertising from 1985-86 to 1988-89 was as follows:

£ million

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Regular Army	3·625	4·547	3·984	4·467	[1]10·093
TAVR	1·811	1·879	[2]4·316	[3]4·264	[1]5·500
Total	5·436	6·426	8·300	8·731	15·593

[1] Estimated final outturn.
[2] Includes £ 2 million from National Employers Liaison Committee (NELC).
[3] Includes £2·1 million from NELC.

Separate figures for the Home Service Force are not available, but would be included in the TAVR figures.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Company Ownership

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has of the number of United Kingdom companies which are under the ultimate ownership of Australian companies but which have intermediary ownership via the Cayman Islands or the Netherlands Antilles.

Mr. Redwood: The chief executive of Companies house tells me that the information is not available.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition by advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mr. Forth: The number of contracts awarded by the Department of Trade and Industry and covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was 24 in the 1988-89 financial year and 10 in the current financial year to date. Of these five were awarded following advertisement in the EC Journal and 29 were considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous supplier.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those accountancy firms which have been criticised by *(a)* his Department's Inspectors and *(b)* the Registrar of Friendly Societies since June 1979.

Mr. Redwood: Ten reports of inspectors appointed under the Companies Act published since June 1979 have

contained criticisms of accountants. The extent of criticism varies in scale and reference should be made to individual reports.

Name of company	*Date of publication of report*	*Name of accountants*
Ashbourne Investments Limited	31 July 1979	Wright Stevens & Lloyd
Data Investments Limited	30 April 1980	Robson Rhodes
Cornhill Consolidated Group Limited	31 December 1980	Singleton, Fabian & Derbyshire
Kina Holdings Limited	24 March 1981	Harold Everett, Wand & Co. Dixon Wilson Tubbs & Gillett Collins & Co.
Scotia Investments Limited	22 January 1981	Lubbock Fine
Gilgate Holdings Limited and others	8 September 1981	Thornton Baker & Co. Gerald Edelman & Co.
Norwest Holst Limited	23 June 1982	Price Waterhouse
Ramor Investments Limited	22 March 1983	Price Waterhouse
Greenbank Trust plc	5 August 1988	Pannell Kerr Forster
Milbury plc	27 October 1988	Arthur Young

I assume that the hon. Member intended to refer to inspectors appointed by the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies under powers comparable to those of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under the Companies Act.

No such inspector has reported since June 1979.

Oil Products

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in view of the recent increase in the price of domestic heating oil, diesel fuel, agricultural oils and other non-petrol oil products, if he will ask the Office of Fair Trading to make an investigation.

Mr. Redwood: If the hon. Member has any evidence that such price increases are the result of monopoly abuse or anti-competitive or restrictive trade practices he should bring it to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading who has powers under the competition legislation to investigate such matters if he considers it appropriate.

Forklift Trucks

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current position on the inter-industry arrangement on forklift trucks from Japan, referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 30 March 1988, *Official Report*, columns *480-81*.

Mr. Redwood: The British Industrial Truck Association (BITA) has told us that its bilateral voluntary restraint arrangement with the Japan Industrial Vehicle Association is no longer in operation. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade has, in reaffirming the Government's general policy against restrictive arrangements, informed BITA that any agreements to restric. imports of forklift trucks to the United Kingdom would have to be fully economically justified.

Computer Misuse

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he accepts the recommendations of the Law Commission's report on computer misuse; and what response he intends to make to the report;

(2) what individuals and organisations he has consulted on the detailed proposals contained in the Law Commission's report on computer misuse; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his estimate of the annual loss of trade and industry in the United Kingdom caused by computer misuse.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* In welcoming the Law Commission report, I stated that I was inclined to accept its recommendations subject to the views of interested parties. Representations that I have had since that date have convinced me that it provides a sound basis for legislation and that such legislation should be introduced as soon as a suitable opportunity arises.

My Department has written directly to over 280 interested parties to ask for their views on the Commission's proposals. This represents a wide cross-section from industry and commerce, private individuals, consumer organisations, academia, the legal profession and other Government Departments. We have also contacted officials and law enforcement agencies in countries where legislation has already been introduced. The overall response indicates widespread support for the introduction of legislation along the lines suggested by the Law Commission.

There are no centrally collected statistics on the damage caused by computer misuse on which a reasonably accurate estimate could be based. Private sector sources have estimated figures of between £400 million and £1 billion but I cannot validate them. However, the reported cases have convinced me that misuse is occurring, and that the problem is of sufficient magnitude to cause concern.

Rover Group

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how much of Rover's trading tax losses was eliminated in the final agreement;

(2) what was the maximum quantum of the Rover Group's pre-acquisition trading tax losses potentially available to claw back under the contractual sale arrangements between the Department of Trade and Industry and British Aerospace.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Because the £469 million of the cash injection relating to Rover's historic debt had, through conditions attaching to it, to be passed down to the operating companies in the form of a taxable subvention it eliminated a corresponding amount of trading tax losses. The remainder of the mechanism effectively to limit Rover Group's access to the benefit of past trading tax losses was the pound-for-pound contractual clawback affecting use of more than £500 million of such losses. It is not possible to state the amount of Rover's trading tax losses eliminated in the final agreement or the maximum amount potentially available to be clawed back. These depend on the outcome of the normal application of tax law to the circumstances of the Rover Group, including any claims or disclaimers made by it, and this is governed by the strict rules of tax confidentiality.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the capital allowances disclaimed by the Rover Group which, under the March conditional terms, could have been clawed back under the contractual sale arrangements if used outside the Rover Group were disclaimed within the statutory time limit set down in the relevant Finance Acts.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* As I said in my reply of 12 December on disclaimers of capital allowances by Rover Group—*Official Report*, column *638* —this is a matter for Rover Group and the normal rules of confidentiality governing taxpayers' affairs apply.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the plan to defer payment of £150 million for the Rover sale was discussed; and what were the options under consideration in July.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The deferment of the £150 million consideration was first raised at the end of June 1988. Three specific options were set out in a letter of July 1988 from the then Secretary of State to the chairman of British Aerospace, a copy of which has already been placed in the Library of the House. There were further discussions on 12 July following receipt of the letter at which it was decided that the consideration would be paid not later than 30 March 1990.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he received the request from British Aerospace seeking abandonment of the golden share.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* I am unaware of any such request. As I explained on 13 December at columns *699-700*, the company has consulted us on a number of occasions on the detail of certain provisions in the company's articles of association which require the consent of the special shareholder before any changes can be made.

Telephone Chatlines

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* full details of the code of practice recently agreed between the director general of OFTEL and the telecommunications industry relating to the provision of telephone chatlines and one-to-one services.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* I have arranged for copies of the two codes of practice recently approved by Oftel to be placed in the Library of the House.

Bananas

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the annual tonnage of imports of bananas from the dollar area received by each company under the quota arrangements.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* No. Details of allocation of shares in all import-administered quotas are regarded as confidential.

Waste Reduction

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what discussions he has had in the last 12 months with Fisons Limited on waste reduction and minimisation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had in the last 12 months with Orsynthetics Limited on waste reduction and minimisation; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what discussions he has had in the last 12 months with Sterling Organics Limited on waste reduction and minimisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have had no discussions on waste reduction and minimisation with the particular companies referred to by the hon. Member. However, my Department is encouraging business in general to take further steps to reduce their waste and has recently published a business guide to waste minimisation entitled "Cutting Your Losses". A copy of the booklet has been placed in the Library of the House.

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will announce his response to the Parliamentary Commissioner's investigation into the role of his Department in the Barlow Clowes collapse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the statement made earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the increase in real earnings of manual and non-manual workers in the decade to June 1989 analysed in both cases to show for the worker at 1 per cent. and 5 per cent., from the top and the manual worker 5 per cent. from the bottom, *(b)* the average of the earnings above the high figures and below the low one and *(c)* for all groups the corresponding information (i) manufacturing and for the whole economy less the production industries, (ii) full-time adult female manual and non-manual workers in each case and (iii) the numbers covered by each category.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his reply of 11 December to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, columns *467-68*, with regard to the increases in weekly and hourly earnings of certain workers, what is his estimate of the increase in unit labour costs in each case in the decade ending in April.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on unit labour costs is not available in the form requested.

Business and Professional Women

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Nicholls: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for an exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 22 January to Friday 26 January.

Employment Training

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees are undergoing employment training in *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle, *(c)* Hyndburn and *(d)* Rossendale and Darwen constituencies; and how many training scheme vacancies exist.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available on a parliamentary constituency basis and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what special funding arrangements there are to cater for the needs of people with disabilities participating in the employment training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: Additional funding is available to meet the special training needs of people with disabilities, where these arise, as follows:

(a) the necessary cost of providing special equipment, adaptations to premises or equipment, and, for the sensorily impaired, communication services.

(b) variable Supplementary Grants—up to £40 per week per trainee—for places involving higher cost training (including, but not exclusively for, people with disabilities).

(c) the necessary cost of creating an individualised training programme for those for whom, because of the effects of their disability, existing contracted training places would be inappropriate. This facility is known as Special Training Provision (STP).

(d) the necessary cost of providing a residential training place where this is deemed appropriate.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to change the provision for travel costs in the employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* There are no plans.

Trade Union Commissioner

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the annual accounts of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Copies of the commissioner's statement of accounts will be laid before each House by the Comptroller and Auditor General in due course.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Labour and Social Affairs Council meeting held in Brussels on 30 November.

Mr. Eggar: In the field of health and safety at work, the Council formally adopted three directives. These provide for minimum standards of health and safety for the workplace, for the use of work equipment and the use of personal protective equipment by workers at work. In addition a common position was reached on a directive dealing with protection of workers from risks relating to exposure to carcinogens at work.

A draft resolution on the setting up of a European employment survey was also adopted; as was a proposal allowing the Commission to negotiate on behalf of the Community at the International Labour Organisation on certain issues.

The Council continued its discussion of the proposal for a technology training programme (Eurotecnet) following amendments by the European Parliament with a view to its adoption at an early future meeting of the Council. Also in the field of training, the Commission outlined a proposal for a programme on continuing training throughout working life; and there was a statement by the presidency on the need for training measures to combat female unemployment and promote equality of opportunity in the labour market.

The Council heard an oral presentation by the Commission on the proposed social action programme to implement the social charter. There was also an oral presentation by the Commission on the worker participation proposals in the draft European company statute.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place a copy of the information memorandum about the sale of the Skills Training Agency in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. The sale process has now reached a stage where I am able to place a copy of the information memorandum about STA, and a copy of the information packs about individual parts of STA, in the Library. Copies will also be made available to staff in the STA and to the recognised trade unions.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has issued any recent guidelines to the Forestry Commission concerning the release of agricultural land for afforestation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland on 24 October 1989, *Official Report*, columns *399-401*, to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

Rape

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment his Department has made of the implications for reform of the law of the recent High Court trial in Aberdeen in which a man was charged with raping his wife.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At the sitting of the High Court in Aberdeen commencing on 6 November 1989 a man did appear on indictment charged inter alia with raping his wife on two separate occasions. After trial, he was convicted of attempted rape and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. It is not considered that this case has any implications for the reform of the criminal law of Scotland.

Land Registration

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the extent of coverage by districts of Scottish land registration as at December.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Land Register is operational in the areas of the counties of Renfrew, Dumbarton and Lanark, and the barony and regality of Glasgow.

Land Holdings

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the extent of land held in Scotland by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland in *(a)* September 1988 and *(b)* September 1989; and if he will break this down into region and island authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

At 30 September each year

Region/area	*Small holdings*		*Other*		*Total*	
	1988 hectares	*1989 hectares*	*1988 hectares*	*1989 hectares*	*1988 hectares*	*1989 hectares*
Borders	504	391	25	25	529	416
Dumfries and Galloway	521	466	259	259	780	725
Central	11	11	2,292	2,292	2,303	2,303
Lothian	170	141	511	382	681	523
Fife	3	3	—	—	3	3
Tayside	70	41	177	177	247	218
Grampian	387	366	1,136	1,136	1,523	1,502
Strathclyde	8,019	6,788	430	430	8,449	7,218
Highland	93,564	93,440	1,142	1,130	94,706	94,570
Western Isles Islands	18,096	18,082	279	278	18,375	18,360
Orkney Islands	247	247	—	—	247	247
Shetland Islands	2,161	2,161	—	—	2,161	2,161
	123,753	122,137	6,251	6,109	130,004	128,246

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the extent of land held in Scotland by the Forestry Commission in *(a)* September 1988 and *(b)* September 1989; and if he will break this down by region and island authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission compiles revised land use figures at 31 March each year by its forest districts. Figures are not available for other times of the year, nor are they held by local authority administrative areas.

At 31 March 1988, the commission managed 727,670 hectares of land in Scotland; the figure at 31 March 1989 was 725,576 hectares. The breakdown into forest districts is given in the commission's annual reports, copies of which can be found in the Library of the House.

Hospital Shops, Glasgow

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his approval has been sought by Greater Glasgow health board to sell off its hospital shops currently run by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and replace them with a commercial service; and what is his policy towards the adoption of such a policy by other health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board has not made any approach to my right hon. and learned Friend on this matter. I understand, however, that there have been discussions with the Women's Royal Voluntary Service about a particular site at Gartnavel general hospital.

Health boards have been advised by the Scottish Home and Health Department that they should pay close attention to the views of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and other voluntary organisations when formulating proposals that would have an effect on the facilities used by these bodies to provide services for patients.

Student Allowances

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the levels of students' allowances and parental contributions for session 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: I propose to increase the main rates of allowances by 5 per cent. in the 1990-91 academic year. In addition, I propose to increase the differential in the rate paid to students studying in London. The new rates for Scottish students will be as follows (rates for 1989-90 are shown in brackets):

	£	(£)
Student in the parental home	1,660	(1,575)
Student living away from home		
outside London	2,200	(2,090)
in London	2,780	(2,585)

Students in receipt of maintenance allowances will be eligible for reimbursement of travelling expenses in excess of the £60 included in the main rates.

The threshold for parental contributions, and the points on the contribution scales at which the rate of contribution changes, will be uprated to reflect the movement of earnings. Parents whose residual income is below £11,500 will not be assessed for a contribution.

The full contribution scales for session 1990-91 are set out in the table.

Residual Income	*Contribution Scale*	
	Scale 1	*Scale 2*
£	£	£
11,500	60	45
12,000	131	98
13,000	274	206
14,000	417	313
14,700	517	388
15,000	577	433
16,000	777	583
17,000	977	733
18,000	1,177	883
19,000	1,377	1,033
20,000	1,577	1,183
21,000	1,777	1,333
21,600	1,897	1,423
22,000	1,997	1,498
23,000	2,247	1,686
24,000	2,497	1,873
25,000	2,747	2,060
26,000	2,997	2,248
27,000	3,247	2,435
28,000	3,497	2,623
29,000	3,747	2,810
30,000	3,997	2,998
31,000	4,247	3,185
32,000	4,497	3,373
33,000	4,747	3,560
34,000	4,997	3,748
35,000	5,247	3,935
36,000	5,497	4,123
37,000	5,747	4,310
37,210	[1]5,800	4,350
38,000	—	4,498
39,000	—	4,685
40,000	—	4,873
41,000	—	5,060
42,000	—	5,248
43,000	—	5,435
44,000	—	5,623
44,946	—	[1]5,800

[1] Max

Notes:

1. The second parental contribution scale was introduced following the announcement on 15 March 1988 that tax relief on new non-charitable deeds of covenant would cease; it applies primarily to students who first entered higher education in session 1988-89 or later. The contributions assessed on scale 2 are 25 per cent. less than those on scale 1.

2. Contributions will rise with residual income, as follows:

Income	*Scale 1*	*Scale 2*
From £11,500 to £14,700	By £1 in £7	As in Scale 1, but reduced by 25 per cent.
From £14,701 to £21,600	By £1 in £5	
From £21,601	By £1 in £4	

3. The contribution payable may be less than the amounts shown in the relevant table, particularly at the top of the scale where the contribution is in respect of one award holder only. It will depend on the level of grant against which the contribution is to be set and whether or not any of the assessed contribution is itself offset by allowances for other dependent children.

Shipping Subsidies

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for shipping subsidies for sea transport services in Scotland in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Subject to parliamentary approval of the estimates I propose to make available in 1990-91 total subsidy provision of £11·628 million. The deficit subsidy for Caledonian MacBrayne will reduce, in line with recent trends in the company's increased carryings and reduced costs, to £5·438 million. The estimated requirement to continue the fares reduction support for P and O services to Orkney and Shetland is increased to £4·6 million. On the basis of budgets submitted by coastal shippers within the tariff rebate subsidy scheme, the funding requirements next year will be £1·59 million.

These proposed levels of subsidy reflect the Government's continuing commitment to assisting the essential sea transport services to the Western and Northern Isles.

Postgraduate Students

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students have applied for assistance under the postgraduate student allowance scheme in every year since 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* This information is not readily available prior to session 1986-87 and figures from that date are as follows:

Session	*Number*	*Percentage awarded*
1986-87	3,245	90
1987-88	3,411	89
1988-89	3,004	89
[1]1989-90	3,259	90

[1] To date.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent, on a constant price basis, on the postgraduate student allowance scheme in every year since 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Separate figures of expenditure on the postgraduate

students' allowances scheme are not available before 1986-87. Expenditure for that and subsequent years at 1989-90 prices are as follows:

Year	£ million	Per capita £
1986-87	9·1	3,095
1987-88	9·2	3,016
1988-89	8·5	3,180
1989-90	[1]10·8	3,697

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his spending plans for the postgraduate student allowance scheme for the years until 1992-93.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The detailed expenditure plans within the totals announced by my right hon. and learned Friend on 6 December (*Official Report*, columns 328-33) will be set out in the Scottish commentary on public expenditure to 1992-93 to be published in the new year.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will change his administrative procedure so that students know which courses are eligible for assistance under the postgraduate student allowance scheme before the student applies for the course.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* A review group of officials is currently examining ways in which the administrative procedures of the postgraduate students' allowances scheme could be improved. This will be one of the criteria under consideration.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *393-94*, he will give for each year since and including the year ended 31 March 1974 the number of applications rejected by a single member, where, subsequently, the applicant is granted an award;

(2) if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *393-94*, he will give the number of applications rejected for each year ended 31 March since and including 31 March 1974 for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The table sets out the available information kept by the board and published in its annual reports. In many cases the decisions made at hearings relate to applications originally rejected in previous years.

Year ended 31 March	Applications Rejected		Applications rejected by a single Member where an award was made after a hearing
	Scotland	England and Wales	
1974	377	930	174
1975	407	1,103	186
1976	483	1,303	218
1977	504	1,543	258
1978	437	1,486	299
1979	543	2,200	348
1980	554	2,213	366
1981	1,081	4,147	[1]—
1982	911	3,484	[1]—
1983	1,062	4,292	[1]—
1984	1,550	6,072	[1]—
1985	1,428	5,612	[1]—
1986	1,226	5,485	[1]—
1987	1,278	5,202	[1]—
1988	1,306	5,178	[1]—
1989	1,451	6,768	[1]—

[1] Information not collated.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *393-94*, he will breakdown the percentage of cases submitted to a single member from date of registration of claim within a period of over 12 months to show the percentage of cases submitted within *(a)* 12 to 15 months, *(b)* 15 to 18 months, *(c)* 18 to 21 months, *(d)* 21 to 24 months, *(e)* 24 to 27 months, *(f)* 27 to 30 months, *(g)* 30 to 33 months and *(h)* 33 to 36 months.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not at present keep a breakdown of such cases for periods over 12 months but has been asked to do so in future years.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *393-94*, he will instruct the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to record the average time taken to process a claim from registration to *(a)* issue to the applicant of the award, and in rejected applications *(b)* the date of final rejection of the claim.

Mr. John Patten: No. Collection of information on average times for awards to be made or claims to be rejected would provide no reliable guide to the board's performance. Average times would be distorted by cases where uncertain prognosis or the need for extensive inquiries precluded an early determination.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *393-94*, he will instruct the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to record the number of applicants who die before their claims are decided.

Mr. John Patten: The board is not necessarily aware of the reasons why applications lapse.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *393-94*, whether the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board records in respect of each application *(a)* the date of issue to the applicant of the decision of the single member, *(b)* the date of issue to the applicant of the decision of the board, where not by a single member and/or *(c)* the date of issue to the applicant of the award.

Mr. John Patten: This information is held on individual case files but is not collated.

South Devon Clerkship

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many employees will be made redundant in the proposed enlarged south Devon clerkship and in merging the north and west Devon clerkships; and what are their designations;

(2) if he will make it his policy to withhold his approval of the appointment of the Torbay clerk to the enlarged south Devon clerkship of the magistrates courts until he is satisfied that the reorganisation will result in an administration which is substantially more economic and efficient than merging the existing north and west Devon clerkships;

(3) what consultations have taken place with each of the benches in the north and west Devon clerkships with regard to the proposed reorganisation of magistrates courts in south Devon; what weight has been given to their recommendations; if he will set out the steps taken to ensure adequate consultations; and who makes the final decision;

(4) what is the estimated cost of the proposed reorganisation of the south Devon clerkships; what he estimates the savings will be in each of the next three years for the present system and for the enlarged south Devon system; and what estimate he has made of efficiency and cost savings produced by the merging of the present north and west Devon clerkships.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the Devon magistrates courts committee has been considering the possible amalgamation of petty sessional divisions and the reorganisation of clerkships in the county. However, the committee has not yet submitted a draft amalgamation order under section 23 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979 for my right hon. and learned Friend's approval. The Act provides for consultation with interested parties before a draft order is submitted and for my right hon. and learned Friend to take relevant objections into account before reaching a decision on a draft order. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the merits of proposals which have yet to be submitted to us.

Nor has the Committee yet sought my right hon. and learned Friend's approval for the permanent appointment of a justices clerk (as it is required to do under section 25 of the 1979 Act) as part of any planned reorganisation of clerkships. Before approving an appointment we will consider any representations which might be made by magistrates of the division concerned.

Police Officers

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will put a table in the *Official Report* showing *(a)* his recent allocation of police officers by police authority, *(b)* the number of police officers requested by the authorities concerned and *(c)* the number of police officers as a proportion of the population served that will pertain after the new allocations are made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

	Police posts approved[1]	*Posts applied for*	*Police/ population*[2] *for ratio taking into account police increases*
Avon and Somerset	10	50	458
Bedfordshire	8	8	504
Cambridgeshire	7	10	541
Cheshire	20	20	506
Cleveland	13	19	368
Cumbria	19	50	416
Derbyshire	19	34	510
Devon and Cornwall	17	48	518
Dorset	14	27	516
Durham	—	—	434
Dyfed Powys	—	—	495
Essex	55	79	511
Gloucestershire	—	—	453
Greater Manchester	54	248	366
Gwent	2	11	441
Hampshire	25	27	527
Hertfordshire	18	35	503
Humberside	15	20	424
Kent	50	50	504
Lancashire	28	81	432
Leicestershire	53	75	488
Lincolnshire	14	20	487
Merseyside	—	—	308
Norfolk	46	66	528
Northamptonshire	20	29	500
Northumbria	38	243	403
North Wales	21	10	478
North Yorkshire	25	35	506
Nottinghamshire	26	63	430
South Wales	31	67	411
South Yorkshire	20	50	431
Staffordshire	14	20	469
Suffolk	18	26	531
Surrey	10	50	449
Sussex	39	54	475
Thames Valley	65	158	530
Warwickshire	15	35	482
West Mercia	32	32	530
West Midlands	63	350	380
West Yorkshire	20	47	390
Wiltshire	13	19	507
City of London	—	—	5
Metropolitan	150	[3]—	252

[1] In some cases increases are offered subject to the police authority's confirmation that it will meet its share of the cost.

[2] Police establishments at 1 April 1990. Population at mid 1988.

[3] The Home Secretary is police authority for the Metropolitan Police.

Mr. Abdul Shamji

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will consider a transfer of Mr. Abdul Shamji, currently at Wandsworth prison, to an open prison;

(2) if he will review the case of Mr. Abdul Shamji, currently serving a sentence at Wandsworth prison.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Shamji's case for reallocation to open conditions is being considered by the authorities at Wandsworth in the normal way.

Video Surveillance

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to place the regulation of video surveillance on a statutory footing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to introduce legislation covering the use of video cameras in public places for surveillance purposes to combat crime. The Home Office issued guidelines in 1984 for the police on the use of surveillance equipment. These guidelines make it clear that CCTV devices should be used by the police only where they are necessary for the efficient conduct of police operations and with due regard for the intrusion of privacy that may result in particular circumstances.

Video Recorded Evidence

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received the report of the advisory group on video recorded evidence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I received the report of the advisory group on 6 October. I am most grateful to the chairman, the Common Serjeant of London, his Honour Judge Pigot QC, and to the other members of the group for their work. I have arranged for the report to be published today. A copy will be placed in the Library. Comments on the report are welcome: they should be sent to the Home Office, C4 Division, Room 339, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT by 30 April 1990.

Law Courts

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vacancies there are currently countrywide for court clerks, giving figures by region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Manpower returns received from 91 of the 105 magistrates courts committees in England and Wales indicated that there were 102 vacancies for court clerks at 30 September 1989, the latest date for which information is available, as shown in the table.

Magistrates' courts committee	*Vacancies (full-time staff)*
Avon	3
Barking	2
Barnet	2
Barnsley	0
Bedfordshire	4
Berkshire	3
Bexley	0
Birmingham	6
Bolton	1
Bradford	1
Brent	2
Bromley	0
Buckinghamshire	n/a
Bury	0
Calderdale	0
Cambridgeshire	1
Cheshire	1
Cleveland	0
Cornwall	0
Coventry	1
Croydon	0
Cumbria	1
Derbyshire	3
Devon	1
Doncaster	0
Dorset	0
Dudley	0
Durham	1
Ealing	2
East Sussex	1
Enfield	0
Essex	n/a
Gateshead	0
Gloucestershire	n/a
Hampshire	1
Haringey	1
Harrow	0
Havering	0
Hereford & Worcester	1
Hertfordshire	3
Hillingdon	0
Hounslow	0
Humberside	3
Isle of Wight	1
Kent	n/a
Kingston	n/a
Kirklees	1
Knowsley	1
Lancashire	3
Leeds	0
Leicestershire	2
Lincolnshire	3
Liverpool	2
London (City of)	0
London (Inner)[1]	7
Manchester	2
Merton	0
Newcastle	0
Newham	n/a
Norfolk	n/a
North Tyneside	1
North Yorkshire	1
Northamptonshire	n/a
Northumberland	0
Nottinghamshire	5
Oldham	0
Oxfordshire	0
Redbridge	n/a
Richmond	0
Rochdale	0
Rotherham	0
Salford	0
Sandwell	1
Sefton	0
Sheffield	0
Shropshire	1
Solihull	1
Somerset	n/a
South Tyneside	1
St. Helens	0
Staffordshire	6
Stockport	1
Suffolk	0
Sunderland	1
Surrey	4
Sutton	n/a
Tameside	0
Trafford	0
Wakefield	2
Walsall	0
Waltham Forest	1
Warwickshire	1
West Sussex	1
Wigan	0
Wiltshire	1
Wirral	n/a
Wolverhampton	3
Clwyd	1
Dyfed	1
Gwent	0

Magistrates' courts committee	Vacancies' (full-time staff)
Gwynedd	n/a
Mid Glamorgan	0
Powys	0
South Glamorgan	n/a
West Glamorgan	1
Total	102

[1] Comparable grade.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest figure available for the current year for *(a)* the number of cases in court which last five minutes or less, *(b)* the amount of legal aid costs these cases incur and *(c)* what representation he has received on the waiting time for such cases; and if he will make a statement concerning the introduction of court timetabling.

Mr. John Patten: No information is available on the number of cases in magistrates courts which last five minutes or less and I understand from my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor that information on the number of legal aid bills submitted for cases where legal representatives appeared in court for five minutes or less could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

From time to time complaints are made about long waiting periods for cases which were disposed of very quickly. However, it can be difficult to predict how long a case will take.

As to the introduction of court timetabling I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to his question on 7 December 1989 at column *397*.

Civil Defence

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nuclear bunkers have been built or provided by local authorities in Wales to date; and how many additional bunkers are now being planned.

Mr. John Patten: The Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 impose on local authorities a duty to establish, equip and maintain emergency centres for the control and co-ordination of action in the event of hostile attack or threat of attack. Of the total of 53 such centres required in Wales, 16 are in place and comply with standards advised in guidance given to local authorities. A further 14 centres require modification in order to meet these standards fully. Planning for such modifications and for the provision of additional centres will be raised in current discussion with relevant authorities in connection with their performance generally in meeting civil defence statutory requirements.

Vehicle Security

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to implement the conclusions of the working group on car security made in November 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The working group on car security made a number of recommendations, most of which were aimed at car manufacturers and the insurance industry.

In response to the working group's recommendations, car security publicity by the Home Office, Department of Transport and the DVLC has continued at a high level and there has been a noticeable increase in publicity from manufacturers.

Five parts of a British standard on vehicle security, covering mechanical locking systems, security of in-car entertainment equipment, window etching, central power locking and dead-locking, and both parts of a standard on anti-theft alarms, have now been published. Much progress is already evident in new vehicle production, including high security door, boot and ignition locks, fuel filler locks, anti-theft radios and alarm systems and in the provision of window etching services. A computerised motor insurance anti-fraud and theft register was launched in March 1987 and there has been a general increase in car security advice from insurers and brokers, though more could be done.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to implement the recommendations of the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention working group on car crime, made in December 1988.

Mr. John Patten: The car crime working group continued its work this year. A group of experts has been formed to consider the production of a car-crime prevention video for use in schools. The working group and the Home Office have taken steps to bring the working group's recommendations to the attention of car manufacturers and the media. In response to the working group's recommendations, the Home Office scientific research and development branch is carrying out research into the production of an index of the vulnerability of types of car to theft and into the correlation between car theft and road accidents. The working group has explored ways in which statistics aimed at the prevention of car crime might be collected and published.

It is encouraging that the most recent published statistics, covering the period of 12 months to June 1989 showed a reduction of almost 4 per cent. in the number of recorded offences of car crime, compared with the corresponding period to the end of June 1987.

Drugs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been spent on research into drug addiction, other than on the campaign Heroin Screws You Up and its evaluation, in the past five years or for any other period of years for which the information is available, by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* the Department of Education and Science and *(c)* the Department of Health.

Mr. Mellor: Estimated expenditure on research into drug addiction in the current and preceding four financial years, excluding evaluation studies, is as follows:—

Financial year	Home Office	Department of Health
	£	
1985-86	8,769	[1]
1986-87	26,331	[1]
1987-88	56,525	[1]
1988-89	32,182	£311,222
1989-90	28,259	£225,406
Total	152,066	
Sub-total		£536,628
5 year DH total £1·2 million		

[1] Separate figures for these years are not readily available, but an average of £221,124 was spent in each year.

The Department of Education and Science has no responsibility for research into drug addiction, but has funded a number of projects related to the development and evaluation of education about substance misuse.

Interpreters

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many interpreters are employed by his Department in the immigration service for translation from English to Kurdish; and what training they are given.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* There are no Kurdish-speaking interpreters in permanent employment with the immigration service, but seven have been employed this year on a casual basis. Interpreters are instructed to give a direct translation of questions put and answers given.

War Crimes Inquiry

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his best estimate of the cost to public funds of prosecuting the three alleged war criminals referred to in paragraph 10.5 of the report of the war crimes inquiry, including the cost of obtaining witnesses and evidence from the Soviet Union and eastern Europe and assuming the provision of legal aid to the defendants;

(2) what is his best estimate of the overall cost to public funds over the coming 10 years of implementing the recommendations contained in the report of the war crimes inquiry (Cm. 744) in respect of the 127 alleged war criminals believed to be in resident in the United Kingdom and recommended for prosecution or further investigation.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* It is not possible to give an indication about the costs which might arise in connection with any investigations and prosecutions of war criminals which might take place if the necessary legislative provision were to be made. However, the experience of other countries which have instigated investigations suggests that the costs involved could be substantial. The costs of conducting any trials of alleged war criminals which might take place would depend upon the number of such trials and the complexity of each case.

WALES

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has issued any recent guidance to the Forestry Commission in Wales concerning the release of agricultural land for afforestation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I recognise the important role that forestry can play as an alternative use of agricultural land. Guidance is readily available.

National Health Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision he has made for expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales in the next financial year on *(a)* remuneration to non-executive members of health authorities and family practitioners services authorities, *(b)* arrangements necessary for establishing contracts for services, *(c)* arrangements necessary for establishing hospital trusts, *(d)* additional tasks as a result of the introduction of general practitioner practice funds, *(e)* capital cost of information systems for the management of drug expenditure, *(f)* audit costs, and *(g)* the upkeep of asset registers and the calculation of capital charges.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend expects to announce the detailed provision for hospital and community health service resources to district health authorities when the House reassembles in the new year. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman then.

School Buildings

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he gives local education authorities in Wales concerning *(a)* the repair of flat roofs in schools and *(b)* the use of flat roofs in plans for new school buildings.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Design note 46 entitled "Maintenance and Renewal in Educational Buildings: Flat Roofs" was issued to all local education authorities in England and Wales in 1985. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has received as to which Welsh schools are in need of refurbishment; what is the age of the schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Expenditure plans submitted each year by local education authorities provide information about education building needs, including refurbishment of schools, and these are the subject of discussion with the Department. The age of schools is not a reliable indicator of expenditure needs.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will commission a survey of the school buildings in Wales concerning their state of repair, energy conservation and age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the context of my right hon. Friend's efficiency initiative, local authorities have already prepared reports on energy management and property review, and have further action in hand. The property review requires the setting up of appropriate records in regard to age and condition of buildings, including schools.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he has any plans to meet *(a)* Clwyd local education authority leaders, *(b)* Clwyd parent—teacher association leaders, *(c)* teacher union leaders and *(d)* representatives of school governers to discuss funding for school regions and the problem of water seepage on flat school roofs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a special allocation to the Clwyd local education authority to enable the authority to deal with the water seepage on flat roofs of Clwyd schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Allocations of resources within a local education authority's area and responsibility for education buildings are matters for the local education authority.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish estimated poll tax payments per head, in current prices, which will be required after removal of safety net arrangements and based on current Welsh Office targets for local government spending for *(a)* Wales as a whole and *(b)* each district council area.

Mr. Peter Walker: Estimates of community charge levels for Wales as a whole and for each district council area were placed in the Library on Monday 18 December 1989. I no longer propose to make safety net adjustments to revenue support grant entitlements.

Welsh Water

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for Welsh Water plc the estimated percentage held by *(a)* individual shareholders and *(b)* financial institutions as on the first day of trading in the new company.

Mr. Grist: The allocations to applicants for shares in Welsh Water plc were announced by Schroders in a press release on 11 December. The offer of Welsh Water shares to the general public was oversubscribed to an extent that the clawback provisions set out in the prospectus on the water share offers were triggered. Thus, 39·25 per cent. of the shares on offer was allocated to institutions and 46·875 per cent. of the shares on offer was allocated to applicants in the retail public offers.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the percentage of shares in Welsh Water plc which were in the hands of shareholders with addresses outside Wales on the first day of trading in the new company.

Mr. Grist: No. This information is not readily available, but at least half of the shares allocated to applicants in the retail public offer were to customers, employees and pensioners of Welsh Water.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the details of the means-testing for the new improvement grants payable from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Peter Walker: Details of the test of resources will be included in regulations which are currently being prepared and will be laid before this House in due course.

European Regional Development Fund Aid

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the total level of European regional development fund aid commitments jointly to all eligible public bodies in the three counties of Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: European regional development fund commitments to eligible public bodies in the three counties of Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed in each of the past five years are shown in the following table:

Year	*£ million*
1984	6·6
1985	19·5
1986	7·5
1987	5·6
1988	14·0

Figures do not include some Welsh projects which cross the boundaries of administrative areas.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the total level of European regional development fund aid commitments to all eligible public bodies in Clwyd in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Peter Walker: The latest estimate for European regional development fund non-quota commitments to all eligible public bodies in Clwyd for 1989 is £2·4 million.

No commitments have yet been made for 1989 and 1990 under the Clwyd integrated development operation programme.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate for the amount of European regional development fund assistance commitments to all eligible public bodies in the four counties of industrial south Wales in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: European regional development fund commitments to eligible public bodies in the four counties of industrial south Wales in each of the past five years are shown in the following table:

Year	*£ million*
1984	51·1
1985	17·0
1986	17·8
1987	41·9
1988	29·1

Figures do not include some Welsh projects which cross the boundaries of administrative areas.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate for the amount of European regional development fund commitments to all eligible public bodies in the four counties of industrial south Wales in *(a)* the present year and *(b)* 1990.

Mr. Grist: The latest estimate for European regional development fund commitments to the mid-Glamorgan national programme of community interest and for non-quota grant in the four counties of industrial south Wales for 1989 is £10·4 million.

No commitments have yet been made for 1989 and 1990 under the integrated development operation programme for industrial south Wales.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the amount of European regional development fund commitments to all eligible public bodies in Clwyd in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: European regional development fund commitments to eligible public bodies in Clwyd in each of the past five years are shown in the following table:

Year	*£ million*
1984	4·3
1985	18·3
1986	19·2

Year	£ million
1987	10·2
1988	20·2

Figures do not include some Welsh projects which cross the boundaries of administrative areas.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up-to-date estimate of the likely final total of European regional development fund aid commitments jointly to all eligible public bodies in the counties of Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Grist: The latest estimate for European regional development fund commitments to all eligible public bodies in the three counties of Powys, Gwynedd and Dyfed for 1989 is £20·4 million.

No commitments have yet been made for 1990.

Health Service Resources

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has reached a decision about the allocation of resources for health and personal social services in Wales in 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Walker: Subject to parliamentary approval, I propose to allocate £1,472 million in 1990-91 to central Government's own expenditure on health and personal social services in Wales. This represents a cash increase of £156·7 million over 1989-90 plans, and an increase of some £98 million over planned provision for 1990-91.

My proposals include £1,055·8 million for the hospital and community health services, an increase of £101·1 million over planned provision in 1989-90. I will announce allocations to individual health authorities as soon as possible. In addition to their allocations, health authorities will retain the benefit of cash released through cost improvement programmes, income from charges for the treatment of private patients and from income generation schemes, and receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings.

These additional resources will allow substantial investment in the information management systems that are required to support implementation of the White Paper "Working for Patients", and will also make possible the further development of modern patterns of service for those with mental handicaps, and those suffering from mental illness; of breast and cervical cancer screening services; of programmes to address the problems of alcohol and other drug abuse; and of initiatives to support the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

HEALTH

Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year since 1974-75 capital spending on hospital and community health services in net terms after deducting proceeds from land and property sales (i) in cash terms, (ii) adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator and (iii) adjusted using the relevant index of National Health Service prices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I see no logical reason for excluding proceeds of land and property sales from figures on capital spending by the NHS and I have given these proceeds in addition to the information requested in order to give a sensible picture of capital investment in the service.

Hospital and community health services—gross capital expenditure since 1974-75

£ million

	Public expenditure	*Capital receipts (mainly land sales)*	*Total expenditure*	*Total at 1988-89 prices adjusted by: the GDP deflator*	*the HCBS capital deflator*
1974-75	243	—	243	960	950
1975-76	327	—	327	1,027	979
1976-77	356	—	356	986	952
1977-78	315	—	315	767	737
1978-79	358	8	366	805	766
1979-80	395	10	405	763	703
1980-81	540	16	556	885	766
1981-82	651	20	671	972	896
1982-83	682	19	701	947	921
1983-84	692	33	725	936	934
1984-85	767	50	817	1,005	1,010
1985-86	803	85	888	1,037	1,037
1986-87	812	149	961	1,085	1,069
1987-88	807	201	1,008	1,081	1,066
1988-89	804	280	1,084	1,084	1,084
[1]1989-90	920	291	1,211	1,132	[2]

[1] Estimated.
[2] Estimates of HCHS capital inflation are not made until after the financial year has ended.

Community Care

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the redeployment of financial resources from long-stay hospitals in the closure/partial closure programme and on how and where these have been used to develop services for community care for people with mental handicap.

Mr. Freeman: Decisions regarding the redeployment of financial resources released from long stay hospitals are primarily a matter for health authorities in consultation with the relevant local authorities and in the light of local needs and circumstances. Proceeds from the sale of mental handicap hospitals must be used specifically for the development of services for that client group unless there are exceptional circumstances and the Department has

agreed otherwise. Systematic information as to how resources have been redeployed to community services is not available centrally.

Energy Statistics

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each region and as a total for England and Wales *(a)* the total number of licensed vehicles at the latest available date, *(b)* the total amount spent on energy during the latest year for which figures are available, broken down into (i) petrol supply, (ii) electricity supply, (iii) gas supply and (iv) other and *(c)* the total amount spent on insulation on the National Health Service estate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Statistics on the total number of licensed vehicles which include Crown cars, ambulances and commercial vehicles, are not held centrally. The total amounts, for hospital sites in England and Wales, spent by health authorities on petrol supply, electricity supply, gas supply and others, in the financial year 1988-89 (£ million rounded up to two decimal places) are provisionally estimated as follows:

Region	*Petrol*	*Electricity*	*Gas*	*Other*
Northern	1·40	6·28	4·14	3·02
Yorkshire	1·49	7·13	5·48	2·66
Trent	1·98	10·60	6·37	5·04
East Anglian	1·10	3·75	2·39	1·77
North West Thames	0·74	7·67	5·42	2·90
North East Thames	0·89	9·62	4·45	5·31
South East Thames	1·12	8·18	5·82	2·66
South West Thames	2·32	5·97	5·26	2·27
Wessex	1·14	5·36	3·88	1·79
Oxford	1·00	4·47	2·65	1·66
South Western	1·41	6·16	3·91	1·75
West Midlands	1·91	10·26	4·34	6·60
Mersey	1·00	5·32	3·19	2·21
North Western	1·44	8·21	6·67	3·92
SHA's	0·02	2·13	1·17	0·52
Total amount spent in 1988-89				
In England	18·96	101·11	65·14	44·07
In Wales[1]	—	6·19	3·71	3·17

Grand Total England £229·23 million
Wales £13·07 million

[1]There is not a separate figure for total amount spent on petrol in Wales. Expenditure on petrol is included in "other" column.

(c) Figures for the total amount spent on insulation on the NHS estate are not available. Guidance on insulation and other energy-saving measures is available to the NHS in my Department's national energy code ('ENCODE'). Ministers have, on a number of occasions, stated their wish for energy savings in the NHS commensurate with providing a proper service. So too has the Public Accounts Committee and its target of a saving in energy consumption of 1·5 per cent. per annum is generally being achieved.

Infections

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the incidence of infection by county in England and Wales caused by *(a)* campylobacter, *(b)* cryptospiridia and *(c)* leptospira.

Mr. Freeman: The data requested are not available by county. The provisional data given in the table are a breakdown of reports by National Health Service health regions for England and Wales and are based on reports received by CDSC from laboratories in England and Wales. They cover 1989 up to and including the week ending 8 December 1989.

Region	*Campylobacter*	*Cryptosporidium*	*Leptospira*
Northern	1,639	134	1
Yorkshire	3,049	651	11
Trent	3,429	519	3
East Anglia	1,018	163	1
North West Thames	1,756	239	1
North East Thames	1,786	236	1
South East Thames	2,049	655	1
South West Thames	2,648	576	1
Wessex	2,133	864	7
Oxford	1,761	596	5
South Western	2,385	760	11
West Midlands	3,159	837	4
Mersey	770	125	2
North Western	2,640	864	2
Wales	1,697	475	2
TOTAL	31,919	7,694	53

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the incidence by county in England and Wales and by occupational group of salmonella infection caused by *(a)* drinking unpasteurised milk and *(b)* contact with sick animals.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in the form requested. Three outbreaks of salmonellosis associated with drinking unpasteurised milk, in which there was microbiological or epidemiological evidence to confirm the association, were recorded in 1988 (provisional total), two in the north western region, and one in Wessex region. One outbreak affected the local community and two outbreaks affected farming personnel from the implicated milk-producing farms as well as persons in the local community. No outbreaks have been recorded so far in 1989.

This information is based on reports of outbreaks of salmonella infection to the public health laboratory service communicable disease surveillance centre by laboratories and local authority environmental health departments in England and Wales.

It is not possible to identify separately salmonellosis which is linked to contact with sick animals as distinct from that of a food origin.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the incidence of chlamydiosis arising from *(a)* domestic poultry and *(b)* other birds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information available is set out in the table. Person-to-person transmission of chlamydia psittaci is rare: outbreaks of the disease in humans occur mainly among aviary and quarantine station workers, poultry processors and veterinarians.

Chlamydia B/Chlamydia Psittaci 1984-88
Laboratory reports to the PHLS Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (not incidence), where contact with birds mentioned

Year	Total laboratory reports	Poultry[1]		Other birds		Total birds contact	
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
1984	410	5	1	59	14	64	16
1985	322	16	5	58	18	74	23
1986	326	9	3	52	16	61	19
1987	430	13	3	61	14	74	17
1988	460	15	3	67	15	82	18
Total 1984-88	1,948	58	3	297	15	355	18
Average year 1984-88	390	12	3	59	15	71	18

[1] Chicken, duck, goose and poultry unspecified.

Ambulance Service

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the average time spent by an ambulance man on transporting *(a)* emergency cases and *(b)* non-emergency cases.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Nurses Grading

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the numbers of nursing grade appeals that have not been dealt with by each health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide estimates showing the amount of capital expenditure on hospital and community health services in each financial year from 1978-79 to 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is shown in the table.

Hospital and community health services—
Gross capital expenditure since 1978-79

Year	Cash £ million
1978-79	366
1979-80	405
1980-81	556
1981-82	671
1982-83	701
1983-84	725
1984-85	817
1985-86	888
1986-87	961
1987-88	1,008
1988-89	1,084
[1]1989-90	1,211

[1] Estimate.

Laboratory Facilities

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any health authority laboratory facilities in the North West regional health authority area are used for veterinary purposes.

Mr. Freeman: We are aware of only one health authority in this region whose laboratory facilities are being used for veterinary purposes, that being Oldham health authority, which does a very small amount of specimen testing.

Self-governing Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the expressions of interest in self-governing trust status that he has so far rejected.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 188 expressions of interests in NHS trust status have been received so far. I understand that sponsors of some 79 of these intend to prepare draft applications for NHS trust status in April 1991. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider all applications for trust status on their merits when received.

Deaf-Blind People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many registered deaf-blind people there are in each local authority;

(2) what assessment he has made of the efficacy of the current methods of recording deaf-blind people in local authorities;

(3) what is his Department's estimate of the total number of deaf-blind people in Britain;

(4) whether any pilot project is being carried out to identify numbers of deaf-blind people.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of registered blind persons in each local authority who are also deaf or hard of hearing are published in "Registered Blind and Partially Sighted Persons at 31 March 1988: England", a copy of which is in the Library.

The social services inspectorate has recently undertaken an inspection of personal social services for deaf-blind

people. The inspection's findings confirm that the number of people registered with local authorities as blind who are also deaf or hard of hearing cannot be used as a reliable basis for a national estimate of the numbers of deaf-blind people because registration with a local authority is voluntary and not all deaf-blind people choose to register.

However, using a broad, functional definition of deaf-blindness, the National Deaf Blind and Rubella Association (SENSE) has estimated that there may be some 11,000 deaf-blind people in the United Kingdom.

The Department is not carrying out any pilot project to identify numbers of deaf-blind people. However, I understand that the Royal National Institute for the Deaf has done some work in this area and will be publishing a report in January 1990.

Profoundly Handicapped People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times local authorities have used their powers under section 43 of the National Assistance Act 1948 to assume responsibility for the care of adults who are unable to care for themselves as a result of profound handicap.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that the right hon. Member is referring to section 47 of the Act. This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times profoundly mentally handicapped people have been sanctioned under the terms of the Mental Health Act in order to ensure their safety.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987-88 there were 186 admissions, under sections of the Mental Health Act 1983, of patients categorised as mentally impaired or severely mentally impaired. Information is not held centrally as to how many of these patients were admitted for their own safety, rather than the other reasons specified in the Act.

Severely Disabled People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has any plans to introduce an at-risk register for severely disabled adults being cared for at home, where there is doubt as to the quality of the care they are receiving;

(2) whether he has any plans to review the legislation available for protecting the interests of severely disabled people over the age of 18 years who are unable to look after themselves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans to do so.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to review the procedure whereby district health authorities which fund speech therapy provision in schools should give reasonable notice to the schools concerned before withdrawing funding arrangements.

Mr. Freeman: No. District health authorities are responsible for determining the level of speech therapy provision for schools in their area, in the light of local circumstances, their assessment of priorities, and the available resources. We expect district health authorities to liaise closely with local education authorities over provision of speech therapy in schools.

Wythenshawe Hospital

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had from the head of medical services at Manchester airport in regard to the future of the accident and emergency department at Wythenshawe hospital; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a letter from the chief executive of Manchester Airport plc about the provision of accident and emergency services in the area of Manchester airport and referring to the proposals of the South Manchester district health authority to rationalise acute and other services at the Withington and Wythenshawe hospitals. The South Manchester district health authority has invited comments on its rationalisation plans from all interested parties including the community health council. The district authority will be able to proceed to implement the plans only with the agreement of the local community health council or, if that is withheld, with the agreement of the North West regional health authority. This is the standard procedure for dealing with significant changes in the use of Health Service facilities. The planning of health services at district level is of course best dealt with at a local level. Ministers would not wish to be involved unless no local agreement can be reached.

The Department will be replying to the chief executive in these terms.

Health Service (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people are to be appointed to assist Dr. Mark Baker to prepare Bradford's acute hospital services for self-government; what budget has been agreed to meet staff costs and other costs associated with this preparatory work; who is to pay these costs; who has authorised this preparatory expenditure; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what salary and expenses will be paid to the person appointed as district general manager of Bradford health authority, to succeed Dr. Mark Baker; how long the appointment is to last; whether the person appointed will be given a contract; whether Dr. Mark Baker has the right to resume his former role as district general manager; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: These matters are for decision locally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Bradford health authority, Mr. R. G. Brooke, in the first instance.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a breakdown of the number of prescriptions issued by community pharmacists during 1988 for the following benzodiazepines *(a)* diazepam, *(b)* tenazepam, *(c)* lorazepam, *(d)* nitrazepam and *(e)* chlordiazepoxide.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists for the drugs requested is as follows:

Great Britain	Number of prescriptions in 1988
	Millions
Diazepam	4·5
Tenazepam	7·7
Lorazepam	2·1
Nitrazepam	4·6
Chlordiazepoxide	0·9

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has of the number of chronic users of benzodiazepines in the United Kingdom and what action he intends to take to reduce this number.

Mr. Freeman: There are no precise figures to show the level of benzodiazepine dependence. A number of measures have been taken to tackle the problem, including the issue of advice to doctors on the careful use of these drugs, the promotion of alternatives to their use, and the development of services to help those dependent on them.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what grants have been made in 1989-90 under the central drugs initiative to services specifically for those dependent on benzodiazepines.

Mr. Freeman: The central drugs initiative was established in 1983-84 as a pump-priming scheme to provide capital and revenue resources for local projects to assist people suffering from drug dependence. Each grant was to last for three years, and the last approach was made in 1987, so that the scheme is now drawing to a close.

Grants specifically for those dependent on benzodiazepines or other tranquillisers under this initiative totalled over £300,000. None of these grants fell into the current financial year. It is not possible to estimate the extent to which these grant-aided schemes also provide services for this group.

The initiative is in addition to the other funds for drug dependence, in particular the earmarked money allocated to regional health authorities for drug dependence in each financial year since 1986, and which in the current year totals nearly £15 million.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why people dependent on benzodiazepines are classed by his Department as drug misusers.

Mr. Freeman: The Department is concerned with the prevention and treatment of drug dependence irrespective of whether the condition arises from illicit or prescribed drug use. Equally, the funds that the Department has made available are for the development of services both for those dependent on prescribed drugs and those experiencing problems with illicit drug use.

Medicine Leaflets

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the European Community proposal to require leaflets to be provided with medicines has now been adopted; and when it will be implemented in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: European Community (EC) Council directive 89/341 of 3 May 1989, among other things, introduced a requirement to provide leaflets with medicines. The content of such leaflets is still under consideration. The EC Commission has recently announced its intention to forward a proposal to the Council of Ministers early in the new year. It would be premature to make commitments about United Kingdom implementation in advance of negotiations and adoption by Council of the directive, but we look forward to playing a constructive part in discussions.

Disabled People

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to begin consultation with local authority associations and voluntary organisations on sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Freeman: We are currently examining these sections with a view to identifying those provisions with significant resource implications. We will then seek the assistance of interested bodies to help us to estimate their cost.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date he expects to publish the first report to Parliament under section 11 of the disabled persons Act 1986, due to be implemented at the end of 1989.

Mr. Freeman: Within the next few days.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements will be made to publish on an annual basis, the total public sector expenditure on care services for disabled people, covering expenditure incurred by central Government, including social security payments, local authorities, health authorities and other statutory service providers funded from public money.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

Information on public expenditure on care services for disabled people is currently available in a number of publications. The public expenditure White Paper analyses past and present expenditure on social security both by broad client groups and by individual benefits, some of which may be relevant to the provision of care. Expenditure on health and personal social services by broad client group is published in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics", for example tables 2.8, 2.6 and 2.9, in the key indicators of local authority social services package; and in the local authority profiles. Information is also available from Health Service cost returns and reports of the Social Services Committee, copies of which are available in the Library. The use made by disabled people of general health and social services (for example acute hospital services and home help services) is not separately identified. We have no plans to change the present publication arrangements.

Contraceptive Services

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those district health authorities who have *(a)* expanded and *(b)* contracted their provision of contraceptive services in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* The information is not available in exactly the form requested.

The data collected cover the number of family planning clinic sessions, and attendances at family planning clinics.

The latest available figures are for 1987-88. The districts listed, copies of which have been placed in the Library, are those where:

(1) both the number of attendances and the number of sessions held increased over the period 1984 to 1987-88. (14 districts)
(2) both the number of attendances and the number of sessions decreased over the same period. (110 districts)
(3) the number of attendances decreased while the number of sessions increased. (58 districts)
(4) the number of attendances increased while the number of sessions decreased. (9 districts)

The number of sessions offered by family planning clinics may be reduced as part of a rationalisation of services by health authorities to make more effective use of available resources. Some 97 per cent. of general practitioners provide planning services and about 65 per cent. of the women using family planning services prefer to see a general practitioner.

Government policy remains that people should be free to choose their source of family planning advice and that health authority contraceptive services complement, rather than duplicate, those which general practitioners provide. This is reflected in current guidance issued to health authorities by the Department.

NHS Reform

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many written comments he received on *(a)* the White Paper "Working for Patients" and *(b)* the White Paper "Care in the Community", and how many of *(a)* and *(b)* were favourable to the proposals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* More than 13,500 written comments have been received on the Government's proposals to improve the Health Service. Many ask questions, many support all or some of the proposals, some refer only to specific aspects. It is not possible to distinguish them in the way the hon. Member requests. We have also received a number of comments on the White Paper "Caring for People". These are generally favourable, but seek clarification on a number of points. The lengthy Labour party campaign produced the equivalent of about 300 postcards for each district health authority area.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Staff

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many employees employed by hon. Members are paid for through the secretarial and office allowance.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: A total of 1,262 in the month of December 1989.

The above figure relates to persons directly employed by Members, ie, paid through the PAYE system. It does not include persons who are self-employed or fee-earning, or agency and other staff provided through an arrangement with a firm or business organisation.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will update the information given in tables 1 and 2 in answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central on 21 December 1988, *Official Report*, columns *303-6* to April/May 1989 using April/May 1988 prices and supply additional information on the proportion of residents on supplementary benefit/income support from February 1986, update table 2 in May 1989 prices and provide the figures for the categories mentioned in table 2 as per the uprating due to take effect in April 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the tables. All figures in table 1 are estimates. Information on the proportion of residents receiving income support is not yet available beyond May 1988. Table 2 provides information from April 1985 when the current system of national limits was introduced.

Table 1

Supplementary benefit (income support from April 1988) to people in independent residential care homes and nursing homes

	Expenditure £ million (current prices)	*Expenditure £ million (May 1988 prices[1])*	*Number of claimants (000s)*	*Number in residential care homes (000s)*	*Number in nursing homes (000s)*	*Average payment (£ per week current prices[1])*	*Average payment (£ per week May 1988 prices)*	*Proportion of residents receiving supplementary benefit percentage[1]*
December 1979	10	18	12	[2]—	[2]—	16·0	33·1	14
December 1980	18	27	13	[2]—	[2]—	26·6	43·6	14
December 1981	23	31	13	[2]—	[2]—	34·0	50·5	13
December 1982	39	50	16	[2]—	[2]—	46·9	61·7	16
December 1983	104	127	26	[2]—	[2]—	76·9	92·9	23
December 1984	200	234	42	[2]—	[2]—	91·6	107·6	31
December 1985	348	385	70	55	15	95·6	105·8	44
February 1986	459	505	90	70	20	98·1	107·8	55
May 1987	671	699	117	85	32	110·3	115·0	53
May 1988	878	878	147	103	44	115·0	115·0	61
May 1989	1,105	1,020	176	119	57	120·7	111·5	[2]—

[1] Estimated only—data on resident numbers are incomplete across all care groups.
[2] Figures are not available.
Note: Adjusted to constant prices on basis of RPI.

Table 2
Residential care and nursing home limits—April 1985-April 1990 (Proposed)

Residential care category	April 1985 £ (current prices)	April 1985 £ (May 1989 prices)	November 1985 £ (current prices)	November 1985 £ (May 1989 prices	July 1986 £ (current prices)	July 1986 £ (May 1989 prices)	April 1987 £ (current prices)	April 1987 £ (May 1989 prices)	April 1988 £ (current prices	April 1988 £ (May 1989 prices)	April 1989 £ (cash)	April 1990 £ (cash)
Elderly	110	133	120	144	125	147	130	147	130	141	140	150
Very Dependent or Blind Elderly	—	—	—	—	140	165	145	164	155	168	155	165
Mentally Ill	120	146	130	156	130	153	130	147	130	141	140	150
Drug/Alcohol	120	146	130	156	130	153	130	147	130	141	140	150
Mentally Handicapped	140	170	150	180	150	177	150	169	160	174	160	170
Physically Disabled under pension age	170	206	180	216	180	212	190	215	190	207	190	200
Other	110	133	120	144	125	147	130	147	130	141	140	150
Nursing Home Category												
Elderly	138-60	168	170	204	170	200	175	198	185	201	190	200
Mentally Ill	148-60	180	180	216	180	212	180	203	185	201	195	200
Drug/Alcohol	148-60	180	180	216	180	212	180	203	185	201	195	205
Mentally Handicapped	168-60	205	200	240	200	236	200	226	200	217	205	215
Physically Disabled under pension age	198-60	241	230	276	230	271	230	260	230	250	235	245
Terminally Ill	198-60	241	230	276	230	271	230	260	230	250	235	245

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and in the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* open to competition by advertisement throughout the European Community.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of contracts awarded by the then Department of Health and Social Security and covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was 40 in the 1988-89 financial year. Of these 37 were awarded following advertisement in the *EC Journal* and one was considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous supplier.

The number of contracts awarded by the Department of Social Security and covered by the provisions of the EC supplies directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, is 14 in the current financial year to date. All were awarded following advertisement in the *EC Journal*.

Begging

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people begging in (i) London and (ii) the rest of the country; what recent surveys have been carried out; and if he will institute a survey now so as to ascertain the up-to-date numbers involved.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

The only statistics available are of the number prosecuted for begging each year. In 1988 there were 573 such prosecutions in England and Wales of which 512 (89 per cent.) resulted in convictions. In the Metropolitan police district there were 500 prosecutions of which 455 (91 per cent.) resulted in convictions. We have no present plans to institute a survey on begging.

Social Fund

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has yet reached any conclusion as a result of his continued monitoring of the social fund.

Mr. Tony Newton: Our continued monitoring of the social fund suggests that it is generally working well. After a slow start in the first year, awareness of both community care grants and of the interest-free loan system has clearly grown. Arrangements for repayment also appear to be working well, indeed, the flow of repayments is somewhat higher than had been forecast, though this partly reflects the pattern of loans in the previous financial year.

It is however also clear from our monitoring that, as might be expected at what is still a relatively early stage in the fund's operation, the pattern of demand varies from office to office, and the present budgets of certain offices have come under exceptional pressure. We shall of course seek to take these factors into account in setting the allocation for 1990-91, which we shall do in the early part of next year. Meanwhile, however, I intend to increase the gross budget of the fund by about £3 million in 1989-90, in order to increase the individual allocation of just under 100 offices where such particular pressures have arisen. In view of the flow of repayments, this will not entail a corresponding increase in the expected net total of expenditure in the present year.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the national allocation to the social fund for the current year as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart).

Homelessness

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Social Security what special resources have been made available to support the homeless and destitute over the Christmas period.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The social security system provides substantial help for the homeless and destitute at all times of the year. The Government are keeping under review whether special emergency arrangements are necessary to meet special problems and, if so, what form of help would be most effective.

Benefit Claimants, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration his Department undertook before deciding to transfer responsibility for all benefit claimants in Abbey Wood SE12 and Thamesmead SE28 from the Woolwich to the Bexley office.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The transfer of responsibility for all benefit claimants to our Bexley office forms part of a larger scheme to improve service to the public in the Lewisham/Eltham, Woolwich/Bexley area.

Before taking the decision a survey was carried out into the population distribution of the area and into lines of communication to the relevant offices. Another factor taken into account was that the postal districts in question were already dealt with by two separate offices. It has been our policy for some time in the London area to avoid unnecessary confusion by arranging for complete postal districts to be dealt with by a single local office.

We are very much aware of the need for the local community to have easy access to advice and information. We believe that by drawing together all benefits for a particular area into a single office we shall improve the overall standard of service to the public. Anyone who does not wish to visit an office and who needs general advice may use the DSS freeline service on 0800 666555. In addition, we are always ready to arrange a home visit if one is needed.

Family Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was expenditure in the United Kingdom on maternity/family social protection benefits using the European system of integrated social protection statistics depreciation for each year from 1979 to the latest available; and what equivalent information he has for each of the other European Community member states.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest statistics available were published in June 1989 in issue 1989-2 of Eurostat's "Rapid Reports on Population and Social Conditions", a copy of which is in the Library.

Local Offices, Edinburgh

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff at his Department's offices in Edinburgh speak *(a)* Urdu, *(b)* Punjabi, *(c)* Bengali, including the Sylheti dialect, *(d)* Chinese, *(e)* Farsi, *(f)* Hindi and *(g)* Gujerati.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the Department's five Edinburgh local offices there are two speakers of Urdu, two of Hindi and there is one speaker of Punjabi.

Family Credit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of people on family credit immediately before the start of the recent family credit publicity campaign; what was the number of successful claims during the campaign; what was the number of unsuccessful claims during the campaign; what is the number of claims currently awaiting processing; what is the number of people now receiving family credit; and if he has plans to follow up this campaign.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 5 December 1989]:* A further publicity campaign to promote awareness of family credit began on 6 November and is still continuing. A full evaluation of the effectiveness of the campaign will not be possible for some time, but in the first five weeks after it began a total of 107,000 claims were received compared with only 68,800 in the same period in 1988. Of the 107,000 claims, 62,200 were new claims from families not receiving an existing award, compared with 49,500 new claims in the five weeks before the campaign began. On 8 December, 63,600 claims were awaiting a response to inquiries (mainly from employers).

Fuller information is available about the campaign conducted in the spring of 1989. During the nine weeks of TV publicity, nearly 260,000 claims were received. Separate information about the outcome of these particular claims is not available, but of all the claims decided in the three months following the start of the campaign over 160,000 received awards and some 134,000 were unsuccessful.

At the end of March 1989, immediately before the spring campaign, about 280,000 families were receiving family credit. The number increased by the end of July to 313,000, and the latest indications are that by the end of September it rose further to about 320,000. (This latter figure was previously thought, as a result of a computer error, to have been reached two months earlier, thus the July figure is a correction of those published previously.) This estimate of about 320,000 is the latest available indicator of caseload prior to the start of the current campaign.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will raise the threshold of capital assets at which disqualification for cold weather payments operate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Following the uprating statement I made on 25 October, I am pleased to announce that today I have laid regulations which amend the Social Fund Cold Weather Payments (General) Regulations, so that from 1 January 1990 elderly people who are receiving income support may be able to qualify for cold weather payments whilst retaining up to £1,000 in savings. The increase in the amount of capital that people aged 60 and over may have before it affects entitlement to cold weather payments will enable more elderly people to obtain help with the extra cost of heating their homes at times of very cold weather.

The regulations also correct defects in the regulations concerning the treatment of the capital of a claimant's partner and the description of the areas covered by the national climatological message stations.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Farm and Moorland Holdings

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the address and location of all freehold and leasehold farm and moorland holdings of the Duchy of Lancaster, showing the different categories, stating when first acquired by the duchy;

(2) if he will list the address, type and size of all freehold and leasehold property holdings of the Duchy of Lancaster, showing the different categories located in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* Aldershot, *(c)* Bedford, *(d)* Bristol, *(e)* Kettering, *(f)* Leeds, *(g)* Leicester, *(h)* Lewes, *(i)* Northampton, *(j)* Hadley Wood and *(k)* Harrogate.

Mr. Kenneth Baker *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* It would be impractical to list the addresses and locations of all the property holdings of the Duchy of Lancaster as these would number several hundred items. However I hope that the following summary will be helpful.

The freehold farm and moorland properties owned by the Duchy or in which the Duchy has an interest are as follows:

Estates: *Predominantly agricultural in nature in the following counties:*

County	*Acreage (approx):*
Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire	2,865
Staffordshire and Cheshire	12,350
Lancashire	10,920
Yorkshire	9,318
	35,453

In addition, the Duchy owns some fifteen thousand acres of moorland in north Yorkshire and south Wales most of which are subject to common rights.

The estates include some 165 agricultural tenancies and 3,145 acres of woodland.

There are no leasehold ownerships in this category.

In all of the counties other than Cheshire ownership of part of the holdings can be established from 1267. Subsequent additions have been made.

In Cheshire, estates have been acquired over the last 50 or so years.

Other property ownership, all of which are freehold except for a long leasehold property in the City of London, may be summarised as follows:

(a) *Greater London* The freehold of properties in the Manor of Savoy bounded by Lancaster Place, the Embankment, Savoy Hill and Strand (including the Savoy Chapel) and a building at 2/4 Lancaster Place to 137 Strand. A Substantial part of these properties are let on building lease or equivalent terms, having between twenty-nine and ninety years unexpired.
Two office buildings, one freehold and one leasehold, are owned in the City of London. both are let on long leases without reviews.

(b) *Aldershot* None.

(c) *Bedford* One shop in High street.

(d) *Bristol* None.

(e) *Kettering* None.

(f) *Leeds* None.

(g) *Leicester* One shop in High street.

(h) *Lewes* One shop in High street.

(i) *Northampton* None.

(j) *Hadley Wood*
i. Twenty-six acres of land and twenty-nine cottages.
ii. Two petrol filling stations (on long lease).

(k) *Harrogate* Miscellaneous commercial properties in Harrogate which include five shops, one hotel, and a house now converted to offices.
These properties, in the main, are let on occupational leases. There is also the remainder of a residential estate developed over a period of one-hundred years or so producing thirty-six ground rents. The freehold reversions are sold to the lessees on terms which follow the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Acts.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what compensatory payments Customs and Excise make to traders when a court or value added tax tribunal has decided that value added tax was incorrectly charged.

Mr. Ryder: Section 40(4) of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 provides that, when a tribunal decides that VAT should not have been charged by Customs, a compensatory payment of interest should be made in addition to repayment of the tax itself. Interest is also payable by order of a court. In cases analogous with those where such a finding has been reached, Customs make ex gratia payments in lieu of interest.

All of these payments fall as a charge on subhead B1 of class XIX vote 2. A recent case where the House of Lords found against Customs is considered to be applicable to a substantial number of similar cases in which Customs had previously refused full repayment. As a result, some significant costs will be incurred in 1989-90. These costs are currently being assessed and will be reflected in a spring Supplementary Estimate which will be presented to Parliament.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters have been sent out from value added tax headquarters at Southend in the current year and in each of the last two years to value added tax defaulters threatening surcharge in respect of payments which related to taxpayers who were *(a)* less than three days late with their returns, *(b)* less than seven days late with their returns and *(c)* less than 14 days late with their returns; and if he will estimate the cost of this administrative action.

Mr. Ryder: A trader is sent a notice warning of liability to default surcharge when value added tax returns or payments have been received late but records are not available in a form which enables me to provide the information requested.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the treatment for capital gains tax of shares issued under the business start-up and business expansion schemes before 19 March 1986.

Mr. Lilley: Up to 5 April 1988, when shares issued before 19 March 1986 under the business start-up scheme or business expansion scheme were exchanged for shares in another company on a takeover or company reconstruction, the transaction was generally not regarded as giving rise to a disposal for capital gains tax purposes. Instead

any gain or loss which would otherwise have accrued was effectively rolled over into the new share holding. The Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 changed the law affecting business start-up and business expansion scheme shares issued before 19 March 1986 so that after 5 April 1988 roll-over treatment was no longer available where incomes tax relief had been given on these shares and not withdrawn. This change in the law was not intended.

The Government therefore propose to bring forward legislation in the 1990 Finance Bill to restore the previous capital gains tax treatment for exchange or cancellations of business start-up and business expansion scheme shares after 5 April 1988 which are affected by this change in the law. For a limited period shareholders will, however, be able to choose to have an exchange or cancellation of shares which takes place before 1 January 1990 treated under the provisions as they currently apply, if this is to their advantage.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing, for the latest years now available, identifiable general Government expenditure by function in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* as a percentage of United Kingdom total identifiable general Government expenditure, *(c)* as an amount per capita, and *(d)* as an amount per capita expressed as an index, United Kingdom identifiable general Government expenditure = 100.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Most public expenditure is planned on a national basis and there is no geographical disaggregation apart from expenditure which is the responsibility of the territorial Departments. However, in order to provide a more comprehensive breakdown of public expenditure within the four countries of the United Kingdom an additional analysis, covering outturn years, is carried out each year. This analysis allocates, where possible, expenditure to England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and therefore includes within the territories a wider coverage of expenditure than that for which the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are directly responsible.

In previous years this analysis has covered expenditure included within the planning total. Since the new planning total (announced in Cm. 441), on which outturn and plans for future years were published in the Autumn Statement (Cm. 879), includes central Government support for local authorities rather than local authority expenditure, the basis of the territorial analysis has been changed this year to cover general Government expenditure. The analysis thus covers central Government's own expenditure, finance for public corporations, and local authorities' expenditure, as it has in the past. Public corporations' market and overseas borrowing is, however, excluded.

The analysis divides expenditure into "identifiable" and "non-identifiable" expenditure. The term "identifiable expenditure" refers to expenditure that can be identified from official records as having been incurred for the benefit of people in a particular country. The coverage of identifiable expenditure has been expanded since last year's exercise to include grants, subsidies and net lending to those public corporations, mainly dealing with housing and development, where allocation between territories is possible on a consistent basis. Total identifiable expenditure accounts for around three quarters of general Government expenditure. The remainder, unidentifiable expenditure, covers mainly expenditure deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole, for example, defence, overseas aid and other overseas services. The coverage of identifiable expenditure is largely unaffected by the change of basis to general Government expenditure.

Tables 1 to 5 show figures for identifiable general Government expenditure according to main function in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the years 1984-85 to 1988-89. The tables show identifiable general Government expenditure in each territory in total and on a per capita basis. The per capita figures are based on mid-year population estimates. Figures for earlier years are not available on a totally consistent basis with those given in these tables.

Table 6 compares, for the latest year, 1988-89, expenditure by function in the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland programmes with the total identifiable expenditure in the respective countries. It shows that identifiable expenditure has a wider coverage than expenditure within the responsibilities of the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales; in the case of Northern Ireland it has a slightly wider coverage than the Northern Ireland programme. The table also shows, for 1988-89, unidentifiable expenditure where this can be allocated to function.

In some cases, expenditure which cannot be separately identified for England, Scotland or Wales can be allocated to Great Britain rather than the United Kingdom; for example, the majority of the finance provided for expenditure by the nationalised industries can be allocated to Great Britain. Tables 7a and 7b compare Northern Ireland allocated expenditure with that allocated to Great Britain over the five-year period.

The extent to which expenditure can be identified may vary from year to year and between countries. The coverage of particular functions can also vary between countries; for example, in Northern Ireland, expenditure on arts and libraries is contained in the education category.

The terms and definitions used for this analysis are the same as those used for the recent Autumn Statement (Cm. 879) but the figures are based on less up-to-date outturn information.

Table 1a Identifiable general government expenditure 1984-85

£ million

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	As a percentage of United Kingdom indentifiable expenditure: England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	631·5	234·1	103·1	159·7	1,128·4	56·0	20·7	9·1	14·2
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,290·6	739·8	385·4	331·4	4,747·2	69·3	15·6	8·1	7·0
Roads and transport	3,734·0	503·8	262·8	100·7	4,601·3	81·2	10·9	5·7	2·2
Housing	3,273·5	665·9	143·8	336·4	4,419·6	74·1	15·1	3·3	7·6
Other environmental services	3,573·5	508·6	270·2	184·2	4,536·5	78·8	11·2	6·0	4·1
Law, order and protective services	4,113·8	508·1	218·2	433·3	5,273·4	78·0	9·6	4·1	8·2
Education and science	13,489·1	2,019·4	840·6	609·8	16,958·9	79·5	11·9	5·0	3·6
Arts and Libraries	551·5	69·1	28·9	0·0	649·5	84·9	10·6	4·4	0·0
Health and personal social services	15,732·9	2,180·3	985·4	665·6	19,564·2	80·4	11·1	5·0	3·4
Social security	32,484·8	3,673·3	2,085·3	1,202·0	39,445·4	82·4	9·3	5·3	3·0
Miscellaneous[1]	1,084·9	232·7	108·2	55·9	1,481·7	73·2	15·7	7·3	3·8
Total	81,960·1	11,335·1	5,431·9	4,079·0	102,806·1	79·7	11·0	5·3	4·0

Table 1b Identifiable general government expenditure per head 1984-85

£ per head

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100): England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	13·4	45·5	36·7	103·0	20·0	67·3	227·6	183·8	515·4
Trade, industry, energy and employment	70·1	143·8	137·3	213·8	84·1	83·3	171·0	163·3	254·2
Roads and transport	79·5	97·9	93·6	65·0	81·5	97·6	120·1	114·9	79·7
Housing	69·7	129·4	51·2	217·0	78·3	89·1	165·3	65·4	277·2
Other environmental services	76·1	98·8	96·3	118·8	80·3	94·7	123·0	119·8	147·9
Law, order and protective services	87·6	98·7	77·7	279·5	93·4	93·8	105·7	83·2	299·2
Education and science	287·3	392·4	299·4	393·3	300·4	95·6	130·7	99·7	130·9
Arts and Libraries	11·7	13·4	10·3	0·0	11·5	102·1	116·7	89·5	0·0
Health and presonal social services	335·1	423·7	351·0	429·3	346·5	96·7	122·3	101·3	123·9
Social security	691·8	713·9	742·8	775·3	698·6	99·0	102·2	106·3	111·0
Miscellaneous[1]	23·1	45·2	38·5	36·1	26·2	88·0	172·3	146·9	137·4
Total	1,745·5	2,202·8	1,935·0	2,630·9	1,820·9	95·9	121·0	106·3	144·5

[1] Includes expenditure associated with the general maintenance of government, such as tax collection and population registration.

Table 2a Identifiable general government expenditure 1985-86

£ million

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure: England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	632·7	254·2	109·3	153·8	1,150·0	55·0	22·1	9·5	13·4
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,484·2	683·3	346·4	375·4	4,889·3	71·3	14·0	7·1	7·7
Roads and transport	3,486·3	539·5	268·4	101·3	4,395·5	79·3	12·3	6·1	2·3
Housing	2,969·8	620·1	135·3	345·5	4,070·7	73·0	15·2	3·3	8·5
Other environmental services	3,663·1	501·2	292·2	196·5	4,653·0	78·7	10·8	6·3	4·2
Law, order and protective services	4,191·9	531·4	228·4	473·2	5,424·9	77·3	9·8	4·2	8·7
Education and science	14,013·3	2,101·8	854·8	637·4	17,607·3	79·6	11·9	4·9	3·6
Arts and libraries	581·8	75·1	31·6	0·0	688·5	84·5	10·9	4·6	0·0
Health and personal social services	16,588·1	2,315·3	1,051·0	697·8	20,652·2	80·3	11·2	5·1	3·4
Social security	35,258·0	4,072·1	2,245·1	1,310·1	42,885·3	82·2	9·5	5·2	3·1
Miscellaneous[1]	1,186·9	237·5	108·9	62·1	1,595·4	74·4	14·9	6·8	3·9
Total	86,056·1	11,931·5	5,671·4	4,353·1	108,012·1	79·7	11·0	5·3	4·0

Table 2b Identifiable general government expenditure per head 1985-86

£ per head

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100) England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	13·4	49·5	38·9	98·7	20·3	66·1	243·6	191·4	486·1
Trade, industry, energy and employment	74·0	133·0	123·2	241·0	86·4	85·6	154·0	142·7	279·1
Roads and transport	74·0	105·0	95·5	65·0	77·6	95·3	135·3	123·0	83·8
Housing	63·0	120·7	48·1	221·8	71·9	87·7	167·9	66·9	308·5
Other environmental services	77·8	97·6	103·9	126·1	82·2	94·6	118·7	126·4	153·5
Law, order and protective services	89·0	103·5	81·2	303·8	95·8	92·9	108·0	84·8	317·0
Education and science	297·4	409·2	304·0	409·2	311·0	95·6	131·6	97·8	131·6
Arts and libraries	12·3	14·6	11·2	0·0	12·2	101·6	120·2	92·4	0·0
Health and personal social services	352·1	450·8	373·8	447·9	364·8	96·5	123·6	102·5	122·8
Social security	748·4	792·8	798·5	841·0	757·5	98·8	104·7	105·4	111·0
Miscellaneous[1]	25·2	46·2	38·7	39·9	28·2	89·4	164·1	137·4	141·5
Total	1,826·6	2,322·9	2,017·0	2,794·4	1,907·7	95·7	121·8	105·7	146·5

[1] Includes expenditure associated with the general maintenance of government, such as tax collection and population registration.

Table 3a Identifiable general government expenditure 1984-85

£ million

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	604·0	231·2	118·0	159·4	1,112·6	54·3	20·8	10·6	14·3
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,897·6	801·4	433·3	387·7	5,520·0	70·6	14·5	7·8	7·0
Roads and transport	3,639·6	575·5	292·7	105·0	4,612·8	78·9	12·5	6·3	2·3
Housing	2,863·5	630·2	177·8	334·7	4,006·2	71·5	15·7	4·4	8·4
Other environmental services	3,846·5	546·7	330·4	209·6	4,933·2	78·0	11·1	6·7	4·2
Law, order and protective services	4,592·0	580·7	247·4	520·8	5,940·9	77·3	9·8	4·2	8·8
Education and science	15,298·3	2,248·5	942·5	730·6	19,219·9	79·6	11·7	4·9	3·8
Arts and Libraries	619·1	81·9	33·6	0·0	734·6	84·3	11·1	4·6	0·0
Health and personal social services	17,861·3	2,444·6	1,131·4	748·7	22,186·0	80·5	11·0	5·1	3·4
Social security	37,937·6	4,356·6	2,440·5	1,423·2	46,157·9	82·2	9·4	5·3	3·1
Miscellaneous[1]	1,332·5	270·6	120·8	70·4	1,794·3	74·3	15·1	6·7	3·9
Total	92,492·0	12,767·9	6,268·4	4,690·1	116,218·4	79·6	11·0	5·4	4·0

Table 3b Identifiable general government expenditure per head 1986-87

£ per head

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100) England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	12·8	45·1	41·8	101·7	19·6	65·2	230·3	213·4	519·0
Trade, industry, energy and employment	82·5	156·5	153·6	247·4	97·2	84·8	160·9	157·9	254·5
Roads and transport	77·0	112·4	103·8	67·0	81·3	94·8	138·3	127·7	82·5
Housing	60·6	123·1	63·0	213·6	70·6	85·9	174·4	89·3	302·7
Other environmental services	81·4	106·8	117·1	133·8	86·9	93·7	122·8	134·8	153·9
Law, order and protective services	97·2	113·4	87·7	332·4	104·7	92·8	108·3	83·8	317·6
Education and science	323·7	439·1	334·1	466·3	338·6	95·6	129·7	98·7	137·7
Arts and Libraries	13·1	16·0	11·9	0·0	12·9	101·2	123·6	92·0	0·0
Health and personal social services	378·0	477·4	401·1	477·9	390·9	96·7	122·1	102·6	122·3
Social security	802·8	850·7	865·1	908·3	813·2	98·7	104·6	106·4	111·7
Miscellaneous[1]	28·2	52·8	42·8	44·9	31·6	89·2	167·2	135·5	142·1
Total	1,957·3	2,493·2	2·222·0	2,993·4	2,047·4	95·6	121·8	108·5	146·2

[1] Includes expenditure associated with the general maintenance of government, such as tax collection and population registration.

Table 4a Identifiable general government expenditure 1987-88

£ million

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure: England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	639·8	222·2	91·0	157·8	1,110·8	57·6	20·0	8·2	14·2
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,699·8	713·8	415·0	369·2	5,197·8	71·2	13·7	8·0	7·1
Roads and transport	3,820·4	590·4	337·0	108·6	4,856·4	78·7	12·2	6·9	2·2
Housing	2,797·4	715·7	213·9	336·6	4,063·6	68·8	17·6	5·3	8·3
Other environmental services	3,751·8	587·3	356·8	229·6	4,925·5	76·2	11·9	7·2	4·7
Law, order and protective services	5,158·7	649·8	275·7	591·7	6,675·9	77·3	9·7	4·1	8·9
Education and science	16,644·0	2,444·8	1,046·4	789·1	20,924·3	79·5	11·7	5·0	3·8
Arts and Libraries	674·1	86·3	37·2	0·0	797·6	84·5	10·8	4·7	0·0
Health and personal social services	19,657·5	2,666·2	1,256·4	810·1	24,390·2	80·6	10·9	5·2	3·3
Social security	39,364·1	4,654·0	2,547·1	1,504·1	48,069·3	81·9	9·7	5·3	3·1
Miscellaneous[1]	1,524·7	296·0	130·7	72·2	2,023·6	75·3	14·6	6·5	3·6
Total	97,732·3	13,626·5	6,702·2	4,969·0	123,035·0	79·4	11·1	5·5	4·0

Table 4b Identifiable general government expenditure 1987-88

£ per head

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100): England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	13·5	43·4	32·1	100·2	19·5	69·2	222·3	164·4	513·5
Trade, industry, energy and employment	78·0	139·4	146·3	234·4	91·3	85·5	152·6	160·3	256·7
Roads and transport	80·6	115·3	118·8	68·9	85·3	94·5	135·1	139·3	80·8
Housing	59·0	139·7	75·4	213·7	71·4	82·7	195·8	105·7	299·4
Other environmental services	79·1	114·7	125·8	145·8	86·5	91·5	132·5	145·4	168·5
Law, order and protective services	108·8	126·9	97·2	375·7	117·3	92·8	108·2	82·9	320·4
Education and science	351·1	477·3	368·9	501·0	367·5	95·5	129·9	100·4	136·3
Arts and Libraries	14·2	16·8	13·1	0·0	14·0	101·5	120·3	93·6	0·0
Health and personal social services	414·7	520·5	443·0	514·3	428·4	96·8	121·5	103·4	120·0
Social security	830·3	908·6	898·1	954·9	844·4	98·3	107·6	106·4	113·1
Miscellaneous[1]	32·2	57·8	46·1	45·8	35·5	90·5	162·6	129·6	129·0
Total	2,061·6	2,660·3	2,364·9	3,154·7	2,161·2	95·4	123·1	109·4	146·0

[1] Includes expenditure associated with the general maintenance of government, such as tax collection and population registration.

Table 5a Identifiable general government expenditure 1988-89

£ million

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	As a percentage of United Kingdom identifiable expenditure: England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	786·4	254·0	106·5	171·4	1,318·3	59·7	19·3	8·1	13·0
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,923·3	687·2	416·0	1786·2	5,812·7	67·5	11·8	7·2	13·5
Roads and transport	3,922·6	616·7	342·7	110·9	4,992·9	78·6	12·4	6·9	2·2
Housing	1,982·8	664·1	172·1	335·2	3,154·2	62·9	21·1	5·5	10·6
Other environmental services	4,050·2	662·3	364·3	260·2	5,337·0	75·9	12·4	6·8	4·9
Law, order and protective services	5,744·9	719·5	309·2	639·7	7,413·3	77·5	9·7	4·2	8·6
Education and science	17,930·4	2,660·4	1,116·3	851·7	22,558·8	79·5	11·8	4·9	3·8
Arts and Libraries	794·6	90·2	42·0	0·0	926·8	85·7	9·7	4·5	0·0
Health and personal social services	21,768·9	2,981·5	1,395·5	882·8	27,028·7	80·5	11·0	5·2	3·3
Social security	40,111·3	4,641·1	2,701·8	1,599·7	49,053·9	81·8	9·5	5·5	3·3
Miscellaneous[2]	1,698·5	313·9	143·4	83·9	2,239·7	75·8	14·0	6·4	3·7
Total	102,713·9	14,290·9	7,109·8	5,721·7	129,836·3	79·1	11·0	5·5	4·4

Table 5b Identifiable public expenditure per head 1988-89

£ per head

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom	Index (United Kingdom identifiable expenditure = 100) England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	16·5	49·9	37·3	108·6	23·1	71·6	215·8	161·4	470·2
Trade, industry, energy and employment	82·5	134·9	145·6	[1]498·2	101·9	81·0	132·4	142·9	489·1
Roads and transport	82·5	121·1	120·0	70·3	87·5	94·3	138·4	137·1	80·3
Housing	41·7	130·4	60·2	212·4	55·3	75·5	235·9	109·0	384·3
Other environmental services	85·2	130·0	127·5	164·9	93·5	91·1	139·0	136·3	176·3
Law, order and protective services	120·9	141·2	108·2	405·4	129·9	93·0	108·7	83·3	312·1
Education and science	377·2	522·3	390·7	539·7	395·3	95·4	132·1	98·8	136·5
Arts and Libraries	16·7	17·7	14·7	0·0	16·2	102·9	109·0	90·5	0·0
Health and personal social services	457·9	585·3	488·4	559·4	473·6	96·7	123·6	103·1	118·1
Social security	843·8	911·1	945·7	1,013·8	859·6	98·2	106·0	110·0	117·9
Miscellaneous[2]	35·7	61·6	50·2	53·2	39·2	91·0	157·0	127·9	135·5
Total	2,160·7	2,805·4	2,488·6	3,625·9	2,275·2	95·0	123·3	109·4	159·4

[1] Includes £390 million (£247 per head) for costs associated with the privatisation of Short Brothers PLC.
[2] Includes expenditure associated with the general maintenance of government, such as tax collection and population registration.

Table 6: General government expenditure[1] analysed by territorial area and function 1988-89

(£ million)

	Identifiable expenditure												
	England	Scotland (Total)	Programme 15[2]	Scotland other	Wales (Total)	Programme 16[2]	Wales other	Northern Ireland (Total)	Programme 17[2]	Northern Ireland other	Total	Non-Identified	United Kingdom
Defence	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	18,974·4	18,974·4
Overseas services	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,268·9	2,268·9
Agriculture, fisheries, food and forestry	786·4	254·0	199·1	54·9	106·5	83·9	22·6	171·4	169·9	1·5	1,318·3	882·1	2,200·4
Trade, industry, energy and employment	3,923·3	687·2	266·2	421·0	416·0	186·1	229·9	[3]786·2	[3]786·2	—	5,812·7	2,551·1	8,364·1
Roads and transport	3,922·6	616·7	615·7	1·0	342·7	342·7	—	110·9	110·9	—	4,992·9	877·0	5,869·9
Housing	1,982·8	664·1	664·1	—	172·1	172·1	—	335·2	335·2	—	3,154·2	16·2	3,170·4
Other environmental services	4,050·2	662·3	656·5	5·8	364·3	359·2	5·1	260·2	260·2	—	5,337·0	727·6	6,064·6
Law, order and protective services	5,744·9	719·5	692·7	26·8	309·2	—	309·2	639·7	606·8	32·9	7,413·3	1,372·8	8,786·1
Education and science[4]	17,930·4	2,660·4	2,318·0	342·4	1,116·3	946·4	169·9	851·7	849·5	2·2	22,558·8	133·3	22,692·1
Arts and libraries[4]	794·6	90·2	90·2	—	42·0	42·0	—	[4]—	[4]—	—	926·8	179·4	1,106·2
Health and personal social services	21,768·9	2,981·5	2,981·5	—	1,395·5	1,395·5	—	882·8	882·8	—	27,028·7	−32·8	26,995·9
Social security	40,111·3	4,641·1	—	4,641·1	2,701·8	—	2,701·8	1,599·7	1,587·9	11·8	49,053·9	798·9	49,852·8
Miscellaneous[5]	1,698·5	313·9	116·3	197·6	143·4	42·5	100·9	83·9	47·6	36·3	2,239·7	3,031·3	5,271·0
Total expenditure	102,713·9	14,290·9	8,600·3	5,690·6	7,109·8	3,570·4	3,539·4	5,721·7	5,637·0	84·7	129,836·3	31,780·5	161,616·8

[1] Items included in general government expenditure but not included within total expenditure on programmes (privatisation proceeds, general government debt interest and accounting adjustments) are treated as unidentified expenditure ad not allocated to territories.
[2] Programmes 15, 16 and 17 relate to expenditure programmes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland covered by the respective chapters of the 1989 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 616-618).
[3] Includes £390 million for costs associated with the privatisation of Short Brothers PLC.
[4] Expenditure on arts and libraries in Northern Ireland is included with education and science.
[5] Includes contribution to European Communities and expenditure associated with the general maintenance of government, such as tax collection and population registration.

Table 7a
General government expenditure[1]
in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1984-85 to 1988-89

£ million

	Great Britain	Northern Ireland	Total	As a percentage of Great Britain and Northern Ireland total Great Britain	Northern Ireland
1984-85	103,494·2	4,182·4	107,676·6	96·1	3·9
1985-86	109,051·4	4,444·1	113,495·5	96·1	3·9
1986-87	115,898·1	4,724·4	120,622·5	96·1	3·9
1987-88	122,951·2	4,921·2	127,872·3	96·2	3·8
1988-89	129,205·0	[2]5,737·9	134,942·9	95·7	4·3

Table 7b
General government expenditure per head[1] in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1984-85 to 1988-89

£ per head

				Index (Great Britain and Northern Ireland = 100)	
	Great Britain	Northern Ireland	Total	Great Britain	Northern Ireland
1984-85	1,884·8	2,697·6	1,907·1	98·8	141·4
1985-86	1,980·6	2,852·8	2,004·6	98·8	142·3
1986-87	2,099·7	3,015·3	2,125·0	98·8	141·9
1987-88	2,221·1	3,124·3	2,246·1	98·9	139·1
1988-89	2,328·6	[2]3,636·0	2,364·7	98·5	153·8

[1] The figures in these tables differ from those for identifiable expenditure given in tables 1-6 because their coverage is wider; in particular some of the finance provided for nationalised industries is included.
[2] Includes £390 million (£247 per head) for costs associated with the privatisation of Short Brothers plc.

Privatisation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the share offer price, the closing price on the first day and the current share price for each of the privatisations since 1979.

Mr. Lilley: The information the hon. Member requested is as follows.

	Year	Offer price	First installment (pence)	Closing price on first day of dealing	Current price[1]
British Petroleum	1979	363	150	n/a	
	1983	435	200	n/a	333
	1987	330	120	85	
British Aerospace	1981	150	—	171	561
	1985	375	200	[2]345	
Cable and Wireless	1981	168	—	197	
	1983	275	100	98	520
	1985	587	300	303	
Amersham International	1982	142	—	188	361
Britoil	1982	215	100	81	[3]—
	1985	185	100	122	
Associated British Ports	1983	112	—	138	
	1984	270	100	102	612
Enterprise Oil	1984	185	100	100	668
Jaguar	1984	165	—	179	845
British Telecom	1984	130	50	93	289·5
British Gas	1986	135	50	62·5	228·5
British Airways	1987	125	65	109	211
Rolls-Royce	1987	170	85	147	171
BAA	1987	245	100	146	387
British Steel	1988	125	60	62	131·5
Anglian Water	1989	240	100	[4]148·5	
Northumbrian Water Group	1989	240	100	157	
North West Water Group	1989	240	100	135	
Severn Trent	1989	240	100	131	
Southern Water	1989	240	100	141	
South West Water	1989	240	100	147	
Thames Water	1989	240	100	136	
Welsh Water	1989	240	100	141	
Wessex Water	1989	240	100	154	
Yorkshire Water	1989	240	100	149	
Package of 10 Water Companies[5]	1989	£2,400	£1,000	£1,395	

[1] Current prices on 12 December 1989.
[2] Opening share price on first day of dealing; closing price on that day not available.
[3] Taken over by BP in 1988.
[4] Shares in the 10 water plcs began trading on 12 December 1989.
[5] Package of 1,000 shares consisting of shares in each individual water plc in proportion to market capitalisation at offer price.

Warsaw Pact

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each of the countries of the Warsaw pact, the terms of the grants and loans, over the last year, to which the United Kingdom has contributed.

Mr. Ryder: These are as follows:

POLAND:

Know-How Fund of £50 million over 5 years (grant)

The general aim is to finance projects and training in political and economic skills that will underpin democracy and assist economic reform. There are no specific terms.

$100 million contribution to $1 billion Stabilisation Fund (grant)

Terms are that an economic adjustment programme

agreed with the International Monetary Fund should be in place. The Stabilisation Fund will be available to support policies aimed at liberalisation of payments and transfers for current international transactions. Its management will be agreed between the contributors and the Polish authorities.

300 million ecu aid (for Poland and Hungary) (grant)

Although not disbursed, provision has been included in the 1990 European Community budget. No terms are attached but it is intended that the money be used in areas such as imports of pesticides and agricultural machinery, environmental protection and training that will help with restructuring the economy.

100 million ecu emergency food Aid (for Poland and Hungary) (grant)

Aid agreed by Community agriculture Council last July to cover shortages of beef and cereals. Mostly from 1989 EC budget, but small part from 1990 EC budget.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the sterling value of the European currency unit at today's price equivalent for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ryder: There is no single definition of real exchange rates. The nominal sterling/ecu exchange rate is published in the Central Statistical Office's "Financial Statistics", table 13.1.

Friendly Societies

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish either a Green or White Paper on new legislation for friendly societies following the Treasury's internal review commenced in September 1988.

Mr. Ryder: I hope to be able to publish the conclusions of our review early in the new year.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the information on the weight of council rents etc., in the retail prices index given in his written reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *800-01*.

Mr. Ryder: Following is the information:

	Rents	*Mortgage interest payments*	*All items in retail prices index*
Weight in retail prices index in 1989	32	60	1,000
Weekly expenditure (in £) on which the weight is based (average over all households covered by the RPI, both tenants and owner-occupiers), at January 1989 prices	6·55	12·47	—
Percentage change in year to January 1989	8·2	49·9	7·5

Mortgage Debt

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the ratio of outstanding personal mortgage debt to disposable incomes before tax in 1966, 1970, 1974, 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1988; what was the average rate of interest payable; and what was the ratio of interest payments to disposable incomes.

Mr. Ryder: Figures for outstanding personal mortgage debt and average building society mortgage rates can be obtained from "Financial Statistics", and figures on personal disposable incomes are given in "United Kingdom National Accounts", both published by the CSO. Figures for average mortgage rates covering all lenders are not available.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the criteria used at local Customs and Excise offices to determine whether value added tax is charged on small cycle helmets, as opposed to children's cycle helmets; if he will make it his policy to apply a zero value added tax rating on all cycle helmets; and if he will make a statement on the current variation in the application of value added tax on cycle helmets between different local Customs and Excise offices.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* There is no general relief from value added tax for cyclists' safety helmets and under European Community law no such relief could now be introduced. However helmets falling within the provisions of group 17 of schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983, as articles designed for young children and not suitable for older persons, are relieved from the tax. While it is for the sellers of goods to determine their liability under value added tax law, local Customs and Excise offices are glad to offer advice on request. If the hon. Member has any particular problem in mind I would urge him to take it up with the chairman of Customs and Excise.

Security Vetting

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the amount to compensate civil servants undergoing security vetting is calculated; how much it is; how often it is paid; and how much has been spent on it in the current financial year.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Civil servants are not compensated for undergoing security vetting.

Rover Group

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which departmental Ministers and officials represented the Government in the discussions with British Aerospace on the applicability of section 768 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 to proposals to be made by British Aerospace following their acquisition of Rover Group.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Discussions leading up to the exchange of correspondence of 8 July 1988 between Inland Revenue and British Aerospace's advisers—which has been placed in the Library—were concerned with explaining how the Revenue approaches the law in this area and its possible application to possible changes in Rover Group's trade. The procedural arrangements for conveying the Revenue's formal views on any such changes were also discussed. The discussions were between British Aerospace, its advisers and the Inland Revenue. Officials from the Department of Trade and Industry and their advisers were also present. Treasury Ministers were aware that the Inland Revenue were having these discussions, but no Ministers were

present at them. As the exchange of correspondence makes clear, the guiding principle throughout was that the tax treatment of anything concerning the Rover acquisition must be consistent with the law and the treatment of other taxpayers in comparable circumstances.

Discussions since the sale of Rover Group concerning British Aerospace's tax liabilities under the law are a matter between the company, its advisers and the Inland Revenue. It would not be in keeping with the strict rules of tax confidentiality for Ministers or other departmental officials to be involved in any such discussions.

It is not the practice of this Government or their predecessors to name officials.

TRANSPORT

M2/A2

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list details of all accidents on the M2/A2 between London and Dover for the three months ended 10 December, giving information on causes, location, types of vehicles involved and any injuries sustained.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is currently unavailable. Details of road accidents in Kent for the period requested have not yet been provided to the Department by Kent county council. The information collected by the police and forwarded to the Department does not include an assessment of the cause of the accident.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to increase safety on the M2/A2 roads between London and Dover.

Mr. Atkins: The following measures are proposed:—

A2 London Boundary to M2
Provision of hardshoulders and lighting.
Brenley to Harbledown
Provision of central reserve safety fencing and lighting.
Harbledown to Bridge
Provision of central reserve safety fence.
Shepardswell
Provision of lighting.
Jubilee Way Dover
Alterations to road markings and removal of laybys.

The White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" also announced a route assessment and scheme indentification study of the A2 from Bean to the M2.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to carry out a traffic survey on the M2/A2 roads between London and Dover.

Mr. Atkins: The next traffic count is scheduled for 17 May 1990 on the M2 at Rochester. Counts are not normally carried out between November and March because flow levels then are not representative.

Net Safety Benefit Analysis

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made an assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of the net safety benefit analysis development by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. McLoughlin: The net safety benefit analysis was a study by a group of four civil aviation safety authorities: the US Federal Aviation Administration, Transport Canada, DGAC France and the Civil Aviation Authority. The CAA published the results of the study as CAA paper 87017.

I know of no reason to doubt the validity of the conclusions of the study.

Salvage

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 1 December to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East, *Official Report*, column *445*, what sums accrued to the Government in each case in respect of the salvage operations carried out on each ships listed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is commercially confidential and cannot therefore be published.

Merchant Shipping

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of his Department's anticipated contribution to the NATO study of supply and demand for merchant shipping in crisis and war, as set out in the 1989 Defence White Paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's contribution to the cost of this study is 2,248,670 Belgian francs, about £37,000 which has now been paid. The Department is also providing the chairman of the steering group overseeing the study.

Radioactive Materials (Transportation)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what contribution his Department will make to the International Atomic Energy Agency review of regulations governing the transportation of radioactive materials;

(2) what contribution is being made by his Department to the International Atomic Energy Agency's standing advisory group on the carriage of radioactive materials.

Mr. Atkins: The Secretary of State is the competent authority for the safe transport of radioactive materials. Officials from the Department's radioactive materials transport division co-ordinate national policy and lead United Kingdom delegations at International Atomic Energy Agency meetings on this subject.

Channel Tunnel

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the decision of the Channel tunnel intergovernmental commission on non-segregation.

Mr. Portillo: I have placed in the Library a copy of the letter sent today to Eurotunnel by the chairman of the United Kingdom/French Channel tunnel intergovernmental commission about non-segregation of passengers from their vehicles on the shuttle trains operating between Folkestone and Calais, and a copy of the English translation.

Buses

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has undertaken any studies or sought advice as to whether the replacement of big bus services by mini-midi buses has an effect on congestion and pollution.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* The choice of vehicle type is a matter for bus operators. Nonetheless the Department's transport and road research laboratory is currently engaged on a financial analysis of urban minibus operations which will touch on fuel consumption and congestion effects.

Air Services

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the countries which impose restrictions on the leasing and operation of foreign-registered and operated airliners.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not generally collected, although I understand that the United States does not permit its airlines to lease foreign-registered and operated aircraft.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of *(a)* foreign-registered and operated airliners leased by British airlines and *(b)* flights undertaken by those airliners in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The number of permits issued by my Department for the lease of foreign-registered and operated aircraft by British airlines in each of the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Permits*
1984	3
1985	1
1986	18
1987	19
1988	19

Details of the numbers of flights undertaken by those aircraft are not available.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the use of foreign-registered and operated airliners; to what subjects those representations referred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: From time to time the Department and the Civil Aviation Authority receive representations about foreign-registered and operated aircraft. In the main, these relate to the quality of service provided by the airlines and the correspondent is encouraged to take the matter up direct with the airline. Exceptionally, where poor safety standards are alleged, the Department and/or the Civil Aviation Authority will investigate, both with the airlines and the other Governments concerned.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safety checks and controls are routinely required to be carried out on British airliners; and whether there is any difference in the requirements put on foreign-registered and operated airliners leased by British airlines.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation.

I understand that there is a large number and a wide variety of safety checks and controls routinely required to be carried out on British airliners. Should the hon. Member have any specific questions, they should be addressed to the chairman of the authority.

Foreign-registered and operated airliners leased by British airlines are required to comply with the safety standards of the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Park and Ride Schemes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of authorities and bus companies in local authority areas which operate park and ride schemes *(a)* during the Christmas shopping period and *(b)* at other times of the year by area.

Mr. Portillo: The Department does not collect statistics on park and ride schemes. Some local highway authorities include information on these schemes in their annual transport policies and programmes (TPPs). In the 1990-91 TPPs submitted to the Department in July 1989 there are references to 27 park and ride schemes in 23 local authority areas in England. Of these, four relate solely to the Christmas shopping period, 10 to other periods of the year (but in two cases including Christmas), 11 to permanent arrangements.

In London, park and ride cannot readily be distinguished from commuter parking. A survey undertaken in 1987 showed that 64 of the 250 London Underground stations had their own car parks, as did 538 of the 922 stations on British Rail's Network SouthEast. In addition, British Rail has a number of "parkway" stations close to motorways.

We have no information about the number of bus companies operating park and ride schemes.

Channel Tunnel Terminals

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received regarding *(a)* a Channel tunnel terminal at Kings Cross/St. Pancras, *(b)* a Channel tunnel terminal at Stratford and *(c)* a Channel tunnel terminal at locations other than the above; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The representations that I have received about the preferred location of a second London station for international passenger services have been confined to King's Cross and Stratford. I have received a number of representations for and against each of these proposals.

Trains (Two-way Radios)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that two-way radios are fitted in all passenger train cabs by the end of 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In its evidence to Sir Anthony Hidden's investigation into the Clapham junction accident, BR gave a commitment to complete its programme of installation of cab radios by 1992. The investigation accepted this timescale. The Government have played their part by making all the necessary radio frequencies available to BR.

Cyclists

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account he takes of cyclists' needs in considering major new road schemes planned by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In planning new trunk roads and improving existing ones, we consider the needs of cyclists for safe and convenient routes. Particular attention is paid to the design of junctions and consequent modifications to the local road network. Detailed guidance is published in our local transport notes series and through our traffic advisory leaflets. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Urban Development

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure designed to support the urban programme.

Mr. Atkins: Each year about £10 million of the public expenditure plans for local authority transport capital expenditure are incorporated within the urban programme administered by the Department of the Environment. The amounts spent on local transport were:

Year	*£ million*
1987-88	10·527
1988-89	[1]10·661
1989-90	[1]10·822

[1]Estimated.

For 1990-91 the amount incorporated will be £2·773 million of credit approvals and £8·320 million of central Government grants; totalling £11·093 million.

In addition, much trunk road spending and a substantial amount of local road spending supported by transport supplementary grant (TSG), is designed to assist inner-city areas. In 1990-91 over 100 major schemes accepted for TSG will benefit inner-city areas.

Since "Action for Cities" was launched in 1988 total expenditure benefiting inner cities on the trunk roads and local roads programmes is estimated at:

Year	*£ million*
1988-89	250
1989-90	300
1990-91	300

The Department is also supporting expenditure on the Manchester Metrolink (expected to cost £110 million) and, from 1990-91, will be spending £1 billion on the Jubilee line extension. Both schemes are designed to improve public transport in urban areas.

Motorway Accidents, Manchester

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many serious road accidents involving stationary vehicles on the motorway network in the Greater Manchester area have been reported during each of the last five years; and how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured as a result of such accidents.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is given in the table.

Accidents involving stationary vehicles on motorways: Greater Manchester: 1984-1988

	Severity of Accidents			*Severity of Casualties*			
	Fatal	*Serious*	*Total*	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1984	0	5	5	0	5	1	6
1985	1	6	7	1	6	3	10
1986	0	4	4	0	4	4	8
1987	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1988	2	5	7	2	6	7	15

Stationary vehicles include those stopped or parked, and vehicles waiting to go ahead but held up.

Highway Schemes (Compensation)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to make highway authorities liable to compensate owners of businesses for loss of trade and profit caused through the loss of passing trade associated with highway schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Compensation is payable where land is acquired for highway schemes. Claimants are entitled to the market value of their interest in the land acquired, disregarding any increase or decrease in its value to the scheme. They are also entitled to any other reasonable loss for disturbance, which could include loss of trade caused by the acquisition of all or part of a property. Compensation is also payable where a highway authority stops up a private means of access to the highway.

However, where a business is affected by a highway scheme but no land is taken or access stopped up, I am advised that there is no liability on the highway authority to compensate for any loss of trade, assuming that the works are carried out directly by it and under statutory authority. Owners of businesses have no right in law to any maintained level of passing trade. Temporary or permanent reductions in traffic flows are part of the commercial risks of running a business.

There are no plans to seek to change these arrangements.

Madeira Shipping Register

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how the proposals for untaxed crews on the proposed Madeira shipping register will affect the competitiveness of United Kingdom registered shipping:

(2) what effect Portugal's proposal to set up a low-cost shipping register in Madeira will have on *(a)* British registered shipping and (b) European Community registered shipping.

Mr McLoughlin: I have no information on whether United Kingdom or other European owners will wish to register any of their ships on the Madeira shipping register.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Primary Schools (Computers)

6. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken to ensure that the supply of computers in primary schools will meet the demands of the national curriculum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: LEAs are responsible for ensuring that schools have enough microcomputers to meet the requirements of the national curriculum. Under our education support grants programme some £25 million is being set aside over a three-year period beginning last year to assist LEAs to purchase microcomputers for educational use in schools. For 1990-91 the Department has asked the LEAs to give particular attention to the needs of primary schools.

73. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that the supply of computers in primary schools will meet the demands of the national curriculum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid).

Professional Association of Teachers

12. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning recognition of the Professional Association of Teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Professional Association of Teachers has represented to my right hon. Friend that some local education authorities still do not recognise the association. The Government recognise the PAT as one of the six schoolteacher unions with which it deals.

Opting Out

13. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the number of schools seeking to opt out under the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. MacGregor: To date 79 schools have embarked on the process of applying for grant-maintained status and parents at 51 of them have so far voted in favour of proceeding with an application. Forty-one proposals have so far reached me for decision: I have approved 32 of them.

Expenditure (Nottinghamshire)

14. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money his Department has spent *(a)* on repair and maintenance of all schools in Nottinghamshire and *(b)* on the city technology college in the past year.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Repairs and maintenance of schools, other than external repairs at voluntary aided schools, are the responsibility of Nottinghamshire local education authority. No figures are available for sums spent by it on these items over the past year. A total of £5·96 million has been spent on the building of the city technology college in Nottingham in the last calendar year.

National Curriculum

15. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the number of letters he has received from head teachers concerning the shortfall of resources for implementation of the national curriculum.

Mr. MacGregor: I frequently receive correspondence from head teachers. Some of it concerns the provision of resources for the national curriculum.

83. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the resources being allocated next year to developing the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: Development of the national curriculum will be achieved largely by the redirection of existing resources. However, we intend next year to use specific grants to support some £120 million expenditure by local education authorities expressly to help with the introduction of the national curriculum. This is in addition to general RSG support of local education authority expenditure. Some £30 million will additionally be deployed to support central expenditure on the national curriculum, including the running costs of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council and the costs of developing standard assessment tasks.

108. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many letters he has received from primary school head teachers concerning the speed at which changes within their school operation and curriculum are being made.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not readily available in the form requested. My right hon. Friend frequently receives correspondence from primary school head teachers about various aspects of education provision.

55. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will report the outcome of the consideration of physical education and the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 12 December 1989 at column *555*.

43. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of parents' reaction to the national curriculum.

49. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from parents about the introduction of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The parental awareness survey published on 4 December indicated that some 90 per cent. of parents interviewed support the introduction of the national curriculum. In particular, they welcome the broadening of provision and the setting of clear objectives. Parents also value the availability of more information from the school about the education being provided.

22. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that there will be the required number of teachers to deliver the national curriculum.

69. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that there are sufficient teachers to teach the national curriculum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 12 December 1989 at column *553*.

24. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the delivery of the national curriculum in primary schools.

30. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the national curriculum.

56. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress in the introduction of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: Evidence from Her Majesty's inspectors shows that in general schools are making satisfactory progress in implementing the national curriculum.

Rural Schools (Sanitation Facilities)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will urge Devon county council to engage in a priority programme to equip all rural schools with indoor sanitation facilities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is the responsibility of the Devon local education authority to determine the priority given to projects included in the authority's annual capital expenditure plans. This requires detailed knowledge of individual schools and their needs as part of the whole educational provision of the area and the authority is best placed to judge these needs.

Pre-school Education

16. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that every three and four-year-old child has the opportunity of pre-school education.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that every three and four-year-old child has the opportunity of pre-school education.

91. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that every three and four-year-old child has the opportunity of pre-school education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government believe that there should be a diversity of provision for pre-school children and that its scope and balance should be for local decision. We want to ensure that the educational experience offered to three and four-year-old children is as high as possible, and that is the purpose of the committee of inquiry which I am chairing.

Under-fives

17. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will seek information from his Danish, Dutch and French counterparts about their policies on under-fives public education in order to improve Her Majesty's Government policies in this area.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on provision in these and other countries may be found in *Statistical Bulletin 13/89* published by the Department last month, a copy of which is in the Library.

Higher Education

18. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on his projections for student numbers in higher education over the next 10 years.

57. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his plans for the future expansion of student numbers in higher education.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy for the expansion of higher education.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on his projections for student numbers in higher education over the next 10 years.

54. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on his projections for student numbers in higher education over the next 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: We expect to see significant growth in student numbers during the 1990s, actively fostered by the Government's education policies. The latest projection indicates full-time equivalent student numbers rising from about 760,000 in 1988 to about 820,000 by 1992. As a result of the very substantial decline in the relevant age groups, numbers are then expected to level off until 1995 before rising again to about 890,000 by the turn of the century.

102. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of young people over the age of 18 years are in higher education in each of the 12 member states of the European Community.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is as follows for each country for the latest year available.

New entrants[1] to higher education

Country[2] (main ages on entry)	*Latest year*	*Participation rate[3] (per cent.)*
Belgium[4] (18 to 19)	1985	39
Denmark (18 to 20)	1985	35
France (18 to 20)	1985	32
West Germany (19 to 21)	1987	29
Greece[5]	1984	38
Ireland[5]	1985	35
Italy (19 to 21)	1986	25
Netherlands[4] (18 to 20)	1985	38
Portugal[5]	1984	14
Spain (18 to 20)	1985	31
United Kingdom[6] (18 to 21)	1987	34

[1] Includes full-time and part-time students entering higher education for the first time, ie excluding postgraduate students and others already having a qualification in higher education. Not all other countries may adhere to this general definition.

[2] Compatible information is not available for Luxembourg since most higher education is undertaken abroad. Ireland figures partly estimated.

[3] To aid comparison and overcome the problem of the varying

lengths of courses in different countries the participation rate is the percentage of all new entrants (defined above) to a derived relevant single year group. The latter is calculated by taking the total populations for the ages providing at least 70 per cent. of the new entrants and dividing by the number of ages involved. For the United Kingdom this is the population of ages 18 to 21 divided by four. OECD recommend this procedure.

[4] Provisional.

[5] Main ages on entry unavailable.

[6] Excludes the private sector and students from abroad. Includes nursing and paramedical students at Health Department establishments.

79. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students were in higher education in the 1988-89 academic year; and how many in 1978-79.

Mr. Jackson: It is provisionally estimated that in 1988-89 there were 993,000 full-time and part-time students on higher education courses in Great Britain, compared with 766,000 in 1978-79.

45. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of persons aged 16 and 18 years went to institutions of higher education in 1979, 1983 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: A measure of young peoples' participation in higher education is the age participation index (API). This is defined as the numbers of young home full-time initial HE entrants expressed as a percentage of the average numbers of 18 and 19-year-olds in the population. In 1979 and 1983 the API for higher education in Great Britain were 12·4 per cent. and 13·1 per cent. respectively. A provisional estimate for 1988 is 15·1 per cent. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

Governing Bodies

19. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given to local authorities regarding political appointments to governing bodies.

93. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given to local authorities regarding political appointments to governing bodies.

103. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has given to local authorities regarding political appointments to governing bodies.

Mrs. Rumbold: Last year the then Secretary of State made clear his view that local authorities which nominate only majority party supporters as school governors are not behaving as their electorates would expect. My right hon. Friend fully endorses that view. Choosing the best people to be school governors need not be a party political matter. However, where a number of governors are to be appointed by a local authority which does wish to act on the basis of political affiliation, they should have regard to the balance of the parties within the authority itself.

71. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has issued any guidance to local education authorities on the appointment and training of school governors.

Mrs. Rumbold: On the issue of appointments, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) earlier today.

We have issued information and guidance on the training of school governors on a number of occasions, particularly in relation to the use of education support grant funds to support LEA training schemes. The Department and HMI have also recently held two conferences bringing together governors and their trainers to discuss this important task.

City Technology Colleges

20. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the City Tecnnology College trust.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend last met representatives of the City Technology College trust on 17 November 1989.

Expenditure (Lancashire)

21. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what increases in capital and revenue spending have taken place in Lancashire in each of the last five financial years; and what are the national average figures.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The figures for expenditure on education for the most recent five-year period available are as follows:

	Financial year					
	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*Average*
Lancashire						
Capital £ million	16·0	11·4	14·4	16·2	13·4	14·3
Percentage increase on previous year	22·3	−28·5	25·7	12·4	−17·4	2·9
Recurrent £ million	275·9	292·3	305·5	322·9	348·7	309·1
Percentage increase in previous year	6·0	4·5	5·7	8·0	8·0	6·4
England						
Capital £ million	469·2	501·3	530·2	574·9	592·8	533·7
Percentage increase on previous year	2·9	6·8	5·8	8·4	3·1	5·4
Recurrent £ million	10,111	10,517	11,003	12,002	13,021	11,331
Percentage increase in previous year	5·3	4·0	4·6	9·1	8·5	6·3

University Entrants

23. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by what percentage applications to enter universities have increased or decreased for 1989-90 against 1988-89.

Mr. Jackson: By the beginning of this month, the Universities Central Council on Admissions had received 135,600 applications from home and overseas students for admission to university next autumn, some 12·8 per cent. more than the corresponding position last year.

31. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the number of students likely to be admitted to university education in 1991-92 expressed as a proportion of the total number of school leavers.

Mr. Jackson: The latest projection of numbers of young, home initial entrants to full-time higher education in Great Britain in 1991-92 is 137,000. The projection of the associated age participation index—defined as the number of full-time, home initial entrants aged under 21, expressed as a percentage of the averaged 18 and 19-year-old populations—is 18·3 per cent.

Special Needs

25. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with local education authorities in the last six months relating to integration into mainstream schools of children with special educational needs.

50. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with local education authorities regarding the integration of children with special education needs into mainstream schooling.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No such discussions have taken place.

41. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account he has taken of special education needs in considering schemes for local management of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has consistently made clear his expectation that authorities would take special care to ensure that their proposals for local management of schools reflected fully the need to ensure appropriate provision for all children with special educational need. A number of authorities believe this provision can be best made by delegating resources to schools and have made appropriate proposals in their submitted LMS schemes. Others have indicated that they wish to retain central control of such resources.

Reforms

26. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the role of governors in implementing the education reforms.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government believe that governors have a central role in improving the effectiveness of our schools. This is reflected in the provisions of the Education Reform Act, including the new arrangements for the local management of schools.

Local Management Schemes

27. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in reviewing local management schemes submitted by London education authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: The 20 outer London education authorities all submitted their schemes of local management by the due deadline of 30 September, and my right hon. Friend has to date announced his preparedness to approve six of them for implementation in April 1990, subject to certain modifications. The 13 inner London councils are not required to submit their schemes until 30 September 1991; but one—Westminster—had done so already, and my right hon. Friend has announced his intention to approve it for implementation in April 1990.

68. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to recommend to education authorities reductions in the size of education departments and the numbers employed there in order to facilitate the release of resources for local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Under local management of schools, more decision-making and administration are being delegated to schools. There should accordingly be scope for economies in local authorities' central administration costs. The scale of these economies, and the speed at which they can be achieved, will vary. But my right hon. Friend expects authorities to secure the largest economies they can as soon as they can, in order to maximise the proportion of available resources which can be delegated to schools.

65. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent reports he has received about the implementation of local management of schools in Norfolk.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has had a number of letters from schools in Norfolk about aspects of local management of schools. Norfolk LEA's scheme for local management of schools was the first to receive approval from my right hon. Friend, and I understand that the LEA is on course for the successful introduction of local management next April.

51. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from education authorities regarding local management of schools.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding local management of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on 14 November at column *215*.

52. **Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with local authority associations regarding local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I met representatives of the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan

Authorities on 13 September to discuss a wide range of local management of schools issues. Representatives expressed their support for the principles of local management. They also set out their concerns about the position of schools with high teaching staff costs when funding is determined mainly by pupil numbers. I made clear in response that it was open to LEAs through their formulae to enhance funding for small schools with above-average salary costs, and that we would also consider sympathetically proposals for an extended transitional period to pure LMS funding for larger schools with high salary costs.

Physical Education Teachers

28. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will supply the latest figures on the shortage of physical education teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In January 1989 there were 162 vacancies for full-time physical education teachers in maintained secondary schools in England, equivalent to 1·2 per cent. of physical education teachers in post.

Grant-maintained Schools

29. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress made by those schools which became grant-maintained in September 1989.

Mrs. Rumbold: The first 18 schools were incorporated as grant-maintained schools in September 1989. They are now experiencing the benefits of greater financial and administrative autonomy. They are proving popular with parents and pupils. I share their confidence in the future and expect them to take full advantage of the opportunities which grant-maintained status offers.

Teacher Shortages

32. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he is considering as to how industry can help to alleviate teacher shortages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Officials from the Department are engaged in discussions with a number of industrial concerns about their future involvement with teacher shortage initiatives. My right hon. Friend acknowledges the valuable contribution that industrialists have already made in this field and welcomes new proposals.

100. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current level of teacher shortages in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 24 October 1989 at col. *392-93*.

47. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he will take to deal with teacher shortages in Lambeth.

Mrs. Rumbold: The employment and deployment of teachers are matters for local education authorities and schools. The Secretary of State's role is to ensure that there are sufficient teachers from whom they can recruit. Government measures include the provision from next April of education support grant for local recruitment measures to attract more mature new entrants and re-entrants to teaching, and my right hon. Friend's request to IAC to look at measures to improve supply in areas where vacancy rates are highest, particularly in inner London.

37. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the measures which he is taking to overcome the shortage of teachers.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is taking to increase the permanent supply of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 14 November at column *235*.

Older Pupils

33. **Mr. Richard Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for the future of 16-to-19 education.

58. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the numbers of 16 to 19-year-olds participating in full-time education.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are committed to increasing the participation of 16 to 19-year-olds in education and training, and believe that every young person should either be in full-time education or in a job with time off for good quality training.

Recent examination reforms and the Education Reform Act will raise standards in schools giving more young people the qualifications and the motivation to stay on in full-time education. This is the key to improving participation. In 1988, after the first year of the GCSE examination, staying on rates for 16 and 17-year-olds rose to a record level. The Government wish to ensure that young people continuing their education at age 16 have access to a range of opportunities that will equip them with the general skills, knowledge and understanding they will need for adult and working life. Young people will have the choice of pursuing that goal through either the academic route—comprising mainly A and AS courses —or the vocational route—where they can choose from courses leading to about 4,000 qualifications. My right hon. Friend has asked the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council and the National Curriculum Council to work with the main vocational bodies to advise on the core skills that A/AS level students should develop and how work on them should be built into the A/AS curriculum.

Expenditure

34. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local education authorities regarding their spending on education.

62. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local education authorities regarding their spending on education.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend discussed the education component of the Government's proposed local authority grant settlement for England for 1990-91 with representatives of the local authority associations at a meeting on 26 October. That was in addition to the statutory consultations about the overall settlement conducted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment following his 6 November announcement. Many of the letters and other representations which my right hon. Friend receives from local education authorities about a range of education issues also touch on spending.

Pupil Profiling

35. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the introduction of pupil profiling.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 4 December at column *14*.

Maintenance and Repairs

36. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money has been allocated for school maintenance and repairs over the past 12 months.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for individual local education authorities and, under local management, their schools to determine how much money should be allocated for school maintenance and repairs. The latest outturn data on recurrent spending show that in 1987-88 local authorities in England spent some £435 million on repairs and maintenance in primary and secondary schools.

Research Students

38. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much the maintenance grant of £3,725 per annum paid by the research councils to research students has increased in real terms since 1979.

81. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of maintenance grants paid by the research councils to research students outside London.

104. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual post-graduate award for research students living away from home outside London paid by the research councils.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamont).

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual maintenance grant paid by the research councils to research students outside London; and what estimate he has made of average lifetime earnings of post-doctoral scientists in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jackson: The annual maintenance grant paid by the research councils in 1989-90 to research students attending an establishment outside London and living away from home is £3,725. The Department does not collect or hold information on the lifetime earnings of post-doctoral scientists in the United Kingdom.

Science Budget

39. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the science budget as a percentage of gross domestic product in 1979-80; and what he expects it to be in 1990-91.

Mr. Jackson: In 1979-80 the science budget was 0·160 per cent. of the gross domestic product. In 1990-91 it is estimated that it will represent 0·163 per cent.

64. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the planned budget for pure science and the research councils.

Mr. Jackson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 15 November at column *272-76*.

Design and Technology

40. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of implementing design and technology as part of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 7 December at column *313*.

Bishopshalt School

44. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce his decision on the application of Bishopshalt school, Hillingdon, to opt out of local education authority control.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement soon.

Research Councils

46. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives from each of the research councils; and what was discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has occasional meetings with representatives of individual research councils to discuss matters of current concern. He met the heads of all the research councils at a reception he held on 14 September.

Surrey University

48. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to visit the University of Surrey.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to do so.

Student Loans

53. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has had on his plans to introduce student loans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner).

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many banks have agreed in principle to operate the student loan scheme.

Mr. Jackson: Ten banks have formed Student Loans Company Limited to undertake preparatory work for the student loans scheme. Additional financial institutions will be invited to become shareholders in the company when a brochure is issued.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to advertise the Government's scheme for student loans; at what estimated cost; and over what period.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government will ensure that students and potential students are fully informed of the public support available.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the costs of the administration of the student loans scheme by *(a)* the public sector, *(b)* competitive tender and *(c)* the student loans company.

Mr. MacGregor: I have nothing to add to the estimates of the costs of administration of the student loans scheme which have already been published.

59. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met Lloyds bank to discuss student finance.

70. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met Lloyds bank to discuss student finance.

77. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the Royal Bank of Scotland concerning student finance.

80. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met Lloyds bank to discuss student finance.

94. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the Clydesdale bank to discuss student finance.

Mr. Jackson: Ministers and officials have had a series of discussions with representatives of the financial institutions as proposals for the student loans scheme have developed. Ten banks have now formed a company, Student Loans Company Limited, to undertake preparatory work for the scheme.

Schools Repairs

60. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he proposes to take to improve the state of repair of schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is primarily for each local education authority to ensure that the schools it maintains are kept in an acceptable state of repair. But my right hon. Friend is aware of concern that some school premises fall below that standard. Accordingly, Government plans for 1990-91 allow for capital borrowing by local authorities in respect of schools, colleges and other educational services of £436 million. For current spending, the Government's proposals for the 1990-91 local authority grant settlement allow for increased spending on repairs and maintenance relative to the levels assumed in the comparable total for 1989-90. Otherwise, the Department promotes improvements in the quality of school premises through the guidance issued by its architects and buildings branch.

Professional Development Scheme

61. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will examine the professional development scheme operated by the British Computer Society as a possible model for career planning for scientists trained and supported by the research councils.

Mr. Jackson: The British Computer Society professfional development scheme is designed for the particular needs of professionals in information technology. It is not an appropriate model for the career planning of scientists, although aspects may be relevant to them. Responsibility for the career planning of scientists employed by research councils and by higher education institutions rests with their employers.

Teacher Training Courses

63. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the joint circular on the approval of initial teacher training courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has received no representations about DES circular 24/89 and Welsh Office circular 59/89 on the approval of initial teacher training courses. The circular was the subject of full consultation before it was issued.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

66. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current pupil-teacher ratio in England and Wales *(a)* in primary schools and *(b)* in secondary schools; and what were the comparable figures 10 years ago.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The pupil-teacher ratios within maintained primary and secondary schools in England in 1989 and 1979 were as follows. Corresponding figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

	Primary	*Secondary*
1989	22·0	15·3
1979	23·1	16·7

Modern Languages

67. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of modern languages taught in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are concerned to increase both the number of pupils continuing to study a

modern foreign language until age 16 and beyond and their standards of language competence. That is why the national curriculum includes a modern foreign language as a foundation subject at secondary level to be studied by all pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. The national curriculum working group on modern foreign languages is expected to recommend, by July 1990, attainment targets and programmes of study for modern foreign languages based on current best practice, in order to raise standards and to provide a stimulating and worthwhile challenge to pupils of all abilities during their period of compulsory secondary schooling.

Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council; and if he will make a statement.

72. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council; and if he will make a statement.

84. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has discussions from time to time with members of the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council on matters of current interest.

City Technology College, Langbaurgh

74. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider establishing another city technology college in Langbaurgh in east Cleveland.

Mrs. Rumbold: City technology colleges are focusing on urban areas because it is there that the aspirations and expectations of pupils and parents are, generally, furthest from fulfilment. Macmillan college, the Teesside city technology college, already provides for children in the inner city area of Middlesborough. There are no plans to establish a further city technology college in the vicinity.

96. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the numbers of representations he has received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against the establishment of a city technology college in Telford.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received 36 letters following the announcement by the Mercers' Company of its intention to sponsor a city technology college in Telford. Thirty-one are against the proposal and five sought further information.

42. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the contribution of city technology colleges to educational practice in schools and to inner-city areas in which they are situated.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is a key aim of the city technology college programme that the colleges should make a major contribution to the development of higher standards in all schools. It is too early yet to evaluate their impact in detail but it is already clear that they are immensely popular with parents and pupils. With three city technology colleges now open, and eight more with firm opening dates, we are now looking very carefully at how the good practices they are pioneering can best be disseminated.

Asbestos

75. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends that asbestos removal from schools should be included in local schemes of management or financed by the local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Under LMS it is for local education authorities to decide whether to retain responsibility centrally for asbestos removal or to delegate responsibility and funding for this within their schemes of local management.

GCSE

76. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the number of GCSE passes at grade C and above by school children in Basildon for 1988 and 1989.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures for the Basildon area are not available centrally, but in 1988 there were 583,000 results at grade C and above in the GCSE in schools within the Essex local education authority. Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Supply Teachers

78. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from schools in Nottinghamshire about the adequacy of supply teacher cover for schools where teachers have to be absent on national curriculum training courses.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has received one letter dealing solely with this subject from the governors of a Nottinghamshire infant school.

Industrial Links

85. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress is being made in encouraging links between schools and local industry and commerce.

88. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken by his Department to improve links between education and industry.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Good progress is being made in encouraging links between schools and local industry and commerce. Preliminary analysis of a recent DES survey indicates that around 90 per cent. of secondary schools now have such links.

The Department is involved with others in a range of initiatives designed to assist in the establishment of links between schools and industry. In particular, it publishes guides to good practice and selectively funds particular

projects and organisations. Funding for teacher training in this area is made available to local education authorities through the LEA training grant scheme.

Teachers

86. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to encourage mature entrants, with practical work experience in other fields, to train as teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department has a range of teacher recruitment measures, one of whose main aims is to increase the number of mature entrants to teacher training recruited from other careers. The teaching as a career unit (TASC) targets older people with special publications, and through its national and local advertising. In conjunction with ICI, the Department has run a well-subscribed programme of taster courses for people considering switching to a career in teaching, and the number of courses is being increased in 1990-91. We are also funding part-time and shortened courses of initial teacher training which take account of students' existing commitments and previous qualifications. The introduction of the licensed teacher route will also facilitate the entry into teaching of mature entrants.

107. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he plans to announce the next steps towards the introduction of new arrangements for determining the pay and conditions of teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the views expressed by the six teacher unions and the employers at his meeting with them last month.

101. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has available for the percentage of teachers leaving the profession each year in *(a)* the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* Hertfordshire.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Teachers in Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Figures for England and Wales and for Hertfordshire for the year ending 31 March 1987 (the latest available) are shown in the table.

Percentage of teachers in England and Wales and in Hertfordshire leaving full-time service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools (MNPS)

Per cent.

	Year ending 31 March 1987	
	England and Wales	*Hertfordshire*
Percentage of teachers leaving full-time service in MNPS	7·7	8·6
of which:		
transfers to other service, full or part-time, in the maintained sector[1]	1·3	1·1
transfers to teaching in the independent sector[1]	0·3	0·5
retirements and deaths	2·4	2·3
others[2]	3·7	4·6

[1]The Department's "Database of Teacher Records" does not provide complete coverage of the independent sector or of part-time service in the maintained sector, so these figures may be slightly under-stated.

[2]Many of these will be women withdrawing from teaching temporarily for family reasons.

Exams

87. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Government's current policy with regard to the A and A/S level exams.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies that I gave on 14 November to the hon. Members for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) and for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) at column *218* and that my right hon. Friend gave on 28 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) at column *181*.

ILEA

89. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current state of preparations for the assumption by the London boroughs of the current educational responsibilities of ILEA.

Mrs. Rumbold: The inner London councils are making good progress towards becoming LEAs. Most of the management posts in their education departments have been filled, and councils are developing their own packages to assist the recruitment and retention of good-quality teaching staff. I am looking forward to the operation of an efficient and responsive education service in the capital after 1 April 1990.

Severe Learning Difficulties

90. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to provide further help for schools for children with severe learning difficulties.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Responsibility for providing for pupils with special educational needs lies with individual local education authorities: this includes provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties.

Wandsworth

92. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to visit the London borough of Wandsworth.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend would welcome the opportunity to visit Wandsworth, and plans to contact the borough about a possible date.

School Buildings, Nottinghamshire

95. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what level of grant he has made available to Nottinghamshire county council for new school buildings next year.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend expects to announce his decisions on the distribution of annual capital guidelines for education to LEAs before Christmas.

History Curriculum

97. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce the new history curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales are waiting for the final report of the history working group, which is now expected by the end of January. When they have considered that report they will publish their proposals for history in the national curriculum.

Greenhouse Effect

98. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision he has made for research into the greenhouse effect in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that in 1989-90 the research councils have allocated about £29·3 million towards research into all aspects of global climate change, including research into understanding the processes of climate change and the impact of such changes. This amount includes about £8 million by the Agriculture and Food Research Council, £19·3 million by the Natural Environment Research Council and some £2 million by the Science and Engineering Research Council. In addition, other research undertaken by the councils, especially AFRC, bears on environmental aspects.

As stated in his answer on 15 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) at columns *272-76*, my right hon. Friend has announced allocations totalling £18·6 million in 1990-91 and 1991-92 in respect of the construction costs of the RRS James Clark Ross, and a minimum allocation of £2 million per annum for the years 1990-91 to 1992-93 to provide for a remote sensing instrument for the ERS-2 satellite. He also announced that he has sought the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the allocation of the science budget for 1990-91 and 1991-92. His decisions after receiving that advice will be announced in due course. Within the totals allocated, it will be for the research councils to decide their priorities for specific research areas.

Teachers' Negotiating Body

99. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received with regard to the establishment of a new teachers' negotiating body.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received a variety of representations regarding the establishment of new permanent arrangements for determining teachers' pay.

Milk

105. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications of recent changes in the provision of milk in schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The statutory requirements related to the provision of milk in schools are set out in section 22 of the Education Act 1980 as amended by section 77 of the Social Security Act 1986. There have been no recent changes in these requirements.

Under certain conditions children under five years old in maintained schools may be entitled to receive free milk provided under the Welfare Food Regulations 1988. These regulations are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Student Statistics

106. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time students are enrolled with universities and polytechnics in the current academic year; and what was the number 10 years ago.

Mr. Jackson: Information for academic year 1989-90 is not yet available centrally. In 1988-89 there were 318,000 full-time university students and, provisionally 310,000 polytechnic and college full-time students on higher education courses in Great Britain, compared with 293,000 and 217,000 such students, respectively in 1979-80.

Educational Performance

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the relative educational performance in different areas of the country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures are published by his Department to show the comparative educational performance of each education authority in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: In its annually published statistics on school leavers the Department includes information on examination attainments in respect of maintained schools in each local education authority in England. Comparable statistics for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. These figures reflect in part the different abilities of pupils resident in local education authority areas.

Disabled Students

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many disabled students do not receive the disabled students allowance because *(a)* they are not in receipt of a mandatory award and *(b)* they have no additional disability-related costs.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make particular arrangements for the repayment of loans by disabled students and people who become disabled after graduation.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend intends that disabled people with low incomes should be protected by the standard provision for deferment of repayments. Like other aspects of the loans scheme, these arrangements will be monitored.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures his Department is taking to publicise the disabled students allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The availability of the disabled students allowance for mandatory award holders is publicised in

the DES booklet "Grants for Students". Bulk supplies are sent each year by the Department to local education authorities for wide free distribution among schools, colleges and other establishments. Copies are available to the public on request.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure that disabled students are enabled to benefit fully from the access funds proposed in the White Paper "Top-Up Loans for Students".

Mr. Jackson: Each further or higher education institution will be responsible for assessing the needs of students, including any who are disabled, and will distribute its share of the access funds accordingly.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will begin consultation on reviewing the maximum level of the disabled students allowance.

Mr. Jackson: Comments on the disabled students' allowance for mandatory award holders have already been received from interested bodies. My right hon. Friend will take these and any other representations into account in the course of the annual review of the awards regulations, so that any changes made can take effect from 1 September 1990.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will begin consultation to revise guidelines to local education authorities on the administration of the disabled students allowance.

Mr. Jackson: Before making the awards regulations each year my right hon. Friend considers representations from a number of sources about the detail of the provisions made in them. This process is well under way for 1990. As in previous years, once the 1990 regulations have been made the Department is likely to issue guidance designed to help local authorities to put them into effect.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to announce the 1990-91 capital allocations to local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) on 14 November at column *216*.

Goldsmith's College

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what arrangements were made by his Department for the funding of Goldsmith's college, university of London, during the transitional period towards entering the University Funding Committee; what assumptions were made about the rate of inflation in such arrangements; and what shortfalls have occurred since that arrangement was made;

(2) what arrangements are being made to deal with the shortfall that has arisen within Goldsmith's college's finances before they enter the university funding system.

Mr. Jackson: Since Goldsmith's college formally became a school of the university of London on 1 August 1988, funding has been the responsibility of London university with the assistance of public funds, now channelled through the Universities Funding Council. With the agreement of all the parties concerned, including Goldsmith's, there was an agreed level of funds transferred from the grant-aided sector to the university sector to provide basic funding for Goldsmith's over the period from 1 August 1988 to 31 July 1991. This reflected then current assumptions including the Treasury's forecast of the gross domestic product deflator. Subsequent additions to the public funding of universities have taken account of the transfer of Goldsmith's to the university sector. The actual distribution of such additional sums is a matter for the Universities Funding Council and the university of London.

Student Grants

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the rates of undergraduate student grants and parental contributions for 1990-91.

Mr. MacGregor: Subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary regulations, the main rates of mandatory grant for undergraduate students will be increased in the 1990-91 academic year by 5 per cent. for those studying outside London and for those who study from their parents' home. For those studying in London the main rate will be increased by 7·4 per cent. in recognition of their higher living costs. The new rates, which apply to students from England and Wales, and will be supplemented by the top-up loan facility subject to the enactment of the legislation now before Parliament, will be as follows (1989-90 rates are shown in brackets):

	£	£
Halls or Lodgings		
(i) London	2,845	(2,650)
(ii) Elsewhere	2,265	2,155
Parental home	1,795	(1,710)

For most students, the 1990-91 main grant and full-year loan together will amount to some 25 per cent. more than the 1989-90 grant alone.

Rates of grant for supplementary allowances, and for postgraduates, will be announced later.

Residual income will be retained for the time being as the basis for assessing parental contributions. Consultations revealed divided views on the proposal in the White Paper "Top-Up Loans for Students" (Cm. 520), to move to a gross income basis, and further work would be needed to resolve some practical difficulties. The matter will be kept under review. Meanwhile, the threshold for parental contributions, and the points on the contribution scale at which the rate of contribution changes, will be uprated in 1990-91 to reflect the movement of earnings. Parents whose residual income is below £11,500 will not be assessed for a contribution.

The full parental contribution scales for 1990-91 are as follows:

Residual Income	*Assessed contributions*	
	Scale 1	*Scale 2*
£	£	£
11,500	60	45
12,000	131	98
13,000	274	206

Residual Income	Assessed contributions	
	Scale 1	Scale 2
£	£	£
14,000	417	313
14,700	517	388
15,000	577	433
16,000	777	583
17,000	977	733
18,000	1,177	883
19,000	1,377	1,033
20,000	1,577	1,183
21,000	1,777	1,333
21,600	1,897	1,423
22,000	1,997	1,498
23,000	2,247	1,686
24,000	2,497	1,873
25,000	2,747	2,060
26,000	2,997	2,248
27,000	3,247	2,435
28,000	3,497	2,623
29,000	3,747	2,810
30,000	3,997	2,998
31,000	4,247	3,185
32,000	4,497	3,373
33,000	4,747	3,560
34,000	4,997	3,748
35,000	5,247	3,935
36,000	5,497	4,123
37,000	5,747	4,310
37,210	max 5,800	4,350
38,000		4,498
39,000		4,685
40,000		4,873
41,000		5,060
42,000		5,248
43,000		5,435
44,000		5,623
44,946		max 5,800

Notes:

1. The second scale of parental contribution was introduced following the announcement on 15 March 1988 that tax relief on new non-charitable covenants would cease. Contributions assessed on Scale 2 are 25 per cent. less than those assessed on Scale 1. Scale 1 applies to parents whose student children began their courses before the 1988-89 academic year, and Scale 2 where students first entered higher education in 1988-89 or later. In 1990-91 over 90 per cent. of assessments will be at the Scale 2 rates.

2. For 1990-91 the level of contribution will be assessed as follows:

Residual income	Scale 1	Scale 2
From £11,500 to £14,700	£1 in £7	£1 in £9·33
From £14,701 to £21,600	£1 in £5	£1 in £6·66
From £21,601	£1 in £4	£1 in £5·33

3. The maximum contribution, which applies to parents with more than one child holding an award, will rise from £5,300 to £5,800. The minimum contribution will remain at £60 on Scale 1 and £45 on Scale 2.

4. The contribution payable may be less than the amounts shown on the scale, particularly at its top end and where the contribution is in respect of one award holder only. This will depend on the amount of grant against which the contribution has to be set and whether any of the assessed contribution is offset by allowances for other dependent children.

Adult Education

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what current national spending and monitoring of success levels have been achieved in relation to adult basic education programmes over the last 10 years, by year; to increase funding and provision in this area; what plans he has; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Local education authorities are mainly responsible for providing basic literacy and numeracy tuition for adults. Central Government support is provided to the adult literacy and basic skills unit (ALBSU) which is funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office to act as the central focus for adult literacy and related basic skills in England and Wales. Grants to ALBSU during the past 10 years are as follows:

	£
1980-81	495,000
1981-82	1,000,065
1982-83	1,406,652
1983-84	1,513,000
1984-85	1,500,000
1985-86	1,723,000
1986-87	2,170,000
1987-88	2,248,500
1988-89	2,596,000
1989-90	2,889,300

Local education authorities and voluntary organisations report that the provision of adult basic skills tuition has increased over the past 10 years. In November 1988, the latest year for which figures are available, they reported that 110,626 adults were receiving tuition. HMI monitor the quality of provision as part of their regular inspection programmes.

My right hon. Friend is not yet in the position to announce what funds will be made available to ALBSU in the future. The Department will continue to work closely with ALBSU to increase the opportunities for adults to improve their basic skills, through initiatives such as the provision of open learning centres in inner-city areas, open learning centres supported through the ESG programme and the development of workplace tuition. The Department will also continue to co-operate with ALBSU, the BBC and the Training Agency in the basic skills accreditation initiative.

Pupils (Per Capita Spending)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the per capita spending for pupils at city technology colleges and for secondary school pupils in the last year for which figures are available; and what is projected spending for the next year.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1987-88 average recurrent spending per pupil in maintained secondary schools was some £1,520. The estimated average spending per pupil implied by the proposed total standard spending for 1990-91 is of the order of £2,000. These figures do not include spending on central services such as administration. The recurrent per capita grant for pupils at city technology colleges for 1989-90 is based on a unit of funding of £1,825. This figure includes central administration costs, but excludes an allowance for diseconomies of scale during the start-up period, and specific grants for certain items. The comparable figure for 1990-91 will be determined by reference to LEA expenditure in 1988-89, updated to a 1990-91 base.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 December 1989

CIVIL SERVICE

Forms

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress has been made on revising Government forms since September 1987.

Mr. Luce: I have just reported continuing good progress to the Prime Minister. A copy of the Cabinet Office (OMCS) report which includes reports from Departments has been placed in the Library of the House and a broadsheet summary is being published today.

The report shows that over 44,000 forms in national use have been reviewed in the last two years. Over 16,000 have been improved and over 9,000 abolished. Savings of over £1 million have been achieved.

Non-departmental Bodies

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many non-departmental bodies are currently in existence; and when the annual list of such bodies will be published.

Mr. Luce: On 1 April 1989 there were 1,555 non-departmental public bodies. That is 93 fewer than last year and 612 fewer than in 1979. The bodies are listed in "Public Bodies 1989" published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

In the year to 31 March 1989, 128 bodies were abolished and 35 new bodies set up. Funding rose by approximately 2·7 per cent. and members of staff employed fell by 12·1 per cent.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how long elapsed in 1983 and 1987 between the general election and the setting up of the Select Committees; and what action he is proposing to ensure the speedy creation of Select Committees after the next election.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The 1983 general election took place on 9 June 1983; the departmentally related Select Committees were nominated on 14 December 1983. The 1987 general election took place on 11 June 1987; the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee was nominated on 24 November 1987; the other departmentally related Select Committees were nominated on 2 December 1987. I understand that this is one matter which the Procedure Committee may look into.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many reports have been produced by Departmental Select Committees since 1979; and how many have been the subject of debate on a substantitive motion on the Floor of the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Since 1979, 543 reports and 213 special reports have been published by departmentally related Select Committees. Seven have been debated in the House on substantive motions.

Order Papers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will examine the possibility of providing a simple daily batting order of the business of the House for visitors and Members.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Visitors are provided with a basic guide to the order of business in the booklet "A Guide for Visitors to the Galleries". It would not be practical to provide a more specific guide. Business not listed in the Order Paper such as a statement or private notice question is not announced until after 1 pm. Some business such as Standing Order No. 20 applications does not become public until the moment it is raised in the House.

I am not aware that Members stand in any need of a simple daily batting order of business.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will examine the design of the front page of the Order Paper.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The design of the front page of the Order Paper is a matter for the House itself. If the hon. Member has specific suggestions for improvements to the format of the Order Paper, I suggest that he writes to the Services Committee.

However, since and in so far as this is one of a number of proposals which the hon. Gentleman intends to make in respect of the content of the Order Paper itself he should, as I have already indicated, raise the matter in the first instance with the Procedure Committee of which he is a member.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what areas of the form of the Order Paper he is examining; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have commenced a general examination of the form of the Order Paper, but I am also awaiting suggestions from many other hon. Members, not least those which may come from the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee whose responsibility this is. It is not an entirely straightforward matter, since I understand that significant changes would involve considerable alterations in the nightly printing procedures, but I am concerned that all serious possibilities should be considered. The Sub-Committee's further consideration of this matter is itself dependent upon elements that relate to wider procedural issues, in particular various aspects of oral questions, which have been considered by the Procedure Committee. The hon. Member is now a member of the Procedure Committee and I have no doubt that he will not hesitate to make a contribution to their consideration of these issues.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will launch an inquiry into the practice of planting questions.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans to do so, but I understand that the Procedure Committee, of which the

hon. Member is now a member, is considering an inquiry into various aspects of oral questions following comments made by Mr. Speaker on 22 November at column 115 and other representations.

Procedure Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to bring forward a substantive motion to embody the recommendations of the outstanding reports from the Procedure Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. I think it is better to reach an understanding through the usual channels and then to bring forward proposals which are likely to be generally acceptable to the whole House.

Staff Shop

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received seeking the closure of Annie's Bar and its replacement by a shop for the use of hon. Members and staff of the House; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No suggestion of this kind has been received. It is, however, proposed that a small general shop and a souvenir kiosk will be established in phase I of the new parliamentary buildings. Both will be run by the Refreshment Department and are expected to be open for business in the late spring of 1991.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Love Lane, Carrickfergus

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the reasons for the proposal by the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Roads Service to stop up Love lane, Carrickfergus, under article 40 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The notice of intention to make an order for the stopping up of Love lane, published by the Department of the Environment, indicated that a copy of the draft order was available for inspection at the Lord Chancellor's Department's office in Carrickfergus. The draft order sets out the reason for the proposed stopping up—that the Department is of the opinion that another road is available which provides alternative facilities for traffic.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Roads Service will give the fullest consideration to any alternative solution put forward by objectors before proceeding on the basis of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) proposals for Love lane, Carrickfergus.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Under the provisions of schedule 6 to the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1980, the Department of the Environment is required to consider all representations made.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the full-time equivalent staffing level in each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland during the academic year 1988-89;

(2) what was the full-time equivalent student enrolment to each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland during the academic year 1988-89.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education does not collect such information on a full-time equivalent basis. The actual numbers of teaching staff and student enrolments, both full-time and part-time, in each of the further education colleges during the academic year 1988-89 were as follows:

FE College	*Staff*		*Enrolments*	
	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
Belfast College of Technology	268	81	898	4,587
Belfast College of Business Studies	122	93	1,079	2,783
Rupert Stanley College	193	701	934	2,440
North-West College	158	169	1,368	3,847
Fermanagh	75	38	589	1,459
Limavady	48	46	490	675
Omagh	68	57	563	1,233
Antrim	40	43	229	976
Ballymena	112	60	975	2,659
Newtownabbey	109	149	606	2,252
North Antrim	35	23	181	939
Coleraine	64	36	574	1,031
Magherafelt	42	20	327	557
Larne	59	26	243	1,335
Northern Ireland Hotel and Catering College	21	5	206	48
Lisburn	100	212	497	1,445
Down	64	145	602	1,687
Newcastle	33	80	225	174
Castlereagh	81	176	332	1,758
North Down	132	282	705	1,742
Lurgan	65	54	555	673
Portadown	109	57	839	1,747
Amagh	68	66	791	644
Banbridge	33	34	240	826
East Tyrone	76	49	680	1,716
Newry/Kilkeel	95	92	891	1,456
Totals	2,270	2,794	15,619	41,089

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total recurrent budget for each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland during the academic year 1988-89.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not centrally available for individual further education colleges.

Youth Training Programme

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the likely number of redundancies resulting from the proposed change in funding at the youth training programme from 1 April 1990 among lecturers employed in colleges of further education.

Dr. Mawhinney: Colleges of further education are currently considering the programmes of training that they will be providing under the new funding arrangements. It is not yet possible to assess the effect of the delivery of these programmes on the staffing levels at the colleges.

Harbours

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of harbour dues for boats in Donaghadee harbour; and if he proposes any changes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The mooring fee for the 1989-90 season is £28 for all vessels which use the mooring chains supplied by the harbour commissioners. No other fee is charged. Vessels with private moorings use the harbour free of charge. The mooring fee is reviewed annually. A review is currently in progress.

PRIME MINISTER

Petitions

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister how many petitions have been handed in to 10 Downing street by groups or individuals for each of the past 10 years.

The Prime Minister: Since January 1985, approximately 500 petitions containing over 200 signatures, have been handed in to 10 Downing street. Further detailed information is not recorded.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Footwear

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received a copy of a letter dated 12 December sent from the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation to his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have received a copy of the letter sent to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The question of renewing the voluntary restraint arrangement (VRA) for imports of leather footwear from Poland is under consideration at present and a reply will be issued shortly.

Financial Reporting Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Financial Reporting Council will have statutory powers to take companies to court for producing defective accounts; and what statutory arrangements are being proposed to deal with auditors who perform inadequate audits.

Mr. Redwood: I cannot prejudge the proposals that we have asked Sir Ron Dearing, chairman-designate of the Financial Reporting Council, to develop on the implementation of his committee's report on the making of accounting standards, including the revision of defective accounts. As regards statutory arrangements to deal with auditors who perform inadequate audits, I refer the hon. Member to part II of the Companies Act 1989.

Consumer Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the ratio of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports to United Kingdom production of consumer goods less food etc. in 1970, 1973, 1985 and 1988.

Mr. Redwood: The information sought is not readily available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the ratio of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports to United Kingdom production of "other" consumer goods in 1970, 1973, 1985 and 1988.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not readily available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the ratio of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports to United Kingdom production of consumer durables less cars in 1970, 1973, 1985 and 1988.

Mr. Redwood: The information sought is not readily available.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what contracts, including those relating to privatisations, the Government have awarded since 1979 to accountancy firms criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors or sued for negligence by the Government;

(2) whether any advisors from accountancy firms sued for negligence by the Government or criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors have been seconded to Government Departments.

Mr. Redwood: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Clothing and Footwear

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the ratio of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports to United Kingdom production of clothing and footwear in 1970, 1973, 1985 and 1988.

Mr. Redwood: Figures for 1985 and 1988 are shown in the table. Figures for 1970 and 1973 are not readily available.

Trade ratios of clothing and footwear (SIC 451, 453)

	As a percentage of United Kingdom production	
	(a) Imports	*(b) Exports*
1985	47	20
1988	57	21

Notes:

The United Kingdom production measure used in the calculation of percentages is United Kingdom manufacturers' sales. Percentages have been calculated in terms of value.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many visits to Blyth Valley he and his predecessor have made over the last five years; and if he will list and date them.

Mr. Ridley: I have not yet visited Blyth Valley as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, nor have there been any visits to the area by my predecessors during the past five years. However, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), then Under-Secretary of State for Industry, visited the area on 30 March last year.

Vietnam

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the United Kingdom's exports to, and imports from, Vietnam in each of the past four years; and what representations he has received from *(a)* business organisations and *(b)* individual United Kingdom owned companies which are now interested in trading with Vietnam.

Mr. Redwood: The United Kingdom's exports to, and imports from, Vietnam in each of the past four years were:

	United Kingdom	
	Exports	*Imports*
1985	2·0	1·7
1986	1·3	1·2
1987	2·5	0·3
1988	2·2	0·5
1989[1]	3·2	0·5

[1] January to October 1989.

A number of companies have been in touch with my Department seeking information on market conditions. In June the DTI, in association with the South East Asia Trade Advisory Group of the BOTB, organised an information seminar which was well attended. Subsequently several companies approached us for more detailed information.

Prospects for any substantial increase in trade are limited by Vietnam's acute shortage of foreign currency and the limitation of export credit insurance cover to short-term business secured by confirmed letters of credit. Until Vietnam reaches a lasting agreement with the IMF and makes tangible efforts to clear its arrears there is little prospect of ECGD reinstating medium to long-term credit insurance cover.

Sound Recordings

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether it has yet been decided what action is needed to implement the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the collective licensing of public performance and broadcasting rights in sound recordings; and whether he intends to propose any changes to the legal basis for copyright protection of foreign sound recordings in the United Kingdom to the criterion known as first fixation.

Mr. Redwood: The Home Secretary and I have now completed our consideration of these matters. We have decided that the recommendations of the commission should be implemented as set out in the report, with only minor modifications, but that there should be no switch from the criterion known as "first publication" as the basis for protecting foreign sound recordings in the United Kingdom.

As to the commission's recommendations, we intend to include provisions in the Broadcasting Bill to introduce the system of statutory copyright licensing put forward in paragraphs 7.49(a)(ii) to paragraphs 7.49(a)(viii) of the report in respect of the broadcasting of collectively licensed sound recordings. The system will also apply to use of such recordings by cable programme providers. The effect will be that where such users cannot reach agreement with a collective licensing body for the use of its repertoire of sound recordings, they will be able to have recourse to a statutory licence, initially on the basis of self-assessed royalties, pending a copyright tribunal order on the level of remuneration. The tribunal will be empowered to require a user who had paid an unreasonably low interim royalty to pay the costs of both parties before the tribunal, and will be required to make its order retrospective to the date on which the statutory licence was exercised.

The user will have to comply with a code of conduct notified by the licensing body and to supply that body with such information as it may reasonably require, but will be able to refer disputes over such matters to the tribunal.

A statutory licence will not be available *(a)* in respect of the unexpired period of any relevant licence which the user may hold, or *(b)* where licences are available on terms which have been ordered by the tribunal, except where the user seeks a greater number of hours of use than is permitted under such licences. In that event the statutory licence will be available for the full extent of the repertoire being sought.

Corresponding provisions will be introduced in respect of the public performance of sound recordings when a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

On the Commission's recommendations regarding the copyright tribunal (recommendations (ix) to (xiv) of paragraph 7.49(a) of the report) the Government consider that improvements already effected by means of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and the Copyright Tribunal Rules should be sufficient and no further changes are currently planned.

In paragraph 7.38 of its report the commission recommended that all performers participating in a recording should receive equitable remuneration directly paid by PPL, for that recording's use in broadcasting or public preformance. It did not, however, make any recommendation as to whether this should be made a statutory requirement or achieved on a voluntary basis. PPL has indicated its willingness, with the co-operation of the Musicians Union and any others concerned, to implement the recommendation as fully as may be practicable. The Government therefore intend to seek voluntary undertakings to this effect rather than to introduce what would necessarily be complex statutory provisions.

The commission further recommended that PPL should abandon its practice of limiting the number of broadcasting hours, or "needletime", for which recordings from its repertoire might be used and also its requirement that musicians be employed for certain public performances. I understand that PPL has now abandoned both practices. The proposed statutory licence procedure will prevent PPL from reimposing needletime restrictions and we do not therefore intend to introduce any separate statutory provisions to this end. As to the musicians' employment requirement, I intend to ask PPL for a voluntary undertaking that the practice will not be reintroduced.

On "first fixation", the Government have been considering the findings of a study commissioned from National Economic Research Associates to establish the effects of providing copyright protection for foreign sound recordings in the United Kindom on the basis of the country in which the recording was first made instead of, as now, the country where it was first published. NERA's report will be published by HMSO on 20 December. The report forecasts that the loss of revenue to PPL (and the corresponding financial gains to radio and public

performance users of sound recordings) would in the long term amount to around £9 million a year or nearly half PPL's current income. NERA does not, however, consider that the change would increase radio stations' efficiency or significantly promote the growth of radio, and they identify a number of disbenefits, not only to the record industry, but to consumers and to the efficient allocation of economic resources. The Government have concluded that, on balance, the findings of the NERA study do not justify a departure from present practice.

Cross-Channel Ferry Services

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on cross-channel car ferry services is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on cross-channel car ferries is being published today. The MMC concluded that a proposal by P and O and Sealink to provide from 1991 a joint car ferry service may be expected to operate against the public interest. P and O and Sealink argued that a joint service was necessary to provide effective competition to the Channel tunnel. The MMC recommended that it should not be permitted.

I accept the commission's findings and this recommendation.

My prime concern is to ensure effective competition. It is clear from the MMC's report that this proposal would have reduced competition in the period before the tunnel is operational. I also accept the commission's view that any joint service intended as more effective competition with the tunnel would not need to be introduced so far in advance of the tunnel's opening.

The competitive environment will look very different when the tunnel is operational. But I share the MMC's view that there are too many uncertainties to establish now whether a joint service might be found to operate in the public interest in the market conditions prevailing after the tunnel has opened.

However, the uncertainties will diminish as we approach the opening of the tunnel. It would be open to the parties to approach the Director General of Fair Trading again then if they wished to make a renewed case for a joint service, and for the director general to advise me on the balance of public interest as it appeared at that time. Then, as now, I will be concerned primarily to ensure the most effective competition. I will have regard to how vigorous competition with the tunnel can best be assured, in the light of how well the current competitive arrangements have operated.

Media Groups (Cross-promotion)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will enlarge the terms of his inquiry into cross-promotion of group interests by media groups by adding to the first terms of reference "and to knock, denigrate or undermine the media services or products of competitors".

Mr. Redwood: The terms of reference do not require enlargement. The terms of reference make it clear that promotion by media companies includes, among other things, "unfavourable reporting or editorial comment about . . . their competitors' media services and products".

Company Reports and Accounts

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the reason for companies having to submit annual accounts to Companies house.

Mr. Redwood: The directors of all limited companies, and certain others, are required by law to provide the Registrar of Companies with copies of their annual accounts. This enables Companies house to make information available to the business community and the public at large, so helping to ensure the development of open and informed markets as well as achieving a fair level of protection for the individual consumer, creditor and shareholders.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what are his Department's criteria for accepting company accounts other than that they are duly signed;

(2) what consideration is given by his Department to auditors' reports accompanying accounts submitted by companies; and whether the same consideration is given for public and private companies;

(3) what efforts are made by his Department to check the authority of company reports submitted according to law to his Department.

Mr. Redwood: Responsibility for the content of accounts and directors' reports rests with the directors. Auditors are required to state whether the accounts meet the requirements of the legislation and give a true and fair view. Companies house staff carry out certain checks for completeness, but do not vet the contents in detail except in response to specific complaints.

Mr. H. P. Herbert

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the basis, in the case of Mr. H. P. Herbert, of the finding that no wrongdoing had taken place by the chairman and managing director of the company complained of; and what cognisance his Department took of the allegation that assets were removed by the chairman and managing director, and that the company was trading whilst insolvent for six months.

Mr. Redwood: Information obtained by the Department concerning the company complained of is at present under consideration as to what action, if any, is appropriate.

Cognisance has been taken of all allegations made by Mr. H. P. Herbert concerning the company.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to ensure that the complaints made on behalf of Mr. H. P. Herbert have been fully investigated by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: Information relevant to the complaints made on behalf of Mr. H. P. Herbert is under consideration. Further comment would not be appropriate.

Tourism

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was his Department's total investment in tourism in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Prime responsibility for tourism rests with the Department of Employment. DTI may assist towards tourism projects, for example under the consultancy initiatives, but these are not separately identified except in the case of the exchange risk guarantee scheme for tourism projects. Under this scheme—which closed to new applications in 1984—the Department offered an exchange risk guarantee on European Investment bank loans for tourism projects. Expenditure under this scheme over the last five years has been as follows:

	£'000s
1985-86	259
1986-87	320
1987-88	303
1988-89	325
[1]1989-90	329

[1]Estimated.

Homeopathic Medicines

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the purchases of homeopathic medicines by United Kingdom traders in recent years from Bulgaria.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Information on imports of homeopathic medicines is not identified in the trade classification.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a further breakdown into manufacturing and non-manufacturing to that given in his answer of 15 November, *Official Report*, column *279*, and divide the resultant figures by the increase in productivity in, respectively, the manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors; whether he will provide the corresponding figures for full-time females; and whether he will include the numbers represented by each category.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the further breakdown of increases in real earnings provided in my reply of 13 December 1989 (*Official Report*, columns *658-59*). The available estimates of productivity are published in table 1.8 of the *Employment Gazette*. The available figures of the numbers represented by each category were published in my reply of 8 December 1989 (*Official Report*, column *426*).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his written reply of 11 December to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, columns *467-68*, with regard to the increase in weekly and hourly earnings of certain workers, whether he will publish a table giving corresponding figures for pay increases since 1979 for full-time adult male employees employed in manual work in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* elsewhere and for non-manual workers employed in (i) the public sector, (ii) manufacturing and (iii) elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* I shall write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Eggar: There were 163 projects carried out for my Department in 1988-89. The cost of these surveys in the 1988-89 financial year was £4,047,977. Outside research contractors carried out 158 of these projects, accounting for 99 per cent. of the total expenditure. I have placed details of each survey in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for the west midlands and the other regions and for each year from 1984 to 1987, together with the source of the information, figures for *(a)* total employment, and *(b)* manufacturing employment.

Mr. Nicholls: The table below shows the data requested for west midlands and the other regions for each year from 1984 to 1987. Information on total employment relates to the civilian workforce in employment and covers employees in employment, the self-employed, and those on work-related Government training programmes. The sources of this information are as follows:

Employees in employment

Estimates of employees in employment are based on the following sources:

(a) the census of employment conducted triennially from 1978 to 1987:

(b) monthly and quarterly surveys of employers;

(c) inquiries conducted biennially by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF) for employment in agriculture, and quarterly by the Department of the Environment for employment in the construction industry;

(d) "centralised returns" covering employment in some nationalised industries, Government Departments and other large organisations such as British Coal, and the London and Scottish Clearing Banks Association;

(e) the Labour Force Survey

For census of employment dates, the estimates given by the census are used without adaptation. Between census of employment dates, sources b. c. and d. are used to estimate monthly and quarterly trends in employees in employment.

Self Employment

The estimates of the self-employed in Great Britain up to mid 1988 are based on the 1981 census of population and the results of the labour force surveys carried out between 1981 and 1988.

Work-related Government Training Programmes

Numbers of participants are provided from the Department's own records.

Information on manufacturing employment relates to employees in employment in standard industrial classification 1980 division 2 to 4. The sources of this information are as above.

Civilian workforce and employees in employment and employees in manufacturing by regions
(unadjusted for seasonal variation) June each year

Thousands

Regions and year	*Civilian workforce in employment*	*Employees in employment*	*Employees in manufacturing*
West Midlands			
1984	2,171	1,965	706
1985	2,178	1,974	693

Regions and year	Civilian workforce in employment	Employees in employment	Employees in manufacturing
1986	2,178	1,961	673
1987	2,223	1,972	663
South East (including Greater London)			
1984	8,074	7,182	1,483
1985	8,184	7,250	1,447
1986	8,195	7,255	1,390
1987	8,400	7,322	1,340
Greater London (included in South East			
1984	3,799	3,459	573
1985	3,824	3,454	539
1986	3,808	3,450	506
1987	3,871	3,457	465
East Anglia			
1984	817	704	185
1985	835	716	184
1986	829	717	178
1987	864	727	174
South West			
1984	1,788	1,542	373
1985	1,832	1,568	375
1986	1,851	1,579	367
1987	1,921	1,619	367
East Midlands			
1984	1,626	1,443	482
1985	1,672	1,498	487
1986	1,674	1,490	487
1987	1,705	1,492	483
Yorkshire and Humberside			
1984	1,990	1,768	481
1985	2,009	1,769	480
1986	2,000	1,762	476
1987	2,041	1,771	471
North West			
1984	2,570	2,289	669
1985	2,590	2,299	664
1986	2,593	2,295	653
1987	2,646	2,323	657
North			
1984	1,164	1,059	277
1985	1,172	1,057	278
1986	1,186	1,061	272
1987	1,202	1,068	272
Wales			
1984	1,040	886	212
1985	1,044	888	211
1986	1,055	887	210
1987	1,073	907	217
Scotland			
1984	2,104	1,901	434
1985	2,121	1,900	433
1986	2,108	1,879	416
1987	2,107	1,879	407
Northern Ireland			
1984	564	497	107
1985	572	503	108
1986	570	501	105
1987	572	504	103

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the actual number of planned basic inspection visits paid by Health and Safety Executive area office 16, Greater Manchester inspectors in the half year from 1 April to 31 October; and what was the number in the Health and Safety Executive area plan of work for the same period.

Mr. Nicholls: The plan of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) factory inspectorate is based on proportions of time to be spent on different aspects of its work. Inspectors based in the HSE's Greater Manchester area office carried out 2,731 preventive inspection visits in the half year 1 April 1989 to 30 September 1989 which is 96·6 per cent. of the number of visits which it was estimated would be carried out in this period.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of its planned programme of basic inspections the Health and Safety Executive area office 18 North-West has achieved in the half year from 1 April to 31 October; and what is the total.

Mr. Nicholls: The plan of the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate is based on proportions of time to be spent on different aspects of its work.

In the half year 1 April 1989 to 30 September 1989 inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive's north-west area office made 2,098 preventive inspection visits which is 86·4 per cent. of the total number of visits which it was estimated would be carried out in this period.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of its planned programme of basic inspections the Health and Safety Executive office 19 North East has achieved in the half year from 1 April to 31 October; and how many this was in total.

Mr. Nicholls: The plan of the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate is based on proportions of time to be spent on different aspects of its work.

In the half year 1 April 1989 to 30 September 1989 inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive's north-east area office made 3,473 preventive inspection visits which is 122·3 per cent. of the total number of visits which it was estimated would be carried out in this period.

Disabled People

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement regarding the current situation in the employment market for disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: The talents of people with disabilities are currently not fully utilised in the labour market. In 1988-89 this Department spent an estimated £350 million, through general and special services, in helping people with disabilities to train for, find, and keep suitable jobs and in encouraging good practice by employers.

A review of the Department's services for people with disabilities is well advanced and a consultative document will be published as soon as possible.

Training Agency

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons are employed by his Department and the Training Agency, and its predecessors the Manpower Services Commission and Training Commission, in each year since and including 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The table details permanent staff in post statistics each year since and including 1979.

Employment department group staff in post

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Employment, Department (UBS)	23,779	21,806	23,823	30,986	30,955	30,258	29,718	30,428	32,357	42,102	40,504
Employment Service (MSC)	24,961	25,388	23,672	23,279	22,687	21,928	20,802	21,075	23,952		
Training Agency	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12,165	11,730
Health and Safety Executive	4,118	4,132	3,922	3,712	3,593	3,563	3,616	3,586	3,526	3,410	3,503
ACAS	799	794	705	675	665	631	610	627	629	625	639
Total	53,657	52,120	52,122	58,652	57,900	56,380	54,746	55,716	60,464	58,302	56,376

Sources:

1. 1987-88 extracted from Civil Service Statistics (Table II)
   nb Prior to 1982 the figures published for 1 January.

2. 1989 extracted from DSR2, the Department's computerised record.

Earnings

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were average weekly adult earnings for full-time work in April 1989; what was the number and proportion of people who had earnings below this level; and how many of these were *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is published in tables 1 and 14 of part A of the 1989 new earnings survey report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to implement the provisions of the Employment Act extending redundancy payments to women over 60 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: This provision will take effect on 16 January 1990.

Women's Earnings

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of women who have earnings below *(a)* the tax threshold and *(b)* the national insurance threshold broken down into married women, lone parents and single women at the latest date.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to provide reliable estimates.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in unemployment, expressed as a percentage and using current counting methods *(a)* between 1979 and 1989 overall and *(b)* for each year between 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* The information is available in the Library. In 1979 the average monthly level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, for the United Kingdom was 1,075,800 compared with a 10-month average of 1,825,800 for 1989, an increase of 69·7 per cent. The following table shows the percentage changes in the annual averages of the monthly levels of seasonally adjusted unemployment for the United Kingdom for each year between 1979 and 1989.

Unemployment in United Kingdom (seasonally adjusted) percentage change between annual averages

	Per cent.
1980	+26·9
1981	+59·2
1982	+17·2
1983	+9·6
1984	+4·7
1985	+3·9
1986	+2·4
1987	−9·2
1988	−18·7
[1]1989	−20·4

[1] Ten month average.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rate of inflation in the 10 years ended June 1989 and in the 10 years ended in 1973; and what was *(a)* the fall in the real exchange rate; *(b)* the increase in manufacturing output and *(c)* the rate of investment in manufacturing industry net of capital consumption in these two periods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Most of the figures requested can be obtained directly from the published sources available in the Library.

The relevant retail prices indices are available from the latest issue of *Employment Gazette* and "Retail Prices Indices 1914-1986". An historical quarterly series for manufacturing output appears in "Economic Trends Annual Supplement" and the most recent figures are given in *Economic Trends* or alternatively the Central Statistical Office's databank.

Net domestic fixed capital formation in manufacturing is estimated to have averaged £3½ billion a year at constant 1985 prices in the decade to 1973 and minus £¼ billion a year in the decade to the end of 1988. These figures exclude capital goods leased from financial sector lessors. Including leased assets, net domestic capital formation by manufacturing industries averaged +£¼ billion a year in the decade to 1988. Estimates including leased assets for the decade to 1973 are not available. However, leasing was a much less important feature of investment then, so the estimate of an average £3½ billion a year set out above is unlikely to be significantly different. Estimates are available only for calendar years and must be interpreted with some caution. The figures for net capital formation

include estimates of capital consumption. Capital consumption is not directly observable and is estimated on the basis of a series of assumptions.

There is no unique way of measuring changes in real exchange rates, but a range of figures is available, for example, in the IMF's "International Financial Statistics" which is in the Library.

Married Couple's Allowance

Mr. Raison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his best estimate of the saving from abolishing the married couple's allowance for non-pensioners in 1990;

(2) what is the expected cost of the married couple's allowance in 1990-91.

Mr. Major: The direct revenue cost of the married couple's allowance in a full year at 1990-91 levels of income is estimated to be £5 billion. If the allowance were to be given only to married couples where either the husband or wife was aged 65 or over, there would be a saving of about £4·5 billion.

Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes, and, in line with Autumn Statement forecasts, assume 7·5 per cent. indexation of allowances and the basic rate limit; all estimates are provisional.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the median mortgage and the median house price on which tax relief is claimed.

Mr. Lilley: In 1989-90, the estimated median mortgage is £23,000. Information is not available from which to estimate the median value of houses on which mortgage tax relief is given.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated revenue for stamp duties on land and buildings, shares and other transactions for 1988-89 and for the current financial year.

Mr. Lilley: Details of the revenues from stamp duties received in 1988-89 were published in table 12.1 of Inland Revenue statistics 1989. The latest forecast of receipts for 1989-90 was given in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 30 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *431-32*.

National Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers have earnings above the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions; and how many of these pay income tax at the higher rate.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that in 1990-91 about 3 million employees will have earnings above the upper earnings limit for class 1 national insurance contributions; and that, of these, about 900,000 will be liable to income tax at the higher rate.

The estimates are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and are therefore provisional.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue raised from introducing a minimum tax equivalent to 20 per cent. of gross income on all individuals whose gross incomes from all sources exceed £25,000 a year; and how many units' total income tax liability is currently less than this figure.

Mr. Lilley: At 1990-91 levels of income, a minimum tax equivalent to 20 per cent. of gross income on all individuals whose gross incomes for tax purposes exceeds £25,000 per annum is estimated to yield about £¾ billion per annum. About 1 million individuals would have a higher tax liability under this proposal.

Estimates are provisional and are based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes, assuming indexation of allowances and the basic rate limit consistent with the Autumn Statement.

Income Tax

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what research his Department has commissioned on the policy options and implications of the ending of personal or other income tax allowances; and what assessment he has made of these options.

Mr. Lilley: I have nothing to add to the answers that I gave to the hon. Member on 6 December and 13 December, *Official Report*, cols *236* and *650*.

Special Shares

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the powers which attach in each case to the special shares held by the Government in those companies which he listed in his reply on 11 December.

Mr. Lilley: Special shares entrench provisions contained in the articles of association of the relevant companies. For details of the provisions in each case I refer the hon. Member to the relevant articles of association.

RPI Advisory Committee

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee will next meet; and who is to be the chairman of that committee.

Mr. Lilley: The Central Statistical Office is now arranging a meeting of the committee for early in 1990 so that consideration of the remaining issues in its terms of reference can be taken forward. The intention is that the committee will complete its work during 1990. With the change in departmental responsibility for the RPI, the chairman of the advisory committee will be Mr. Jack Hibbert, director of the CSO and head of the Government statistical service. He replaces the previous chairman, Mr. I. T. Manley, from the Employment Department.

Life Assurance

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make an announcement about the outcome of the consultations between the life assurance industry and his officials authorised by his predecessor in his 1989 Budget statement.

Mr. Lilley: Significant progress was made in a series of meetings between representatives of the insurance industry and Inland Revenue officials. I am particularly grateful to the Association of British Insurers and the other representative bodies involved for their constructive approach. Treasury Ministers have given the most careful consideration to all the representations made to them.

The legislation in the Finance Act 1989 put in place the framework of the new tax rules for life assurance which followed the Government's policy of broadening the tax base and cutting tax rates. We recognised at the time the 1989 measures were announced that some of the further legislation on the more technical points to be introduced in the Finance Bill 1990 would be integral to the new regime; and that accordingly both sets of measures would need to come into effect at the same time. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer therefore proposes to bring forward the following legislation in the Finance Bill 1990 which will for the most part have effect from 1 January 1990. These measures include some technical improvements to the legislation now in the Finance Act 1989, in part to fulfil commitments given by the Government during its passage earlier this year. The measures are:

Allocation of income and realised gains

—new rules for the allocation of income and realised gains to different types of business where a company writes more than one of the types of business which have to be treated separately for tax purposes;

Pension business

—rules clarifying the calculation of the profits of pension business for the purposes of section 83 of the Finance Act 1989;

General annuity business

—consequential changes to the rules for calculating the investment income and profits referable to general annuity business, pending further consideration of the tax treatment of this type of business;

Overseas branch and agency business

— amendments to the current rules for the overseas branch and agency business of UK life offices;

Division between shareholders and policy holders

— a revised approach to the allocation of investment income, capital gains and profits between shareholders and policy holders for various tax purposes;

Reassurance commissions

— new provisions for the tax treatment of reassurance commissions received;

Life office holdings in exempt investment media

— a new basis of charge on capital gains arising from holdings in authorised unit trusts and comparable offshore investment vehicles, subject to transitional provisions for existing holdings and protection for obligations under investment-linked policies taken out up to the end of March 1990. The charge will ensure that life office investment via unit trusts will be treated on terms more level with direct investment.

Transfers of undertakings between insurers

— new provisions to provide continuity for tax purposes where life assurance business is transferred to another company (for example, on a merger) or from a friendly society to another society or company, including the carry forward of unrelieved expenses of management to the transferee and incorporation in the legislation of the existing extra-statutory concession.

A press release to be issued today by the Indland Revenue gives further details of the proposed legislation.

I will be giving further consideration to the other topics on which consultations have been held:

— tax treatment of policy holders
— other international aspects
— reassurance business
— general annuity business.

ECOFIN

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Ryder: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 18 December. The Chancellor of the Exchequer represented the United Kingdom.

The abolition of fiscal frontiers was discussed. The Presidency concluded that the Community should aim to reach a decision on VAT standard rates by the end of 1991 on the basis of a rate band or a minimum rate within a 14 to 20 per cent. band. The Chancellor of the Exchequer recorded the United Kingdom's view that Community decisions on tax rates are neither necessary nor desirable, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that there is no present intention of diverging from the 14 to 20 per cent. bracket of the standard rate of VAT. The Chancellor of the Exchequer reiterated also the importance to the United Kingdom of retaining zero rates. We now expect work to move forward on the technical systems of collecting VAT and excise duties after 1992, on a basis that is fully acceptable to the United Kingdom.

Eleven member states, including the United Kingdom, were prepared to accept the Commission's proposals for improving mutual assistance between tax authorities to counter tax evasion, but Luxembourg is still unable to do so.

Company Cars

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to abolish tax relief on company cars.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Tax Recovery

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the results of those High Court cases in the last two years in which the Inland Revenue has sought to recover £1 million or more of tax revenue.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tax Avoidance and Evasion

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will call for and publish a report by the Inland Revenue on the current extent of tax avoidance and evasion.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* Because of their nature it is not possible to measure accurately the overall extent of tax avoidance and evasion.

Tax Havens

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has of tax revenue which is being lost through the creation of business transactions carried out solely or mainly for tax reasons between

United Kingdom-based individuals and companies and trusts and companies located in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate he has of assets owned by United Kingdom resident companies and individuals which have been disposed of or transferred to *(a)* the Isle of Man, *(b)* Guernsey, *(c)* Jersey, *(d)* the Cayman Islands and *(e)* the Netherlands Antilles corporate, trust or individual ownership in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* I regret that the information is not available on which to base such estimates.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect on revenues of raising the top rate of capital gains tax to 40 per cent.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The 1988-89 FSBR estimated the yield from aligning capital gains tax and income tax at £70 million in 1988-89 and £65 million in 1989-90. However, tax on gains realised in 1988-89, the first year for which capital gains were charged at income tax rates, became payable from 1 December 1989. It will therefore be some time before sufficiently complete information about 1988-89 liabilities is available.

Accounting Firms

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which accounting firms are or have been involved in privatisation work; and which of those accounting firms maintain affiliated offices in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The following accountants have been, or are currently engaged by the Government in connection with the privatisation programme:

Arthur Andersen
Binder Hamlyn
Coopers and Lybrand[1]
Deloittes, Haskins and Sells[1]
Ernst and Whinney[2]
Peat Marwick Mitchell[3]
Price Waterhouse
Thomson McLintock[3]
Touche Ross

[1] Now merged.
[2] Now merged with Arthur Young to become Ernst and Young.
[3] Now the merged firm of Peat Marwick McLintock

Details of their affiliated offices may be obtained from the firms in question.

Solicitors

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which solicitors firms are or have been involved in privatisation work; and which of those firms maintain affiliated offices in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Netherlands Antilles or *(c)* the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The following solicitors have been, or are currently, engaged by the Government in connection with the privatisation programme;

Allen and Overy
Ashurst Morris and Crisp
Coward Chance[1]
Clifford Turner[1]
Freshfields
Field Fisher Waterhouse
Herbert Smith
Linklater and Paines
Lovell White and Durrent
McGrigor Donald
McKenna
Norton Rose
W. and J. Burness

[1] Coward Chance and Clifford Turner have merged to become Clifford Chance.

Details of their affiliated offices may be obtained from the firm in question.

Environmental Damage

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to revise economic indicators to take into account the environmental impact of industrial processes.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no plans at the present time.

Friendly Societies

Mr. Forman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies has yet considered the representations made to him for an increase in the financial limits set in the Credit Unions Act 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies has held discussions on the representations with the representative bodies. He told them last year that he accepted in principle the case for increases, but that he needed further confirmation that the work which the bodies had done to ensure that their member societies were properly run was bearing fruit. He is now satisfied on the basis of improvements since then that the increase in limits can be made without running risks to members' funds.

The Chief Registrar accordingly sought Treasury consent to an order under the Credit Unions Act 1979 increasing the limit on the size of loans to £5,000, with similar increases in other limits. I gave that consent. The order has been laid today, and will take effect on 1 February 1990.

I hope that these increases will help the credit union movement at this relatively early stage in its development, immediately by enabling unions to give an enhanced service to their members, and thereafter by encouraging more groups to form such unions.

DEFENCE

Poland

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to visit Poland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no current plans to visit Poland.

I was there at the beginning of September for the commemoration of the outbreak of world war 2.

Trident

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Trident missile programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Trident programme continues to progress to time and budget towards its in-service date of the mid-1990s.

Defence Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what practical changes in policy have arisen from the new situation in eastern Europe.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reassessment he has made of defence policy in the light of political changes in the Warsaw pact countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 28 November 1989 at column 573.

RAF St. Mawgan

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many hardened aircraft shelters are being constructed at RAF St. Mawgan;

(2) what is the purpose of the hardened aircraft shelters being constructed at RAF St. Mawgan;

(3) who is funding the hardened aircraft shelters being constructed at RAF St. Mawgan.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Nine hardened aircraft shelters are being constructed at RAF St. Mawgan to provide protection for Buccaneer aircraft. The airfield is designated as a forward operating base for these aircraft. Costs are being met from NATO common infrastructure funds.

Explosives and Propellants

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the expenditure on explosives and propellants in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Expenditure related to explosives and propellants is not available as we purchase the great majority of these components as an integral part of ammunition, mines and bombs. Our approximate expenditure (VAT inclusive, in year cost) on those weapons, but excluding guided weapons and rocket motors, was:

Year	*£ million*
1985-86	380
1986-87	395
1987-88	400
1988-89	350

Data for earlier years are currently in our archives. I will write to the hon. Member once the information has been retrieved.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many explosive and propellant contracts were placed in the periods *(a)* January to July 1987, *(b)* July to December 1987, *(c)* January to July 1988, *(d)* July to December 1988 and *(e)* January to July 1989; and what are the values of those contracts.

Mr. Alan Clark: The value of the explosives and propellants purchased by the Ministry is not recorded separately. The approximate number and values of orders for ammunition and stores containing explosives and propellants, but excluding those for guided weapons and rocket motors and orders placed under international collaborative arrangements were:

Period	*Number of orders*	*Value of contracts VAT excluded £ million*
1 January 1987—20 June 1987	35	29
1 July 1987—31 December 1987	50	99
1 January 1988—30 June 1988	60	37
1 July 1988—31 December 1988	45	145
1 January 1989—30 June 1989	60	128

Rover Group

Mr. Allan Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any moneys were given to the Rover Group to help correct deficiencies in the DROPS contract.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Berlin

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to review the role of British defence forces in Berlin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces will continue to fulfil our responsibilities for the protection of Berlin in conjunction with those of other Allies.

Submarines

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) of 28 November, *Official Report*, column 568, if he will give brief details of all of the incidents which have taken place in water far too shallow for submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Examples of which I am aware include the losses of FV Tijl Eulenspiegel on 5 March 1989 and FV Salve Regina on 6 December 1987 and allegations that the FV Crystal Sea was towed backwards on 17 October 1987.

The Ministry of Defence does not however maintain records of accidents to civilian shipping where there is no military involvement.

Fishermen's Associations

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *245*, if he will list the dates and meetings which have taken place and which are planned to take place between the Royal Navy and fishermen's associations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following meetings have been held between fishermen's organisations and the Royal Navy during the past year:

20 June 1989—Maritime Liaison Meeting.
4 August 1989—Meeting between Senior Naval Officers and the West Coast Committee of the National Federation of Fisherman's Organisations.
1 December 1989—Clyde Annual Fishing Liaison Meeting.
14 December 1989—Fishermen's representatives spent a day at sea in HMS SCEPTRE in the Firth of Clyde.

Further meetings are planned. The dates and details of these are still to be agreed.

Sea-based Weapons

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) of 28 November, *Official Report*, column 571, whether sea-based weapons systems will be included in the consideration of significant reductions on the NATO side.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: By agreement of all participants, maritime forces are specifically excluded from the mandate for the CFE negotiations.

Warsaw Pact War Materials

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *570-71*, if he will list the types and numbers of the war materials being newly produced by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 30 November at column *360*.

Frigates

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent competition for Duke class type 23 frigates.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to implement the Royal Navy's requirement for vessels to modernise its escort force.

Mr. Neubert: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr O'Neill) at column 197.

Conventional Arms Planning

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what considerations prompted United Kingdom participation in the NATO conventional arms planning system agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom, in common with other NATO nations, participated in the trial of a conventional armaments planning system to determine whether a system could be devised to meet the following objectives: to provide guidance to the conference of national armaments directors (CNAD) and orientation to the nations on how the military needs of the Alliance can best be met by national armaments programmes, individually and collectively, and to help to elaborate armaments co-operation opportunities and priorities for CNAD.

The trial was completed in October, and NATO Ministers, meeting in the reinforced council in November, adopted the recommendation put to them by CNAD, that two full cycles of the conventional armaments planning system should now take place over the next four years, based on procedures derived from the lessons learnt during the trial.

Developing Defence Industry Countries

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the developing defence industry countries, in the light of the NATO report entitled "Shared Roles, Risks and Responsibilities in the Alliance."

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO has long accepted the need for assistance to be given to developing defence industry countries to help them meet their defence requiremens. We provide assistance in a variety of forms, including training and credit support for sales of defence equipment.

Procurement Executive

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the job description of the director of contracts and organisation in the Procurement Executive of his Department.

Mr. Neubert: To develop the procedural and organisational framework for handling the contractual aspects of certain new initiatives, notably at present those concerned with contracting for reliability, implementation of the Next Steps policy and the establishment of the new management strategy.

Al Yamamah Contract

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sums his Department has paid to British Aerospace and other United Kingdom defence contractors to make up the deficit in the Al Yamamah contract as a result of the reduction in the price of Saudi Arabian oil.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Ambulance Duty

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any additional payments are to be made to service personnel engaged on ambulance duty over the Christmas and new year period.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been decided that additional welfare benefits will be made available for those service personnel deployed on ambulance duties who are on duty or confined to barracks on Christmas day, Boxing day or new year's day. Welfare funds will be specially supplemented by £15 per head to allow units to provide extra Christmas and new year fare and entertainment. These are not cash payments to individuals, as emergency duties are something that have to be accepted in service life, but an enhancement of welfare funds to enable some

additional comfort to be provided. In addition, each person will be allowed two extra free private telephone calls, and where service personnel are required to split their leave and make two journeys home, the cost of the second will be met.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether companies that are either partially or fully foreign owned will be allowed to bid for the management contract for the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* Bids will be invited for the management contract at AWE from United Kingdom-based prime contractors who are also able to satisfy United Kingdom national security requirements.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of overtime that has been paid out at the atomic weapons establishment sites at *(a)* Aldermaston, *(b)* Burghfield, *(c)* Cardiff and *(d)* Foulness in each year for the last 10 years.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The total amount of overtime paid out at the AWE sites during 1987-88 was:

AWE sites	*£ million*
Aldermaston	6·5
Burghfield	0·8
Cardiff	0·6
Foulness	0·5

Figures for previous years on the same basis are not readily available.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the budget for the compliance director at the atomic weapons establishment will be the responsibility of the chief executive of that establishment.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Financial arrangements for the compliance office will ensure its independence from the contractor.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the safety division of the atomic weapons establishment will be retained after the introduction of private contractors at the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 11 December at column *528*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the accountancy firm advising the Government on the student loan scheme has at any time since June 1979 been *(a)* criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors or *(b)* criticised by any disciplinary committee of the accountancy profession for lacking in professional conduct, efficiency or competence.

Mr. Jackson: The accountancy firm advising the CLSB and, subsequently, the Student Loans Company Limited was criticised by the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in 1982 and 1983 and under the profession's disciplinary scheme in 1983. The accountancy firm advising the Government has not been criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors; a predecessor firm to the one advising the Government was criticised in 1983 under the accountancy profession's joint disciplinary scheme.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children with special educational needs are currently at schools *(a)* in the north-west and *(b)* in the Bolton education authority area; and what is the cost to the authority of providing the special education which they need.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The number of pupils with special educational needs in maintained schools in *(a)* the north-west and *(b)* Bolton in January 1989 were as follows:

	North-West	*Bolton*
(i) Pupils in maintained special schools	15,209	464
(ii) Pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained ordinary schools	6,375	124

Information on the cost of special education which relates directly to the above figures is not available centrally.

Korean Language Departments

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many British universities have Korean language departments; which they are; and how many *(a)* first degree and *(b)* postgraduates they produced in 1988;

(2) how many British universities teach Korean subjects; which universities they are; and what are the subjects they teach.

Mr. Jackson: Several institutions offer oriental language and area studies, although none has a separate Korean department. The School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) offers Korean as half of a joint first degree and, like the university of Sheffield, offers Korean at post-graduate level and as a subsidiary subject in a first degree. Centrally available figures are not sufficiently disaggregated to show the number of such first or post-graduate degrees awarded.

Accountancy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of Britain's university and polytechnic graduates make a career in accountancy.

Mr. Jackson: The 1988 survey of first destinations of graduates shows that 52,936 new first degree graduates of United Kingdom universities and polytechnics in England and Wales were recorded as entering United Kingdom

employment. Of these, 4,836 or 9 per cent. went into accountancy. Separate information from the 1987 labour force survey shows that 18 per cent. of all graduates employed in Great Britain were working in industry division "Banking, finance and insurance" which, includes accountancy.

Incentive Allowances

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers are employed by each local authority in England; how many teachers are in receipt of an incentive allowance for each local authority in England; what percentage this is of the total employed by each local authority; and how many teachers in receipt of an incentive allowance in each local authority in England hold allowances that are *(a)* incentive A, *(b)* incentive B, *(c)* incentive C, *(d)* incentive D and *(e)* incentive E.

Mrs. Rumbold: No information is at present available about the number of teachers with incentive allowances in September 1989. The Government's present plans assume the award of 174,600 allowances to teachers in ordinary schools in September 1989. Of these 38 per cent. (66,000) are A allowances, 30 per cent. (52,900) Bs, 11·5 per cent. (20,000) Cs, 15 per cent. (26,000) Ds and 5·5 per cent. (9,500) Es. If allowances were awarded in line with the Government's assumptions some 40 per cent. of primary and over 55 per cent. of secondary teachers paid on the main scale in England and Wales will have been in receipt of an allowance this September. Information from various sources suggests that the number awarded in previous years has been broadly in line with the Government's assumptions.

Student Loans

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his written answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *5*, whether he now proposes to guarantee the obligations of the Student Loans Company Limited as described in the departmental minute laid before the House on that date.

Mr. John MacGregor: A departmental minute was laid before the House on 22 November, describing the contingent liability which would arise if I were to guarantee the obligations of the Student Loans Company Limited under an agreement to lease and a lease on premises in Glasgow. That minute has now been before the House for 14 sitting days. Right hon. and hon. Members expressed an objection to the minute, in early-day motion 55, dated 23 November. The hon. Member for Blackburn has explained the nature of that objection during debates in Standing Committee B. I have considered his arguments. I am now satisfied that it is right in principle to seek to locate the Student Loans Company Limited in Glasgow, on the assumption that a suitable lease can be negotiated. If, therefore, I am asked by a landlord to guarantee the obligations of Student Loans Company Limited under an agreement to lease and a lease, and if I am satisfied that it would be appropriate to do so, I shall give such a guarantee.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on capital expenditure on schools and further education establishments in 1990-91, including the voluntary aided sector.

Mr. MacGregor: Local education authorities have today been informed of their annual capital guidelines for 1990-91, and of the allocations for capital spending by the governors of voluntary-aided and special agreement schools in their areas. These figures amount to a big increase in local authorities' borrowing power for education capital expenditure and in grant for the governors of voluntary aided schools.

Annual capital guidelines (ACGs) for education under the new system of local authority finance will total £485 million compared with allocations of £352 million in 1989-90 under the old system; £410 million is available for schools, £65 million for further and higher education and £10 million for other educational services. In 1988-89 allocations for schools totalled £318 million and those for colleges totalled £34 million while allocations for other educational services were included on the larger "other services" block distributed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Within the schools sector I have given priority to new projects designed to:

provide new school places in areas of population growth

implement cost-effective schemes to remove surplus places and

continue remedying deficiencies in existing school buildings.

I have therefore distributed £76·5 million to allow more new projects to be added to the special programme of school improvements started two years ago. This represents a four and a half times increase over the sum so distributed last year.

Within the further and higher education sector I have given priority to new major building projects, where the ACGs allow for nearly 90 per cent. of local authorities' requirements. Allocations for minor works and for equipment each exceed £6 million.

The ACGs are not grants and do not themselves give authorities the power to borrow money for capital purposes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will issue credit approvals to each authority which will give authorisation to borrow. ACGs include a small element in respect of spending from capital receipts on top of the spending that can be financed by borrowing. In addition authorities will be able to spend further sums from capital receipts and from their revenue budgets if they so choose. Local authority expenditure, including that on loan charges resulting from capital expenditure, is assisted by central Government through revenue support grant.

I am also announcing increased allocations for spending on building projects by the governors of aided and special agreement schools. I have authorised 59 new starts for major projects with first year costs in 1990-91 totalling £12·9 million, and minor work totalling £5·4 million, an increase in new work overall of 17 per cent. on last year. In addition, I have accepted more than twice as many projects as last year on to the design list to enable detailed costed plans to be drawn up. I pay direct grant aid on this work of 85 per cent.

Lists of annual capital guidelines and allocations to individual local authorities, together with lists of major new projects at voluntary aided schools accepted for a start in 1990-91, are as follows:

Column 1 *Local Education Authority*	*Column 2*[1] *£000s*	*Column 3*[2] *£000s*
Barking and Dagenham	485	1,940
Barnet	888	912
Bexley	1,242	437
Brent	687	394
Bromley	1,684	80
Croydon	1,061	1,066
Ealing	889	93
Enfield	1,315	344
Haringey	1,132	2,336
Harrow	1,073	0
Havering	5,881	357
Hillingdon	1,140	232
Hounslow	539	0
Kingston upon Thames	268	26
Merton	3,608	449
Newham	5,572	0
Redbridge	1,577	314
Richmond Upon Thames	1,390	505
Sutton	2,974	612
Waltham Forest	6,661	0
City of London	0	0
Camden	1,421	1,097
Westminster	380	110
Greenwich	3,849	0
Hackney	2,605	71
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,047	452
Islington	1,079	38
Kensington and Chelsea	2,145	4,775
Lambeth	1,480	411
Lewisham	1,232	52
Southwark	5,429	1,186
Wandsworth	1,677	26
Tower Hamlets	7,778	632
Birmingham	10,494	1,172
Coventry	1,962	453
Dudley	3,608	632
Sandwell	1,647	176
Solihull	1,511	1,191
Walsall	1,369	50
Wolverhampton	783	0
Knowsley	2,080	169
Liverpool	9,742	4,487
St. Helens	5,066	128
Sefton	4,176	1,527
Wirral	3,354	304
Bolton	802	137
Bury	815	641
Manchester	3,062	744
Oldham	3,429	184
Rochdale	4,078	669
Salford	3,899	327
Stockport	1,300	472
Tameside	1,410	20
Trafford	9,448	292
Wigan	4,378	699
Barnsley	1,883	0
Donaster	860	215
Rotherham	1,589	0
Sheffield	2,428	120
Bradford	9,731	1,150
Calderdale	1,514	204
Kirklees	1,216	144
Leeds	2,562	7,107
Wakefield	5,394	145
Gateshead	1,082	57
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,564	597
North Tyneside	1,265	835
South Tyneside	1,894	51
Sunderland	1,883	6
Isles of Scilly	221	0
Avon	5,653	2,311
Bedfordshire	2,409	15
Berkshire	4,500	438
Buckinghamshire	4,544	763
Cambridgeshire	13,229	58
Cheshire	5,814	1,736
Cleveland	3,329	0
Cornwall	6,522	1,201
Cumbria	7,930	654
Derbyshire	14,653	1,132
Devon	12,984	465
Dorset	3,853	4,847
Durham	4,924	277
East Sussex	8,613	1,725
Essex	13,895	529
Gloucestershire	7,917	923
Hampshire	13,325	3,664
Hereford and Worcester	6,248	1,081
Hertfordshire	6,526	202
Humberside	9,004	508
Isle of Wight	1,912	87
Kent	16,210	2,756
Lancashire	18,524	4,970
Leicestershire	11,154	459
Lincolnshire	7,387	125
Norfolk	2,880	184
North Yorkshire	4,105	69
Northamptonshire	6,182	0
Northumberland	1,961	194
Nottinghamshire	3,716	1,036
Oxfordshire	3,751	1,920
Shropshire	6,319	120
Somerset	4,837	1,562
Staffordshire	6,375	1,068
Suffolk	7,921	256
Surrey	3,718	819
Warwickshire	1,507	1,097
West Sussex	3,633	2,527
Wiltshire	6,256	767

[1] Annual capital guideline.

[2] Capital expenditure by the governors of aided and special agreement schools.

Voluntary aided and special agreement schools 1990-91.
Major named projects

LEA and schools

Camden
  St. Mary's, Kilburn
Hammersmith and Fulham
  Sacred Heart
Kensington and Chelsea
  Sion Manning Roman Catholic
Barnet
  St. Agnes Roman Catholic Primary
Bromley
  Chislehurst
Enfield
  St. Georges Church of England, Freezywater
Merton
  St. John Fisher Roman Catholic Primary
Richmond upon Thames
  Holy Trinity
Coventry
  Blue Coat School Church of England
Knowsley
  St. John Fisher Roman Catholic
  St. Aidan's Roman Catholic Primary, Huyton
Liverpool
  St. John Almond
Sefton

Much Woolton Roman Catholic Primary
Salesian (Savio) Phase IV
St. Luke's Roman Catholic Halsall
St. John Stone/Ainsdale Roman Catholic
Doncaster
Hatfield Travis Church of England
Salford
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary
Stockport
St. Peter's Roman Catholic Primary
Wigan
Tyldesley Boothtown Holy Family Roman Catholic Primary
Sunderland
St. Michael's Primary
Bradford
Baildon Church of England
Leeds
Christ the King Roman Catholic
Holy Family Roman Catholic
St. Francis Roman Catholic
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic
Holy Name Roman Catholic
Our Lady of Good Counsel Roman Catholic
Avon
St. Stephen's Church of England Primary
Berkshire
English Martyrs Roman Catholic, Reading
Buckinghamshire
St. Paul's Roman Catholic Secondary
Cheshire
Westbrook Church of England
Marton Whitegate Church of England Primary
Prestbury Church of England Primary
Cumbria
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary, Barrow
Devon
Cuthbert Mayne Phase II
Dorset
St. Clement and St. John Church of England
Essex
Bishop Wilson (New School) Springfield
Dovercourt All Saints Church of England
Gloucestershire
St. Mary Roman Catholic, Gloucester
Ann Cam Church of England Primary, Dymock
Hampshire
Hedge End Roman Catholic Primary (New School)
St. Anne's Roman Catholic Primary
Hereford and Worcester
Blessed Edward Oldcorne St. Paul's Church of England Primary, Hereford
Hertfordshire
St. Clement Danes, Chorley Wood
Kent
St. George's, Sheerness
Ashford St. Mary's Phase II
Lancashire
St. Helens Church of England Primary, Overton
St. Albans Roman Catholic, Blackburn
Christ Church Church of England, Lancaster
St. John's, Church of England Primary, Nelson
Nottinghamshire
St. Philip Neri Roman Catholic Primary, Mansfield
Oxfordshire
Blessed George Napier Roman Catholic
Somerset
New Church of England School
St. Augustine's of Canterbury, Taunton
Staffordshire
St. Thomas' Church of England Primary
St. Peter's Roman Catholic, Cobridge
Suffolk
St. James Church of England Middle

VOLUNTARILY AIDED AND SPECIAL AGREEMENT SCHOOLS DESIGN LIST 1990-91

LEA and Schools

Bexley
St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Primary
Bolton
St. Joseph's High
Bury
Bury Church of England High
Manchester
St. Andrew's Church of England High—Phase 2
Our Lady's High
Sefton
St. Monica's Bootle
Newcastle
St. Paul's Church of England Primary
Bedfordshire
Heath Church of England Lower
Cheshire
Hartford St. Nicholas
Middlewich St. Mary's Roman Catholic Primary
Cumbria
St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Junior
Devon
Plympton Roman Catholic Primary
Dorset
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary
Poole St. Peter's Roman Catholic
Bournemouth
Durham
Tudhoe St. Charles Roman Catholic
Kent
Judd School
Lancashire
Chorley St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Primary
Poulton Le Fylde, Barnes High
Leicestershire
Coalville St. Claire's Roman Catholic Primary
North Yorkshire
St. Peter's Roman Catholic Primary
Scarborough
St. Aidan's Church of England High—Phase 2
Somerset
St. Dubricus Church of England
Porlock
Long Sutton Church of England
Chewton Mendip Church of England Primary
Staffordshire
St. Mark's Church of England Primary
Surrey
Salesian Roman Catholic High
Warwickshire
St. Paul's Church of England
Leamington Spa
Liverpool
Broughton Hall Roman Catholic
Cambridgeshire
King's School, Peterborough

Student Loans

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many banks have agreed in principle to operate the student loan scheme.

Mr. Macgregor *[pursuant to the reply, 19 December 1989]:* My predecessor announced on 19 June that, subject to the satisfactory outcome of the contractual negotiations, a sufficient number of financial institutions would wish to participate in the administration of the student loans scheme to ensure that the student loans company would be viable. I was able to announce on 16 November that agreement had been reached by 10 major banks to the establishment of a company, Student Loans Company Limited, to undertake preparatory work; and to the terms on which that company would operate the scheme.

Notwithstanding those agreements I have been told today by the chairman of the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers, speaking on behalf of his own bank (Barclays) and of the National Westminster bank, the Midland bank, the TSB and the Royal Bank of Scotland

that in view of the fact that Lloyds bank in particular was not participating in the scheme, they now wished to withdraw. I have also been told today that Lloyds has now firmly decided that it will not participate. The four Irish banks have now also confirmed that in these circumstances they wish to withdraw. I am informed that the Girobank is not in a position to take a decision about full ownership of the company.

The objectives, principles and framework of the scheme as outlined in the Education (Student Loans) Bill remain completely unchanged. The Government decided that, on balance, there were advantages in operating the mechanics of the scheme through a sufficient number of banks, whose branch networks throughout the country would have provided swift and easy access for students. The main effect of their withdrawal will be to make the process of applying for a loan less convenient for students themselves. I have made clear to the chairman of the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers the Government's regret that the participants feel unable to honour the commitment entered into before the 19 June statement. The relevant negotiations were satisfactorily concluded, as I announced on 16 November.

Arrangements are now being made for the Student Loans Company to pass into the ownership of the Government so as to ensure continuity in the necessary preparations for the scheme.

The Government have spent just under £1 million so far on the preparations for the loans scheme, chiefly in the form of consultancy and legal fees. Although it is not possible to attribute this precisely as between preparing for the participation of the banks and preparing for the scheme itself, the banks have agreed to contribute £0·5 million to these preparatory costs.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Know-How Fund

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those projects being supported by his know-how fund, with details of the support in cash and in kind for each project.

Mrs. Chalker: We have already approved a wide range of activities under the know-how fund for Poland, costing £2·1 million. They are as follows:

Projects as at 16 December

Title:—Foreign Investment Agency
Description:—Four seminars on corporate finance, and financial and management accounting
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£56,000

Title:—Bank Handlowy
Description:—Two seminars on Treasury management and an introduction to capital markets
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£34,000

Title:—Free Market Mission
Description:—High level project identification mission in the banking and finance sector
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£113,000

Title:—Finance and the City of London
Description:—Course in financial institutions for 20 Polish visitors
Status:—To be held in February
Cost:—£61,000

Title:—Office technician and accountancy staff training
Description:—Project identification mission for training of accountancy staff
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£29,000

Title:—Privatisation conference
Description:—Conference
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£33,000

Title:—Job Ownership
Description:—Study tour of UK employee-owned businesses
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£12,000

Title:—Warszawskie Zaklady Telewizyjne (WZT)
Description:—Pilot consultancy on employee ownership
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£12,000

Title:—Management Study tour
Description:—Directors of Polish management education schools to undertake two-week UK study tour
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£31,000

Title:—Management seminars
Description:—Seminars on marketing and export promotion
Status:—To be implemented
Cost:—£23,000

Title:—Young management graduates
Description:—Two month programme at Strathclyde
Status:—To be implemented
Cost:—£222,000

Title:—Management educators
Description:—Training of trainers at Strathclyde
Status:—To be implemented
Cost:—£251,000

Title:—Visiting lecturers
Description:—Tours of Polish management schools by invited British specialists
Status:—To be implemented
Cost:—£56,000

Title:—Fishery management
Description:—Three month programme at Hull for Polish fishery managers
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£133,000

Title:—Farmer/Co-operatives training
Description:—Identification and implementation of training programme for managers of cooperatives
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£50,000

Title:—English for management
Description:—Identification visit
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£10,000

Title:—Management libraries
Description:—Provision of basic library of management texts to key Polish educational institutions
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£129,000

Title:—WK & AM consultants
Description:—Assessment of potential productivity improvements at three Polish plants
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£30,000

Title:—Financial seminars
Description:—Raising the awareness of how Western financial institutions work
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£172,000

Title:—Electricity sector
Description:—Reconnaissance mission
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£10,000

Title:—IBRD social security mission
Description:—Secondment of two United Kingdom experts to an IBRD mission to look at the social aspects of economic adjustment
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£13,000

Title:—Blood plasma
Description:—Feasibility study for establishment of a blood fractionation plant
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£140,000

Title:—Data Processing
Description:—Adaption of Polish econometric model to meet IMF specifications
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£22,000

Title:—Economic Adviser
Description:—Appointment of a macro-economic adviser to the Minister of Finance
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£80,000

Title:—Equipment for Ministry of Finance
Description:—Provision of office machinery
Status:—To be implemented
Cost:—£50,000

Title:—Post-experience training for journalists
Description:—Academic plus practical attachments
Status:—To be implemented
Cost:—£29,000

Title:—Local government assistance
Description:—Preparation for local government elections in June
Status:—Underway
Cost:—£170,000

Title:—Seminars for Polish MPs
Description:—Introduction to British parliamentary concepts
Status:—Completed
Cost:—£15,000

Title:—Media training
Description:—Training organised by BBC World Service
Status:—To be implemented
Cost:—£130,000

Cambodia

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has yet met heads of non-governmental organisations involved in humanitarian aid projects in Cambodia to discuss the details of further United Kingdom aid disbursements in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I met representatives of British non-governmental organisations on 14 November to discuss further Government support for their humanitarian activities in Cambodia. Another meeting at official level will take place early in the new year to follow up the recent visit of British officials to Cambodia.

Bangladesh

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations Her Majesty's Government have undertaken on the problem of flooding in Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government hosted an international conference at Lancaster house on 11-12 December at which the Bangladesh Government and all major bilateral and multilateral aid donors to the country were represented. The meeting was chaired by the World Bank.

The meeting endorsed an initial five-year flood action plan prepared for the Bangladesh Government by the World Bank. The plan recommends a staged approach to dealing with the flooding problem in Bangladesh, and emphasises the need to identify structures that are economically and technically viable and also socially and environmentally sound. The plan starts with a series of further detailed studies and pilot activities. Some of the studies would examine specific regions of the country which are affected by flooding to devise area specific solutions. The others would establish general guidelines for the conduct of the whole programme, and include pilot work on critical aspects such as river training, flood modelling and compartmentalisation.

One or more donors offered finance for each of the study and pilot activities recommended. The United Kingdom will take the lead in one of the regional studies (in the north-west), and three major supporting studies; and will participate in a number of other activities under the programme. The World Bank has agreed to co-ordinate this ambitious multi-country effort, and the flood action plan, which extends for an initial five years, will be reviewed every two years and defined in more detail as the studies proceed. The cost of the studies and the initial works that they are expected to identify is tentatively estimated at some $650 million. On the basis of this initial work it will be possible to take informed decisions on a possible comprehensive programme of flood control and development, which would be a much longer-term objective.

I believe that the conference took a major step forward in initiating a programme which offers the hope of a major reduction and alleviation in the devastation which flooding can bring to Bangladesh. Her Majesty's Government and the other Governments and agencies represented intend to push the programme forward energetically. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for visiting the conference and discussing its work with participants.

Fourth Lomé Convention

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the negotiations on a fourth Lomé convention.

Mrs. Chalker: The main outstanding issues in the negotiation were settled at the fifth ACP/EC ministerial negotiating meeting in Brussels on 25-27 November. After further discussions, both sides subsequently confirmed their acceptance of the final outcome. The way was thus clear for signature in Lomé on 15 December. As soon as the finalised text of the new convention has been received a copy will be laid before Parliament.

The general framework of ACP/EC co-operation is largely unchanged under Lomé IV. The main features of the new convention are as follows:

(a) Duration: Lomé IV is of 10 years duration (ie it expires 29 February 2000) with provision for review after 5 years. Financial resources will continue to be provided on a 5 yearly basis so Lomé IV will be covered by two five-year European Development funds (EDF).

(b) New ACP members: The applications by Haiti and the Dominican Republic to join Lomé IV were accepted. Namibia will also be welcome to join Lomé when it becomes independent and if it wishes to do so.

(c) Financial package: Lomé IV contains a financial package of up to 12 billion ecu (around £8·5 billion). This comprises 10·8 billion ecu (around £7·7 billion) under the seventh European Development Fund (EDF VII), an increase of 46 per cent. over the previous EDF, and up to 1·2 billion ecu from the European Investment Bank's (EIB) own resources. This financial package will cover the first five years of the new convention. The Community will also provide up to 165 million ecu over the next five years to member states' dependencies under an associated Council decision. This comprises 140 million ecu from EDF VII plus up to 25 million ecu from EIB own resources.

The EDF is financed by direct contributions from the member states and not from the EC budget. The UK contribution to EDF VII will be 1·79 billion ecu (around £1·3 billion); this is 16·37 per cent. of the overall sum. EIB own resources are raised on the capital markets of the world as part of its overall financial operation.

(d) Use of EDF:

(i) Aid projects and programmes: the bulk of EDF resources will continue to be channelled through national indicative programmes for each ACP state. Aid will be programmed in the same way as under Lomé III, with a series of mutual commitments and obligations

designed to maximise the effectiveness of the aid provided. Rural development is likely to continue to be the focal sector of assistance for many countries. However, Lomé IV places increased emphasis on industrial development and encouragement of private sector activity. Assistance will also be available in the form of finance for import programmes both from within national indicative programmes and from a separate earmarking which will be allocated on a selective basis throughout the next five years.

(ii) Investment support: specific support for investment and industrial development will continue to be available in the form of risk capital, managed by the EIB. This has been increased from 600 million ecu to 825 million ecu.

(iii) Stabex: (the arrangement for assisting ACP states facing shortfalls in their export earnings from a specified list of agricultural products). The Stabex provision within EDF VII is 1·5 billion ecu, representing a slightly increased share of the EDF. The system remains broadly the same as under Lomé III, although a number of technical changes have been agreed.

(iv) Sysmin: (an arrangement which provides assistance to ACP states facing shortfalls in production or earnings from a specified list of minerals): Sysmin also remains largely unchanged though the funds will now be provided to the ACP on grant terms. Its financial provision, at 480 million ecu, represents a slightly lower proportion of EDF VII than under EDF VI, reflecting the rate of take-up of available Sysmin funds in recent years.

(e) Use of EIB Own Resources: the EIB will continue to provide loans, subsidised from the EDF, for investment activities in creditworthy ACP countries.

(f) Trade Provisions: Lomé IV contains further improvements to the already favourable Lomé trade regime. These include improved access for a range of agricultural products and various improvements to the rules of origin designed to assist the ACP to develop processing and manufacturing industry. Substantial progress was made on the liberalisation of ACP rum access (rum is the only ACP industrial product still subject to quota restrictions). The EC agreed that the Council should take a decision by 1995 on how the quota should be abolished.

(g) Bananas: the Banana Protocol has been retained coupled with a joint EC/ACP declaration that the interests of traditional ACP suppliers will be safeguarded should any modifications be made to the internal Community arrangements for bananas in the context of the completion of the single market.

(h) Sugar: the sugar protocol is of indefinite duration and continues unchanged in Lomé IV.

(i) Toxic Waste: the EC has agreed to ban the export of all hazardous and radioactive waste to the ACP countries provided they ban imports from all countries.

Poland

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress there had been in setting up a currency stabilisation fund for Poland.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary told the House on 29 November that the United Kingdom intended to contribute $100 million to a currency stabilisation fund for Poland. It has now been agreed that these resources should be provided as a grant to the fund, which will total around $1,000 million. The fund will be available to support policies aimed at liberalisation of payments and transfers for current international transactions. It will complement resources provided by the International Monetary Fund to support an agreed programme of economic policy reform.

The management of the fund will be agreed between the contributors and the Polish authorities. The fund is expected to become operational in January 1990 and to run for one year although it may be extended for a further period. Drawings on the fund will be limited and will be expected to be reconstituted. The contributors will discuss with the Polish Government how the balances remaining in the fund can most effectively be used to further assist economic reform in Poland.

The United Kingdom contribution will be part of the public expenditure provision for economic assistance to eastern Europe and is additional to and separate from the provision for overseas aid. Parliamentary approval of the new service will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Overseas Aid Vote (Class II, Vote 5). Pending that approval, the sterling cost will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingency Fund.

International Development Association

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the negotiations on the ninth replenishment of the International Development Association; and what will be the United Kingdom contribution.

Mrs. Chalker: Negotiations on the ninth replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA 9) were successfully concluded in Washington on 14 December. Donor countries agreed on a replenishment of 11·68 billion special drawing rights (about $15 billion). This maintains in real terms the value of IDA 8. With repayments from earlier loans, there will be a real increase in the total available for commitment to the poorest countries over the three years starting on 1 July 1990, which will be about $17 billion. The United Kingdom has agreed, subject to Parliamentary approval, to contribute 6·7 per cent. of IDA 9, or nearly £619 million at the agreed exchange rate.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Stable Staff

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the powers of the Horserace Betting Levy Board with regard to the National Joint Council for Stable Staff; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will conduct a scrutiny of the role played by the Trainers Federation during current pay negotiations at the National Joint Council for Stable Lads; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his policy towards making Horserace Betting Levy Board money payable to trainers through travelling expenses; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what steps have been taken to ascertain the requirements of trainers of further financial assistance from the Horserace Betting Levy Board; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what steps he has taken to ensure a full investigation by the Horserace Betting Levy Board of the circumstances whereby trainers have been unable to fund pay awards over the last decade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The levy board has no powers in relation to the National Joint Council for Stable Staff. It is not for my right hon. and learned Friend to scrutinise the Trainers Federation. The levy board does not provide financial assistance direct to trainers of race horses. It is for the board to consider whether to re-introduce travelling expenses for trainers. It is also for the board to decide what, if any, information about the training industry may be relevant to its duties.

Mrs. Eulalia Potter

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will take steps to expedite the granting of a visa to Mrs. Eulalia Potter of the Philippines to enable her to reside with her husband in the United Kingdom;

(2) on what grounds the Philippines-born Mrs. Eulalia Potter, wife of Mr. M. J. Potter of South Hams, was refused a visa for entry to the United Kingdom on each occasion on which application was made.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

In accordance with the recent guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Horse Racing

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to investigate current Horserace Betting Levy Board practices in relation to generation of moneys by bookmakers' tax impositions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will undertake an investigation into the means by which the Horserace Betting Levy Board provides finances for the benefit of racing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering whether to establish an inquiry into the financing of racing. We are not considering any other investigation into the operation of the horserace betting levy system, a statutory purpose of which is the improvement of horse racing and under which bookmakers, not the levy board, customarily provide the horserace betting levy on off-course bets on horseraces by a "tax" on such bets, or by a deduction from winnings from them.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to investigate the issue of interest-free loans made by the Horserace Betting Levy Board to racecourses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has with regard to moves by the Horserace Betting Levy Board to recover £2 million of moneys made in interest-free loans to Goodwood racecourse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* We have no plan to investigate the long-established practice of the levy board of making interest-free loans to racecourses, in pursuance of its statutory duty to apply its moneys for purposes conducive to the improvement of horse racing. We understand from the board that loans to Goodwood racecourse are being repaid on terms agreed either when the loans were made or as a result of subsequent re-negotiation.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to investigate the omission to disclose the £3·8 million bookmakers' surplus during his Department's inquiry in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1988 my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) invited the bookmakers' committee and the Horserace Betting Levy Board to make submissions to him about the possible terms of the 28 horserace betting levy scheme, which he determined this March. Information about the levy board's financial reserves was provided in these submissions, and we are not aware that any material information about bookmaking was omitted from them.

Sports Grounds

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken following the recommendations of the report by Lord Justice Popplewell on crowd safety and control at sports grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The proposals to give effect to the safety recommendations of the final report of the Popplewell inquiry were set out in a Home Office-Scottish Office consultative document published in June 1986.

In addition to revision of the guide to safety at sports grounds, designation under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 was extended in 1986 to sports grounds used for association football, rugby, or cricket and identified as having accommodation for over 10,000 spectators.

Parts II and III of the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 amended the 1975 Act and introduced a system of safety certification for stands at undesignated sports grounds able to accommodate at least 500 spectators

under cover with effect from 1 January 1988 and 1 January 1989 respectively. As from 1 June 1988, part IV of the 1987 Act extended entertainment licensing to indoor sports entertainments to which the public are invited as spectators.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which came into force on 1 January 1986, had already extended the police powers of search and arrest in ways that help them to deal with troublemakers at football grounds. The Public Order Act 1986 created a new offence of disorderly conduct to cover hooliganism in football grounds elsewhere.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the report by Lord Justice Taylor on crowd control and safety at sports stadia to be complete.

Mr. John Patten: The timing of the final report by the inquiry is a matter for Lord Justice Taylor. I understand that he hopes to complete his report in January 1990.

Drugs

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female foreign nationals are currently serving a prison sentence or are on remand for drug-related offences; and how many come from (i) Nigeria, (ii) Pakistan and (iii) Colombia.

Mr. Mellor: The latest readily available information is given in the table. The recording of nationality for citizens of Commonwealth countries and the Irish Republic is not always reliable. The nationality of remand prisoners and the offences with which they are charged are not recorded centrally until the completion of court proceedings.

Population sentenced for all drugs offences in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1989: by nationality and sex.

Number[1]

Nationality (name of country)	*Males*	*Females*
Colombia	48	14
Nigeria	267	77
Pakistan	158	2
Other nationalities	606	81
United Kingdom	1,823	151
Not recorded	5	1
All nationalities	2,907	326

[1]Provisional. The figures are those recorded centrally which are approximate: detailed checking would involve disproportionate cost.

Police Recruitment

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants passed the police inititial recruitment examination in the Metropolitan police division in 1986, 1987 and 1988, broken down separately for white and black candidates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis that the information is as follows:

Applicants who passed the PIR test

	White	*Black*[1]
1986	1,440	65
1987	1,306	74
1988	1,559	42

[1]Includes all members of the ethnic minorities.

Prison Boards of Visitors

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total membership of boards of visitors throughout the United Kingdom; and what number and percentages of them are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Mellor: The complement of all boards of visitors in England and Wales is 1,767 and on 14 December there were 1,630 members in post. The information that is held centrally indicates that of these, 127 (8 per cent.) were members of ethnic minorities. Visiting committees in Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and boards of visitors and visiting committees in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to increase ethnic minority representation on the board of visitors of Her Majesty's prison, Brixton.

Mr. Mellor: In making appointments to a board of visitors, consideration is given to the abilities of the individual candidate to discharge the duties effectively and the desirability of maintaining, so far as possible, a representative balance on the board in terms, for example, of age, sex and social and ethnic background. No fewer than two members of the board are required to be justices of the peace. The membership of individual boards is reviewed every three years.

The board of visitors for Her Majesty's prison, Brixton, currently has 12 members and one vacancy. Two members of the board are from the ethnic minorities.

Fresh Start

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the fresh start initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Discussions and correspondence with staff associations and other interested groups and individuals have been under way since the beginning of the fresh start initiative. All prison establishments have been working fresh start arrangements since August 1988. The initiative has therefore been completed and operational for some time. The benefits for officers of improved pay and the ending of overtime were felt immediately. Other benefits in terms of more professional management, increased productivity and regime enhancement are being progressively realised. This process will continue through the transitional period of the framework agreement, while the working week of officers is gradually shortened, until by 1 April 1992 all officers will be working a 39-hour week.

Debtors (Imprisonment)

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are imprisoned each year for non-payment of debts in *(a)* England and *(b)* Avon; and what is the average length of the prison sentence.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information from records held centrally is given in the table. Figures for England and Wales are published annually in Prison Statistics England and Wales (table 6.3 of the issue for 1988, Cm. 825); but to compile figures for Avon for several years would involve disproportionate cost.

Persons received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales after committal for non-payment of debts in 1988 from all courts in Avon and England and Wales; by type of non-payment

Type of non-payment	Avon[1]		All courts in England and Wales	
	Number of receptions	Average period imposed (days)	Number of receptions	Average period imposed (days)
Wife maintenance[2]	5	39	3,182	34
Child maintenance			17	38
Arrears under an affiliation order			36	34
Rates	5	43	253	43
Other debts			59	21
All types of non-payment	10	41	747	36

[1] Estimated.
[2] including wife and child maintenance.

Immigration

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the statutory provisions applying to the admission of non-British spouses of British citizens to the United Kingdom after marriage abroad; what ministerial discretion has been involved in such cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The provisions for admission to the United Kingdom as the spouse of a person who is present and settled here are set out in paragraph 50 of the Immigration Rules (HC 388). Ministers consider any representations that are made to them about individual cases but will not normally intervene before the initial decision is taken by the entry clearance officer, or while there is an outstanding appeal against a refusal to the independent appellate authorities. Ministers will also not normally reverse a decision where the appeal process has been exhausted and no new or compelling evidence has become available.

Brixton Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many deaths have occurred in each of the last five years in *(a)* Brixton prison and *(b)* Brixton prison hospital wing.

Mr. Mellor: The table gives the figures for all deaths of Brixton inmates for each year since 1984. It includes deaths which occurred outside the prison, for example following transfer to hospital for medical treatment, as well as those within Brixton itself. Deaths of all kinds are included.

Location	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	[2]1989
Hospital	3	1	—	1	—	—
F Wing[1]	2	—	4	3	2	0
Ordinary location within Brixton	1	2	—	2	2	3
NHS hospital	3	2	3	1	—	1
Police custody	—	—	2	—	—	—
At court	—	—	—	—	—	1
Total	9	5	9	7	4	11

[1] F Wing is adjacent to the hospital and is staffed mainly by hospital prison officers. It holds most of the inmates within the prison who require regular medical observation.
[2] To 19 December.

Germain Alexander

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will establish an independent inquiry into the death of Germain Alexander who died in King's College hospital on Wednesday 6 December;

(2) if he will instruct the governor of Brixton prison and the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis to set up an inquiry to establish how Mr. Germain Alexander incurred serious injuries on 5 and 6 December while in police and prison custody.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. A coroner's inquest is to be held which will inquire into all the circumstances surrounding Mr. Alexander's death. Until the outcome of the inquest is known any further inquiries would be inappropriate.

Morledge Case

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will initiate an immediate inquiry into the conduct of the officers involved in obtaining confessions from Mr. Morledge;

(2) if he will make a statement on the incidents involving Kevin Morledge, Godfrey Hibbert and the Nottinghamshire police force.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Any allegation of malpractice against officers of the Nottinghamshire constabulary is a matter for the chief constable of that force. I understand that the chief constable has arranged for the allegations in this case to be investigated.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers the police have to offer immunity against prosecution; and if he will review these powers in the light of the Morledge case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The police have no such powers.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rules apply to the taking of confessions by police officers; and if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable for Nottinghamshire on the extent to which these were followed in the Morledge case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The code of practice for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers governs the way in which suspects are interviewed. A copy is available in the Library. The way in which the codes are applied in a particular case is a matter for the Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire and the courts.

Police Disciplinary Codes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those sections of police disciplinary codes that relate to the use of racially offensive expressions by police officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 9 of the police discipline code, which is set out at schedule 1 of the Police (Discipline) Regulations 1985, is the only section which specifically relates to the offence of racially discriminatory behaviour.

Such behaviour may, however, fall within other sections of the code, such as abuse of authority (section 8), disobedience to orders (section 3) and discreditable conduct (section 1).

West Indian Communities

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps *(a)* he has taken and *(b)* he will take to improve the relationship between the police and the West Indian community in the inner cities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government will continue to support the police in their efforts to be responsive to the needs and concerns of Afro-Caribbean and other communities within the inner cities and elsewhere. We are encouraging effective consultation by the police with all sections of the public, and in particular with members of the ethnic minority communities. We are emphasising to chief officers and police authorities the priority that we believe should be placed on recruitment and retention of ethnic minority officers and civilians, and the importance of implementing effective equal opportunities policies. We have also recently established a specialist support unit for police community and race relations training to help ensure that a professional approach to community and race relations is integrated into all aspects of police training.

Ambulance Stations

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of the Metropolitan police on releasing the telephone numbers of London ambulance stations to members of the public.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis that he would advise the public to use the existing 999 emergency system.

Chinese Nationals

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the arrangements announced on 16 June, *Official Report*, column *566*, allowing Chinese nationals to remain in the United Kindom for six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has decided that the concession allowing Chinese nationals to remain here on an exceptional basis should be extended for a further period of 12 months.

Race Relations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made towards the reduction of the time taken to deal with applications for section 11 funding; and what is the number of applications presently awaiting resolution.

Mr. John Patten: Over the period July 1988 to September 1989 the backlog of section 11 applications has been reduced from 1,400 posts to some 150.

At present the average time taken to process applications of all sizes has fallen to between three to four months.

Prison Medical Service

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to conduct a review of the operation of the prison medical service.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend has decided to carry out an efficiency scrutiny of the prison medical service with the following terms of reference.

(1) To examine the effectiveness and value for money of the prison service's arrangements for providing medical and dental services for inmates of penal establishments.

(2) To consider in particular, having regard to the Government's response to the July 1986 report on the prison medical service by the House of Commons Social Services Select Committee and taking as given the need to retain a separate medical service, the following aspects of the service:

(a) the policy and practice in management of the prison medical service and in the employment and deployment of both full and part-time medical and other staff, including the use made of locum tenens and visiting NHS specialists and consultants;

(b) the scale of provision of hospital facilities in penal establishments necessary to support the medical service provided;

(c) the policy and practice of purchasing, stockholding and control of pharmaceutical supplies; and

(d) arrangements for training prison medical service personnel, ie doctors, nurses and hospital officers.

(3) Having regard to the arrangements and management practices in comparable organisations, to make recommendations on changes to increase value for money and effectiveness; and on performance indicators to enable the director of prison medical services to monitor efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

The scrutiny will be conducted by a team of officials led by Mr. Robert Wootton. Dr. Pamela Mason of the Department of Health will act as medical assessor. I will exercise ministerial supervision. The scrutiny will begin in early January and I expect to receive the report during May.

The scrutiny team will be consulting widely about the operation of the service and interested parties may wish to

send their observations in writing by 12 February to the prison medical service scrutiny team, room 1106, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's gate, London SW1H 9AT.

Fixed Penalties

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to make any changes to the operation of the extended fixed penalty system.

Mr. Waddington: On 27 June 1989, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Douglas Hurd) announced that we would be consulting representative organisations about fixed penalty levels and other matters connected with the fixed penalty system. I have now considered possible changes in the light of this consultation.

I propose to increase fixed penalty levels to £16 for non-endorsable offences and £32 for endorsable offences, with effect from 1 April 1990. The levels will be reviewed every two years thereafter. I propose to amend the legislation to enable the level of enhancement which occurs when an unpaid penalty is registered as a fine to be varied by order.

As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 14 December, we shall be consulting further about a possible increased fixed penalty in London and on the proposed system of priority routes.

I propose to amend the range of offences covered by the fixed penalty system to include the offences of failing to comply with a red signal at a pelican crossing, failing to accord precedence to pedestrians at a pelican crossing or zebra crossing, and failing to observe a temporary speed restriction; and to exclude offences of overloading by heavy goods vehicles.

I propose to provide for traffic wardens, in addition to police officers, to issue fixed penalty notices for the endorsable offences of parking on pedestrian crossings.

I propose to correct the anomaly whereby owner liability for parking offences applies only if the fixed penalty notice is affixed to the vehicle, and not if it is handed to the driver.

Orders to increase penalty levels and to amend the range of offences will be made in the near future. The other changes will require primary legislation, which will be brought forward when parliamentary time permits.

Immigration

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the outcome of the meetings of TREVI and European Community Immigration Ministers in Paris on 15 December.

Mr. Waddington: The meeting of TREVI Ministers endorsed a number of measures to reinforce co-operation among member states in the fields of law enforcement and security. In particular, we agreed to do more to co-ordinate our efforts to combat drug trafficking and organised crime, and to co-operate in measures to prevent disorder at international football matches. We approved priorities for further work to develop co-operation in general, including the development of a network of liaison officers; speedier sharing of information; joint studies of scientific and technical aspects; and strengthening security at the external borders of the European Community.

The meeting of Ministers concerned with immigration, attended also by a vice-president of the Commission, was the seventh such meeting following the establishment during the United Kingdom presidency in 1986 of the ad hoc working group on immigration.

Ministers had before them a report from senior officials which set out the work undertaken during the French Presidency and which was approved. In particular, we restated our desire for the conclusion of a convention determining which state should be responsible for examining an asylum applications and we welcomed the opening of discussions on a draft convention on the crossing of external borders of the member states of the Community. Building on earlier discussions, the latter provides for controls to be operated to a common standard at member states' external frontiers and for the harmonisation of a visa policies. It also includes proposals for the recognition of visas issued by other member states and in the longer term for a common visa. Although the United Kingdom is not at present in a position to agree to all these proposals, I undertook that we would play a full and active part in discussing them.

I was pleased to make contact with my Community colleagues at these meetings, at which we also agreed upon two public declarations outlining the measures under development respectively in TREVI and in immigration with a view to completion of the single market. I shall be arranging for copies of these declarations to be placed in the Library.

TRANSPORT

Railways

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if any experimentally re-opened lines or stations have subsequently closed.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in separate categories for England, Scotland and Wales the lines and stations now opened or re-opened under the 1981 amendment to the Transport Act as agreed between his Department and British Rail *(a)* sections of line re-opened, *(b)* stations on re-opened lines and *(c)* stations on lines previously open and subsequently experimentally re-opened; and if he will give the total mileage of railway re-opened since 1981 under these provisions.

Mr. Portillo: The following lines have been re-opened by British Rail under the Transport Act 1962 (Amendment) Act 1981:

England
- Penistone to Barnsley
- Kettering to Corby
- Dore Curve (Derbyshire)
- Morecambe to Heysham Harbour
- Oxford to Bicester
- Coventry to Nuneaton
- Lichfield City to Lichfield Trent Valley
- Bishop Auckland to Stanhope
- Walsall to Hednesford
- Altrincham to Stockport

Scotland
- Newbridge Junction to Bathgate
- Coatbridge Central to Motherwell

Thornton West Junction to Thornton South Junction (Fife)

Wales
Cardiff City
Abercynon to Aberdare (approximately 91 miles)

The following stations have been opened or re-opened on these lines:

England
Corby
Heysham Harbour
Bicester Town
Bedworth
Lichfield Trent Valley
Stanhope
Hednesford
Cannock
Landywood
Bloxwich
Broad Lane

Scotland
Uphall
Livingstone North
Bathgate

Wales
Ninian Park
Penrhiwceiber
Mountain Ash
Cwmbach
Fernhill
Aberdare
Waun-gron Park

The decision to re-open a station or line is a matter for the board and does not need ministerial approval.

Train Drivers (Telephones)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in installing telephones in the drivers' cabs of trains on Network South East; and when he expects the programme to be completed.

Mr. Portillo: All driver-only operated rolling stock and all new stock on Network South East has cab radio already. Approximately 1,000 cab radios have been fitted on other trains. In addition, lineside equipment for various lines has either been installed or is on order. The programme is scheduled for completion in 1992.

Light Railway Systems

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to promote rapid light transport railway systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: We accept that light rail or light rapid transit system have a part to play in improving public transport in some urban areas and we are prepared to consider for central Government grant those systems which are expected to bring benefits in terms of reduced road congestion, environmental improvements, and economic development.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss proposals for the electrification of the Edinburgh-Linlithgow-Glasgow line.

Mr. Portillo: No. It would be for the British Railways board to bring forward such proposals. However, I understand that BR proposes to introduce new class 158 express diesel units on this line in 1990. These units will be fully air-conditioned and capable of speeds of up to 90 mph.

London Underground (Escalators)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new escalators have been built on London Underground stations during the last five years; how many new ones are planned and at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: This is an operational matter for London Underground Limited, but I understand that 26 escalators have entered service in the last five years and that a further 11 are currently under construction.

Driving Instructors

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to change the regulations governing the qualifications of those supervising learner drivers.

Mr. Atkins: I share the public concern about the risks involved where learner drivers are under the supervision of other drivers who are themselves very young and only newly qualified.

I have today issued a consultation paper on our proposals to require a minimum age of 21 and at least three years as the holder of a full driving licence for those who accompany learner drivers. A copy of the document has been placed in the Library.

Airport Security

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what warnings have been received about the need for extra security at British airports during the Christmas period; what action has been taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend ensures that the level of security required at British airports is appropriate to the threat to civil aviation. The "Threat Advisory" issued by the US State Department on 15 December did not refer to aviation and neither the US Federal Aviation Administration nor my Department judged that additional security measures were necessary at airports. Nevertheless airports have been reminded that it is important that existing security requirements should be scrupulously observed. We do not publicly discuss threat information, or what action is taken as a result of any information.

Vehicle Emissions

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what regulations exist to prevent the emission of smoke from diesel vehicles in use on the highway; who is responsible for their enforcement; and if he will provide statistics showing the extent of enforcement of these powers;

(2) whether he has any plans to introduce new powers to control the emissions of smoke from heavy diesel vehicles in use on the highway.

Mr. Atkins: Regulation 61 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 prohibits the emission of smoke likely to cause damage to property or injury or danger to persons.

The annual tests for buses and heavy goods vehicles conducted by the Department's vehicle inspectorate include a visual check on smoke density. Over the past two years the inspectorate has increased substantially its programme of roadside checks on the condition of goods vehicles and fleet checks at operators' premises. These include a check on smoke emissions. Vehicles can be banned or owners required to rectify defects within a specified period. The total number of roadside and fleet checks in 1988-89 was almost 155,000.

In addition, the police are responsible for day-to-day enforcement of requirements set by the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations which include controls on vehicle emissions. As well as prosecuting offenders, they can require defects to be rectified within a specified period.

There are no plans to alter these powers.

A12, Lowestoft

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached on a second A12 trunk road crossing of Lake Lothing at Lowestoft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Following a report by consultants commissioned by my Department about options for improving the A12 truck road through Lowestoft, we favour a new mid-harbour crossing in the vicinity of the Co-operative Wholesale Society factory. To the north of the river, the bridge will connect with the northern spine road which is to be built as a joint venture between private developers and Suffolk county council. To the south of the river, it will connect with the proposed South Lowestoft relief road.

We believe that this new north-south road will provide better communications for the town of Lowestoft, relieve congestion in the town centre, and provide opportunities to improve the surrounding environment.

My Department will begin public consultations in the spring of 1990.

LRT (Safety)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is yet in a position to announce safety and quality of service objectives for London Regional Transport.

Mr. Parkinson: I have today written to the chairman of London Regional Transport in the following terms:

"My predecessor wrote to you on your appointment about the challenges facing London Regional Transport. He asked you to prepare a strategy for the coming years, which could be used as a basis for setting formal objectives for you and your board.

Your response takes the form of the 'Chairman's Planning Statement', which you are about to publish. In the light of that statement, I am writing to you about the safety and quality of service objectives I wish you to pursue. Before 1 April 1990 I shall settle with you the financial objectives for LRT covering the next three financial years.

Safety

LRT and its subsidiaries are responsible for the safe operation of the services they provide. The Fennell Report on the Kings Cross fire underlined the need to give the highest priority to safety and to address safety matters explicitly in all LRT's activities. You have undertaken with vigour the task of implementing the Fennell Report's recommendations. You have already fully implemented 73 of the 127 recommendations addressed to LRT or London Underground, and have in hand action on the remaining 54.

You have also now established a clear framework for collecting statistics on safety performance, setting safety objectives and monitoring and auditing safety performance at every level of the organisation. This should ensure the progressive improvement in the safety of all the services you provide or secure. I welcome the steps you have taken. I hereby endorse the safety objectives set out in annex A to this letter.

Quality of service on the Underground

Demand for Underground services has grown by more than 70 per cent. since 1982. This has put the Underground under strain and we are all agreed that the quality of service for passengers is not as good as it should be.

Much of passengers' dissatisfaction stems from overcrowding. The only way to deal adequately with the growth in demand is to invest in increasing the capacity of the system. This is why approval has been given for a massive investment programme, including the £900 million major upgrading programme and the extension of the Jubilee Line to service East London and Docklands. Urgent work is in progress on the options for another major new line to relieve congestion. In the shorter term, we must ensure that the most is made of the existing system. I am therefore setting objectives for improvement in such areas as peak capacity, reliability and the availability of lifts and escalators. I shall look to London Underground to meet these as soon as possible and, in any case, no later than 31 March 1992. These objectives are set out in full at annex B to the letter."

Copies of the annexes to this letter have been placed in the House Libraries.

Smoke Hoods

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation implementing the mandatory use of passenger protection smoke hoods for civil aircraft using airports in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for the regulation of air safety. The authority published a specification for smoke hoods in May 1988. I understand that no smoke hood has yet been shown to meet the specification. The authority has told me that when a suitable hood does exist it will review the arguments for and against the provision of smoke hoods and decide whether a mandatory requirement would be appropriate.

Heathrow Express Rail Link

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Heathrow express rail link in the Upper Waiting Hall, to commence on 12 February 1990.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* We have received an application from my hon. Friend himself and I will write to him.

SCOTLAND

Royal Scottish Academy

10. **Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has received to the announcement that £2·5 million is to be dedicated to the repair of the Royal Scottish Academy building in Edinburgh.

Mr. Lang: Both the chairman and the director of the National Galleries of Scotland have warmly welcomed the announcement that £2·5 million is to be dedicated to the repair of the Royal Scottish Academy building in Edinburgh.

Homelessness

18. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many people in Scotland will be homeless on 25 December.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not possible to estimate from the information available the number of homeless on a single date in the future.

58. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the factors which have contributed to the increase in homelessnes over the last six years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The incidence of homelessness increased in the mid-1980s because of social, economic and demographic factors. Over the last three years, the number of households assessed by local authorities as homeless has remained reasonably stable.

Hospital Waiting Lists

19. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decrease has been achieved in waiting lists in the Scottish Health Service over the last year.

34. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decrease has been achieved in waiting lists in the Scottish Health Service over the last year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the year to 31 March 1989 the in-patient waiting list in Scotland fell by 9·2 per cent.

University Students

20. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase the numbers of students from manual working class backgrounds gaining access to university education.

Mr. Lang: We have taken steps to improve participation in higher education among all groups. Recent changes in secondary education will increase the numbers of those staying on at school and our Scottish wider access programme will benefit those without standard entry qualifications.

Health Service Expenditure

21. **Sir Nicholas Fairbairn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the expenditure per capita in the National Health Service in Scotland; what was the total expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland in 1979; and what will be the total expenditure in 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Spending per head in the Health Service in Scotland this year was £550, an increase of 33·5 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the amount of money spent on press and publicity in each of the past three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

67. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health boards are currently placing unplanned restrictions on expenditure in order to reduce or eliminate any likely deficit at the end of this financial year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I know of no health boards which are placing unplanned restrictions on expenditure to reduce or eliminate deficits.

Student Loans

22. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what calculations he has made about the numbers applying to enter central institutions in Scotland after the introduction of a student loans scheme.

Mr. Lang: My Department does not try to estimate applications for places at central institutions, but I have no reason to believe that the introduction of the top-up loans scheme will discourage entry into higher education.

78. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the Government's plans to introduce top-up loans in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received around 250 such representations covering a range of issues relating to the introduction of top-up student loans.

55. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the impact of student loans upon Scottish education.

Mr. Lang: Approximately one third of the representations on top-up loans received by my right hon. and learned Friend since the publication of the White Paper "Top-Up Loans for Students" (Cm. 520), referred specifically to the potential impact of the proposals on the Scottish education system.

Football Grounds

23. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is taking to improve public safety at football grounds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have asked the football authorities, the police and other emergency services, as well as local authorities to implement the recommendations in Lord Justice Taylor's interim report in order to improve public safety at football grounds.

Health Service (Patients)

24. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were treated in the Scottish Health Service in 1978-79; and how many were treated in 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1978-79 6,024,165 patients were treated and in 1988-89 6,873,112—an increase of 848,947.

Legal Profession

25. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received about the proposals for the reform of the legal profession in Scotland since the publication of the White Paper.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Four.

Police Morale

26. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about morale in the police force in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received some representations about the effect on police morale of the removal of the rates element of rent allowance. He has taken these representations into account in bringing forward regulations which will restore to officers whose circumstances have not changed the level of rent allowance, including the rates element, which they were receiving on 31 March. The regulations will come into effect on 22 December. I hope that police authorities will be able to make payments backdated to 1 April as soon as possible.

Agricultural Education

27. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Williams report on the future of agricultural education in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland on 15 December 1989.

Self-employment

28. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of self-employment in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that there were 224,000 self-employed in Scotland in June 1989, the latest date for which a figure is available.

Housing Policy

29. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake a review of housing policy priorities with special reference to meeting the needs of the homeless and those in damp housing.

38. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake a review of housing policy priorities with specific reference to meeting the needs of the homeless and those in damp housing.

44. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake a review of housing policy priorities with specific reference to meeting the needs of the homeless and those in damp housing.

47. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake a review of housing policy priorities with specific reference to meeting the needs of the homeless and those in damp housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government policy priorities for housing in Scotland already take full account of the needs of the homeless and of those in damp housing.

British Steel

30. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what is the latest communication he has had from the chairman of British Steel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend received a private letter from Sir Robert Scholey on 11 December. The letter, inter alia, confirmed that the statement which Sir Robert made on 3 December 1987 concerning the Scottish steel plants still stands.

Whisky Industry

31. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the current state of the Scotch whisky industry.

Mr. Lang: The industry is enjoying a period of growth in both volume and value terms, and looks set for further growth.

56. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the numbers employed and the export performance of the Scottish whisky industry.

Mr. Lang: The total number of employees engaged in spirit distilling and compounding in Scotland in 1987 was 15,300, according to the census of employment conducted in September that year.

The table gives an indication of the industry's recent export performance.

Exports of Scotch Whisky

	1987	*1988*	*Percentage change 1987-88*
Volume (mlpa)	240,174	245,973	+2·4
Value (£ million)	1,135,514	1,288,771	+13·5

Note: mlpa = million litres of pure alcohol.
Source: Scotch Whisky Association.

In the year to September 1989 it is estimated that the value of whisky exports was 15 per cent. higher than in the year to September 1988.

Export prospects should be further improved by the tax reforms, presently under way in Japan and North Korea, which will ease the discrimination against Scotch whisky.

43. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are estimated to be working in the whisky trade in Scotland; what was the comparable figure 10 years ago; what are the capacities in which they are employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The latest available information on employment in the industry in Scotland comes from the

1987 census of employment. The table shows the total number of employees in employment in the industry in September 1987 and September 1981, the nearest year to 1979 for which comparable estimates exist.

Spirit distilling and compounding—Employees in employment

September	
1981	21,300
1987	15,300

Source: 1981 Census of Employment.
1987 Census of Employment.

Although no official statistics exist, a recent survey undertaken by the Scotch Whisky Association found that in September 1988 around one quarter of the total work force was engaged in the primary production of Scotch whisky, a further 40 per cent. worked directly in the blending and bottling plants, and the remaining third in administration and other support work.

Local Government Finance

32. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of those liable to pay domestic rates had not paid their rates by December 1988; and what percentage of those eligible to pay the community charge have not now done so.

52. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of those liable to pay domestic rates had not paid their rates by December 1988; and what percentage of those eligible to pay the community charge have not now done so.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Comparison between the collection of the community charge and domestic rates cannot be precise because of significant differences in the administration of the two systems. The general flow of income from community charges does not appear very different from the flow from domestic rates, when allowance is made for these differences, including the much larger number of people liable for the community charge.

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the cost to local authorities and central Government of the collection of *(a)* domestic rates and *(b)* the poll tax for 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The costs to local authorities of the collection of rates in 1987-88 was £12·1 million and in 1988-89, £17·3 million. No separate figures are held centrally on the collection costs for domestic rates only. The cost to local authorities of collecting the community charge in 1989-90 is estimated by authorities at £31·8 million. This figure includes the cost of registration work, but excludes the costs of operating the rebate scheme. For 1987-88 and 1988-89 no separately identified figures are available for any preparatory costs authorities may have incurred in respect of the collection of the community charge.

There are no direct costs falling on central Government for the collection of either domestic rates or the community charge, although provision was made for such costs falling on authorities in the RSG settlements for the years concerned.

74. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance has been issued on the collection of the community charge debts through arrestment orders.

Mr. Rifkind: None. It is for local authorities to decide the most effective means of collecting arrears. Authorities will be familiar with the debt collection procedures available to them since they are broadly the same as were available under domestic rates.

59. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place a copy of the speech on the poll tax which he made in Glasgow on 4 December in the Library.

Mr. Rifkind: I made no speech in Glasgow on 4 December. In my speech to the Edinburgh city business club on 4 December I referred to a number of aspects of the community charge as well as to a number of other matters. There is no copy of that speech. I will, however, send the hon. Member a copy of the press release which reported my main comments on the community charge.

57. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hon. Members have made representations to him regarding non-payment of the community charge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of such representations.

54. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the number of people who are in arrears with their poll tax payments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information about the number of people in arrears is not available for Scotland as a whole. Figures for the number of people who have made some community charge payments vary from region to region but are typically in the range of 85 per cent. to 95 per cent. of chargepayers, with a figure of 98 per cent. in one area.

39. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many summary warrants were granted in respect of rate arrears for the financial year 1988-89; and how may summary warrants have been granted in respect of community charge arrears.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of summary warrants granted for rate arrears in calendar year 1988 was 468. A warrant may apply to a number of debtors. The figures for calendar year 1989 for rates and community charge arrears will be available in 1990.

35. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what effect non-payment of the community charge will have on the level of the community charge for the next financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities made allowances, in setting their community charges for 1989-90, for non-payment by a small percentage of persons liable to the charge. I do not have any reason to suppose that these allowances will be exceeded and, therefore, no reason to suppose that there will be any effect on community charges for 1990-91.

General Practitioners

33. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from general practitioners in Tayside about general practitioner budgets and from hospitals about self-governing status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Three GP practices in Tayside are interested in becoming budget holders and establishing a self-governing hospital.

36. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to the doctors and dentists review body with regard to the remuneration of general practitioners in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The DDRB has been told that a special fund will protect the income of rural GPs who fulfil all their obligations under the new contract.

Nuclear Power

37. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what reports he has received on the economic and environmental benefits to Scotland of nuclear power.

Mr. Lang: None.

Violence

41. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the numbers of convictions recorded last year for violent crime in Scotland where alcohol was directly or indirectly involved; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available in that form, but alcohol has been generally known to be a factor in many cases involving crimes of violence.

Housing Stock (Sales)

42. **Mr. Dover:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scottish Homes stock has been sold; and what proportion of local authority housing stock has been sold.

73. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scottish Homes stock has been sold; and what proportion of local authority housing stock has been sold.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the period 1 April 1979 to 30 September 1989, the proportion of houses sold by Scottish Homes and its predecessor the Scottish Special Housing Association was 32·6 per cent. the comparable figure for Scottish local authorities was 14·7 per cent.

Scottish Homes alone has sold 6·7 per cent. of the stock it inherited from the SSHA on 1 April 1989.

69. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses and flats owned previously by local authorities in Scotland have been sold to their former tenants; and what further proposals he has to encourage the spread of home ownership in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since April 1979, over 124,000 houses and flats have been sold by Scottish local authorities to sitting tenants.

The position on home ownership is reviewed constantly. A number of detailed changes to the right-to-buy legislation will be brought into force by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Roads

45. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of new motorway, dual-carriageway and other trunk roads have been completed in Scotland since 1979; at what cost; and if he will give details of other road projects in the pipeline.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One hundred and two schemes, each costing over £1 million, have been completed since May 1979. These have provided 282 miles of new trunk road, comprising 24 miles of new motorway, 108 miles of dual carriageway and 150 miles of single carriageway. So far as details of future road projects are concerned I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 15 May 1989, c. *31-37.*

75. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further expenditure is planned on primary roads in south east Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Future spending on trunk primary roads in south-east scotland will depend on the decisions to be taken following the recent consultation on the routes south of Edinburgh study. The position within the trunk road programme of any scheme proposals that result from these decisions will then have to be considered in the light of the resources likely to be available and the competing priorities of projects already in the programme.

Priorities for expenditure on non-trunk primary roads are a matter for the relevant local roads authorities in the context of their tansport policies and programmes and available capital allocations.

Job Announcements

46. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many major job announcements have been made in the past 12 months.

Mr. Lang: Through my Department's monitoring of press reports, I am aware of some 33 announcements, involving over 10,500 jobs to be created or relocated in Scotland.

65. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many major job announcements have been made in the past three months.

Mr. Lang: Through my Department's monitoring of press reports, I am aware of some four announcements, involving nearly 1,200 jobs to be created or relocated in Scotland.

Health Service (Tendering)

48. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made within the Scottish Health Service in respect of putting contracts out to competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards continue to make significant progress. By the end of November, 155 contracts had been awarded and these are expected to release savings of more than £60 million over the periods of the contracts. These savings are available to boards for

reinvestment in direct patient care. Of the 155 contracts awarded, 119 (over 75 per cent.) have been won by in-house teams. The total savings released could buy over 5,500 renal dialysis machines or pay for over 20,000 hip replacement operations or around 9,500 heart bypass operations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has on the effect on the standards of cleaning and catering in hospitals in Scotland of competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An independent company has recently carried out a snapshot survey of cleaning and catering contracts both in-house and private in Scotland. The report of the survey indicates that with respect to domestic services, cleaning standards overall were good. In 14 out of 24 hospitals visited, the standard of cleanliness was rated as very good, nine hospitals were rated as adequate, and only one (a geriatric hospital with problems related to incontinence) was rated poor/not clean. With regard to catering, 29 hospital contracts were assessed, of which 25 were reported as producing food which was good or very good and served at an acceptable temperature. Four were rated either as adequate or poor, with in four cases less than acceptable temperature (not hot) being the main complaint. Where shortcomings have been found, these are being drawn to the attention of the board general manager. In light of this survey I am satisfied that standards are at the very least being maintained and that steps will be taken to put right such shortcomings as were found.

60. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct health boards to make public the details of all contracts with private companies for the provision of services to health board patients.

Mr. Forsyth No such instruction is required: health boards normally issue news releases giving information on important contracts awarded. Additionally, boards have in the past given detailed information in response to requests from hon. Members.

CBI Scotland

49. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Confederation of British Industry, Scotland, and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman and director-designate of the Confederation of British Industry, Scotland informally on 24 November. Matters of mutual interest were discussed.

STUC

50. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish Trade Union Congress; what was was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the general council of the Scottish Trade Union Congress on 10 November to discuss a range of matters affecting the Scottish economy and industry. He drew attention to the sustained improvement in the Scottish economy over the past year as reflected in falling unemployment; record levels of employment and output; and continuing strong performance in manufacturing productivity and exports.

Fishing Industry

51. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received on the Scottish fishing industry.

Mr. Lang: A number of representations have been received. My noble Friend the Minister of State has had several meetings with the industry recently to discuss the approach to be taken in negotiations on EC fisheries arrangements with third countries, and the level of total allowable catches and quotas for 1990. He also met the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), along with industry representatives, on 14 December. In addition, fisheries departments are in regular contact with the industry.

Federal Express

53. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the chairman of Federal Express about consideration of Prestwick as a base for their European operations.

Mr. Lang: The Secretary of State has had a number of discussions with representatives of Federal Express, the details of which cannot be disclosed as such discussions are held on a commercial in confidence basis.

Scottish National Farmers Union

61. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish National Farmers Union; and what was discussed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and my noble Friend the Minister of State have regular meetings with the union. My noble Friend last met representatives on 25 October when issues concerning farming in the hills and uplands were discussed.

Law Centres

62. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to establish more law centres in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Universities

63. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the principals of Scottish universities; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the principals in May 1989 to discuss various matters of mutual interest privately.

British Rail

64. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend discussed various topics relating to rail transport when he met the chairman of British Rail, Sir Robert Reid, on 31 October 1989.

Self-governing Hospitals

66. **Dr. Hampson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations from the British Medical Association on the evaluation of self-governing hospitals.

77. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations from the British Medical Association on the evaluation of self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

Warrant Sales

68. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to bring forward legislation to abolish warrant sales in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) today.

Water Industry

70. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in favour of the privatisation of the water industry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Bed and Breakfast

71. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the number of people who live in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six months per year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available on the numbers of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 does not enable estimates to be made in the form requested.

The code of guidance issued to local authorities on the exercise of their homelessness functions makes it clear that bed and breakfast accommodation should be used only as a last resort and then only for as short a period as possible.

Electricity Industry

72. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next proposes to meet the heads of the electricity supply industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No such meeting is planned for the immediate future, but my right hon. and learned Friend does meet the chairmen of the Scottish electricity boards from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues affecting the industry.

Natural Heritage

76. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest progress towards the establishment in Scotland of a unified and autonomous natural heritage agency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend, announced on 28 November *(Official Report,* vol. 162, cols *188-89)* that he will consult early next year on the detailed aspects of his proposals to create a natural heritage agency. Its establishment will follow the creation of a Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland provided for in the Environmental Protection Bill which will shortly come before Parliament.

Electricity Board Reports

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list (i) the statutory requirements governing the publication of reports of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board, (ii) the dates on which such reports have been published in each year since nationalisation, either for existing or predecessor corporation, and (iii) indicate when the reports for 1988-89 will be published.

Mr. Rifkind: The statutory provision for the making of annual reports to the Secretary of State by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board is contained in section 42(1) of the Electricity (Scotland) Act 1979. The annual report requirements applying to each board have effect as though made under that section of the Act. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 17 October at column *75.*

Annual reports published by the boards in previous years are available in the Library of the House.

I am expecting the boards to make their reports for 1988-89 to me by the end of the year.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make additional funds available to Greater Glasgow health board for paediatric cardiac surgery.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This year, Greater Glasgow health board was allocated £8·764 million for cardiac surgery as a whole. The actual amount given to each unit in Glasgow, including the paediatric unit, is for the board to decide.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current number of unfilled medical posts in the family planning service for Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand from the board that there are no unfilled posts.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of requests for medical locum posts in the family planning service which have been refused in the past three months for Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand from the board that no requests have been refused.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many travel-to-work areas in Scotland had an unemployment rate *(a)* over 10 per cent., *(b)* between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. and *(c)* below 5 per cent. in October 1989.

Mr. Lang: In October 1989, 13 Scottish travel-to-work areas had a work force unemployment rate of more than 10 per cent., 36 had a rate of between 5 and 10 per cent., and 11 had work force rates of below 5 per cent.

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the amount of central funding allocated to Greater Glasgow health board for cardiac surgery for the past three years; and how much was spent in *(a)* the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow, *(b)* Glasgow Royal Infirmary and *(c)* Glasgow Western Infirmary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The funding allocation to Greater Glasgow health board for the provision of cardiac surgery for each of the three years, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90, was £7·556 million, £7·896 million and £8·764 million respectively.

It is for Greater Glasgow health board to decide the distribution of funds among individual cardiac units.

Nature Conservancy

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), of 28 November, *Official Report*, columns *188-89*, if he will list the 98 respondents which are in favour of the merger between the proposed Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the existing Countryside Commission for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Of the 159 respondents to the consultation paper "Scotland's Natural Heritage" expressing an opinion, 98 supported in principle the Government's proposal to bring forward legislation to merge the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the proposed Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland. They are listed in the table except for those who submitted comments in confidence.

Almost all respondents commented on a range of issues or sought assurances that the Government would address particular issues before finalising their proposals. These views will be taken into account and further consultation will be undertaken early next year.

Allcock, Ian
Angus District Council
Annandale and Eskdale District Council
Argyll and Bute District Council
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
Badenoch and Strathspey District Council
Berry, John
Black, George
Borders Regional Council
British Ecological Society
British Field Sports Society
British Rail Property Board
Bryden, John
Central Regional Council
Central Scotland Countryside Trust
Clegg and Company
Clydesdale District Council, Director of Recreation
Coppock, Professor J. T.
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Countryside Commission for Scotland
Countryside Commission for Scotland—staff side
Crofters Commission
Cumnock and Doon Valley District Council
Currie, Robin
Dumfries and Galloway District Council
East Lothian District Council
Ettrick and Lauderdale District Council
Falkirk District Council
Farming and Wildlife Trust
Fife Regional Council
Foxley, Michael
Geological Society, The
Habitat Scotland
Highland Regional Council
Highlands and Islands Development Board
Holliday, Professor F.
Huxley, Thomas
Inverclyde District Council
Jamieson, A. D.
Kyle and Carrick District Council
Lindsay, Alexander
Livingston Development Corporation
Lothian Regional Council
Miller, Professor H.
Motherwell District Council
John Muir Trust
National Farmers Union for Scotland
National Trust for Scotland
Nature Conservancy Council (Great Britain Council)
Nature Conservancy Council Scottish Advisory Committee
North East Fife District Council, Recreation Committee
North of Scotland Agricultural College
Ormand, Donald
Perth and Kinross District Council
Perth Partnership
Proudfoot, Edwina
Provan, Ian
Red Deer Commission
Ross, Duncan
Ross and Cromarty District Council
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Scottish Geographical Society, The
Royal Society of Edinburgh, The
Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland, The
Rural Forum Scotland
Saltire Society
Scott, John
Scott, Peter
Scottish Conservation Projects
Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association, Rural Affairs Committee
Scottish Council (Development and Industry)
Scottish Countryside Activities Council
Scottish Countryside Rangers Association
Scottish Crofters Union
Scottish Environmental Education Council
Scottish Field Studies Association
Scottish Green Party
Scottish Land Owners Federation
Scottish Peat and Land Development Association
Scottish Sports Association
Scottish Sports Council
Scottish Tourist Board
Scottish Youth Hostels Association
South of Scotland Electricity Board
Stirling University Environmental Conservation and Development Unit
Sutherland District Council
Tayside Regional Council
Timber Growers UK
Timber Growers UK South East Region
Weir, The Honourable Douglas
West Lothian District Council
Western Isles Island Council
Wheater, R. S.
Wigtown District Council

Nurses

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1959 the number of nurses employed by the National Health Service, with each year also expressed as a percentage change on the previous year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is contained in successive volumes of Scottish health statistics published annually by the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency, copies of which are in the Library. The latest volume published on 20 December 1989 contains information as at 31 March 1989. The provisional figure for 30 September 1989, not yet published, is 42,350.

Nursery Classes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the proportion of under five-year-olds in Scotland who currently attend nursery classes provided by local education authorities in each island and local authority region; and what the figure was in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: The figures for nursery schools and departments at each September for the last five years for which information is available is set out in the table.

Percentage of 3 and 4 year olds in education authority nursery schools

	1983	*1984*	*1987*	*1988*	[1]*1989*
Borders	16·6	15·2	16·6	18·7	19·1
Central	31·2	31·2	37·8	39·2	41·3
Dumfries and Galloway	7·9	8·7	12·7	15·8	17·9
Fife	42·2	42·8	48·5	50·4	49·6
Grampian	18·6	18·6	21·2	24·0	30·5
Highland	10·3	10·5	11·6	12·3	12·2
Lothian	43·8	45·3	47·8	47·9	47·3
Strathclyde	27·7	27·6	29·6	30·1	31·3
Tayside	23·0	22·6	25·1	26·5	31·3
Orkney	17·9	18·3	18·3	20·7	21·5
Shetland	11·1	13·6	17·7	18·1	19·4
Western Isles	16·2	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Scotland Total	28·0	28·2	30·8	31·9	33·5

[1] Provisional

Tourism

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he now proposes to take to promote increased tourism from countries in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The British Tourist Authority and the Scottish Tourist Board, as the statutory bodies with responsibility for attracting overseas visitors to Scotland, are fully aware of the potential of the eastern European market. Both bodies will take account of recent developments in considering their future marketing plans.

House Building

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of houses completed, by tenure, in each district council and islands council for each year from 1979 to 1989 or to the latest available date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tables giving the details requested on house completions from 1979 to 1988 have been placed in the House Library.

Speech-impaired Children

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many speech therapists are employed in each region and islands area to provide for the needs of speech-impaired children.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Speech therapy services are provided almost exclusively by health boards and it is unusual for staff to be employed specifically for work with children. The table shows the whole-time equivalent numbers of speech therapists (provisional figures) employed by health boards at 30 September 1989.

	Numbers
Scotland	377·6
Argyll and Clyde	33·0
Ayrshire and Arran	21·5
Borders	11·7
Dumfries and Galloway	16·1
Fige	28·1
Forth Valley	18·2
Grampian	45·5
Greater Glasgow	63·7
Highland	15·5
Lanarkshire	31·8
Lothian	56·4
Orkney	1·0
Shetland	0·7
Tayside	31·3
Western Isles	3·1

Rural Practices (New Technology)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional funds he is making available to health boards to enable the structural changes to small practice surgeries in rural areas to accommodate new technology required under the new contract.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The White paper "Promoting Better Health" announced that, in furtherance of our policy of improving practice premises, we shall be increasing the assistance to doctors available through health boards in improvement grants and under the cost rent scheme. Detailed expenditure plans within the totals announced by my right hon. and learned Friend on 6 December have still to be determined and health boards will be informed of their individual allocations by early March 1990.

Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock

Mr. Lambie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if settlement has been made of the contractual disputes arising from the construction of Crosshouse hospital, Kilmarnock.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following negotiations between representatives of Ayrshire and Arran health board and the main contractors, the architects and the consulting mechanical and electrical engineers, relating to claims arising from delays in the completion of Crosshouse hospital, the following settlements have been agreed:—

The health board has accepted an offer of payment by Boissevain and Osmond, architects, of £470,000 together with the abandonment of the architects' claim for outstanding professional fees;

The heald board has accepted an offer of payment by Ruck, Willcox & Partners, consulting mechanical and engineers, of £250,000.

Melville, Dundas & Whitson, the main contractors, have accepted an offer of payment by the health board of £1·25 million.

In each case, the settlement of the claim is on the basis that each side should meet its own costs.

I am satisfied that this settlement represents a reasonable and acceptable conclusion to this dispute, taking into account the substantial costs that would have been required to pursue these actions to a conclusion.

Child Abuse

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he intends to promote greater collaboration among agencies in Scotland which are concerned with protecting children from abuse.

Mr. Lang: Protecting children from abuse calls for concerted efforts from a wide range of services and professions. We have today issued Scottish Office guidance aimed at boosting efforts to work together, in the best interests of children. The guidance is part of an integrated approach by the Scottish Office to dealing with child abuse. Copies of the guidance document have been placed in the Library.

Training Schemes

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what action the Training Agency takes to prevent job substitution on employment training schemes;

(2) what safeguards there are against employment training schemes taking on trainees in firms which would otherwise have recruited a worker in the normal way;

(3) what action he intends to take to ensure that there is no unfair competition between firms using Government-funded employment trainees and schemes.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December]:* The employment training programme imposes a substantial training requirement upon placement providers. This makes it financially unattractive to use trainees as substitutes for qualified workers and the use of trainees should not convey competitive advantages. However, where an abuse is attempted normal monitoring procedures should detect it. Furthermore, anyone uncovering evidence of abuse should report his or her suspicions to the Training Agency. All complaints will be investigated fully.

GPs' Contracts

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sum he is giving to compensate rural general practitioners for losses incurred by the implementation of the general practitioner contract, expressed as a percentage of the current Scottish rural practice fund.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The recommendations of the doctors and dentists review body on the pricing of the new GP contract will be considered when its report is received.

ERDF Aid, Strathclyde

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his best estimate of the total level of European regional development fund aid commitments to all eligible public bodies in Strathclyde in each of the years 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The total level of regional fund commitment is estimated as follows:

	£ million
1984	58·6
1985	37·2
1986	48·6
1987	50·5
[1]1988	45·4

[1] Figures exclude some commitment in those parts of Strathclyde within the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his most up-to-date estimate of the total of European regional development fund aid commitments to all eligible public bodies in Strathclyde in 1989 and in 1990.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The total level of regional fund commitment[1] in 1989 is estimated at £46·4 million and in 1990 is estimated at £49 million.

[1] Figures exclude commitment in those parts of Strathclyde within the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

NHS Reform

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the proposed level of expenditure allocated to matters concerned with the implementation of the National Health Service reforms articulated in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill in 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 6 December that the provision for spending on health in Scotland in 1990-91 is planned to increase by £220 million compared with the current year. This will bring the provision to over £3 billion (£3,041 million) for the first time. In accordance with normal practice, allocations to health boards—including recognition of White Paper initiatives—will be determined and notified to boards in the early part of the next year. It will be for boards to decide, in the light of local circumstances, the spending that will be needed to implement the NHS reforms contained in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. We fully expect that the initial costs will be outweighed in the longer term by improvements in the operation of services and the better management of resources.

Health Service (Doctors)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1959 the number of doctors employed by the National Health Service, with each year also expressed as a percentage change on the previous year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of doctors employed by the NHS in the years 1975 to 1988 inclusive

are shown in the table together with the percentage change from year to year. The construction of an equivalent time series of 1959 to 1974 would incur disproportionate expenditure and lack consistency because of changes in recording practice.

Year	Number	Percentage change on previous year
1975	9,075	
1976	9,267	2·1
1977	9,512	2·6
1978	9,641	1·4
1979	9,839	2·1
1980	9,923	0·9
1981	10,167	2·5
1982	10,229	0·6
1983	10,410	1·8
1984	10,499	0·9
1985	10,509	0·1
1986	10,480	−0·3
1987	10,476	0·0
1988	10,833	3·4

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many local offices are now operating a different policy with regard to applications for grants from the social fund than the one operating at the start of the financial year.

Mr. Scott: Applications for awards from the social fund are decided locally by independent social fund officers. In making decisions, social fund officers are required to follow the law and the Secretary of State's directions and take into account guidance contained in the social fund manual. A copy of the social fund manual is available in the Library.

Guidance as to the general level of priority that may be met is given by the area social fund officer (normally the local office manager). This ensures that, as far as possible, applications of similar priority receive similar consideration throughout the year. Nevertheless, each application is considered on its individual circumstances. Levels of applications will vary during the year and thus the levels of priority being met in each local office will be adjusted from time to time.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the value in real terms and in relation to average male earnings of *(a)* retirement pensions, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* sickness benefit, *(d)* industrial disablement benefit, *(e)* industrial death benefit, *(f)* maternity allowance, *(g)* non-contributory retirement pension, *(h)* war disablement pension, *(i)* war widows' pension, *(j)* attendance allowance, *(k)* invalid care allowance, *(l)* severe disablement allowance, *(m)* mobility allowance, *(n)* child benefit and *(o)* one-parent benefit, giving in each case the single and couple rate where applicable and the higher and lower rate in the case of attendance allowance, paid in November 1979 and April 1989; and if he will give the cash figure for each benefit in each year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Comparisons over the period in question are complicated by the change in 1983 from uprating partly based on forecasts of future inflation to upratings based on known movements in the retail prices index to the latest available date. Moreover, in November 1979 long-term benefit rates were increased by 2 per cent. more than forecast inflation to make up for the fact that the forecast underlying the 1978 uprating had proved 2 per cent. lower than the actual growth in earnings of 13·3 per cent. between November 1977 and November 1978. The table gives the figures requested in relation both to November 1978 and November 1979. It also shows the change in the average real value of benefit in the uprating years November 1978 to November 1979, and between April 1988 and April 1989.

Table 1: Comparison of benefit rates

	Nov. 1978 rates in cash	Nov. 1979 rates in cash	Nov. 1978 rates in April 1989 prices	Nov. 1979 rates in April 1989 prices	April 1989 rates in cash	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings Nov. 1978	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings Nov. 1979	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings April 1989	Nov. 1978 to April 1989 per cent. change	Nov. 1979 to April 1989 per cent. change	Per cent. change[3] between uprating periods Nov. 1978-79 to April 1988-89
	£	£	£	£	£	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.			
Retirement Pension											
Single person	19·50	23·30	43·42	44·20	43·60	26·9	27·0	20·5	0·4	−1·4	7·06
Married couple	31·20	37·30	69·47	70·76	69·80	43·1	43·3	32·7	0·5	−1·4	7·16
Unemployment Benefit											
Single person	15·75	18·50	35·07	35·09	34·70	21·8	21·5	16·3	−1·1	−1·1	5·50
Married couple	25·50	29·95	56·78	56·81	56·10	35·2	34·7	26·3	−1·2	−1·3	5·35
Sickness Benefit											
Single person	15·75	18·50	35·07	35·09	33·20	21·8	21·5	15·6	−5·3	−5·4	0·83
Married couple	25·50	29·95	56·78	56·81	53·75	35·2	34·7	25·2	−5·3	−5·4	0·87
Industrial Disablement Benefit	31·90	38·00	71·03	72·09	71·20	44·1	44·1	33·4	0·2	−1·2	6·88
Industrial Death Benefit	20·05	23·85	44·65	45·24	43·60	27·7	27·7	20·5	−2·4	−3·6	4·13
Maternity Allowance											
Single person	15·75	16·50	35·07	35·09	33·20	21·8	21·5	15·6	−5·3	−5·4	0·83
Married couple	25·50	29·95	56·78	56·81	53·75	35·2	34·7	25·2	−5·3	−5·4	0·87
Non-contributory Retirement Pension											
Single person	11·70	14·00	26·05	26·56	26·20	16·2	16·2	12·3	0·6	−1·3	7·32
Married couple	18·75	22·40	41·75	42·49	41·85	25·9	26·0	19·6	0·2	−1·5	7·02
War Disablement Pension	31·90	38·00	71·03	72·09	71·20	44·1	44·1	33·4	0·2	−1·2	6·88
War Widows' Pension	25·55	30·45	56·89	57·76	56·90	35·3	35·3	26·7	0·0	−1·5	6·73
Attendance Allowance											
Higher rate	15·60	18·60	34·74	35·28	34·90	21·5	21·6	16·4	0·5	−1·1	7·16
Lower rate	10·40	12·40	23·16	23·52	23·30	14·4	14·4	10·9	0·6	−0·9	7·32
Invalid Care Allowance											
Single person	11·70	14·00	26·05	26·56	26·20	16·2	16·2	12·3	0·6	−1·3	7·32
Married couple	18·75	22·40	41·75	42·49	41·85	25·9	26·0	19·6	0·2	−1·5	7·02
Severe Disablement Allowance											

	Nov. 1978 rates in cash	Nov. 1979 rates in cash	Nov. 1978 rates in April 1989 prices	Nov. 1979 rates in April 1989 prices	April 1989 rates in cash	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings Nov. 1978	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings Nov. 1979	Ratio of benefit to gross earnings April 1989	Nov. 1978 to April 1989 per cent. change	Nov. 1979 to April 1989 per cent. change	Per cent. change[3] between uprating periods Nov. 1978-79 to April 1988-89
	£	£	£	£	£	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.			
Single person	11·70	14·00	26·05	26·56	26·20	16·2	16·2	12·3	0·6	−1·3	7·32
Married couple	18·75	22·40	41·75	42·49	41·85	25·9	26·0	19·6	0·2	−1·5	7·02
Mobility Allowance[1]	10·00	12·00	22·75	22·76	24·40	13·8	13·9	11·4	7·3	7·2	13·46
Child Benefit[2]	3·00	4·00	6·68	7·59	7·25	4·1	4·6	3·4	8·5	−4·5	3·41
One Parent Benefit	2·00	2·50	4·45	4·74	5·20	2·8	2·9	2·4	16·9	9·6	24·30

[1]For Mobility Allowance, the initial uprating period is July 1978 to November 1979.
[2]For Child Benefit, the initial uprating period runs from April 1979 to November 1980.
[3]The percentage change between uprating periods is calculated as the percentage change in the average real value of benefit during the uprating period April 1988 to April 1989, as compared to the period November 1978 to November 1979.
Note: Average gross weekly earnings, all full-time workers on adult rates (Source: New Earnings Survey). Interpolated by the seasonally adjusted monthly index of average earnings, all employees in industries and services (published by DE).

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to make a statement on the future of the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: As explained in the White Paper "Caring for People" (Cm. 849), there will clearly be an overlap between the Independent Living Fund and the intended responsibilities of local authorities which will need to be reviewed. Announcements will be made as appropriate in due course.

Students (Invalidity Benefit)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to ensure that students on invalidity benefit do not have their housing benefit reduced by the student grant notional element for accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To avoid double provision by the taxpayer, the majority of full time students are expected to meet their rent to the level intended for accommodation costs within the student maintenance grant before they have recourse to housing benefit. However this rule does not apply to students on invalidity benefit whose income would fall below income support levels if the reduction was made. These students are able to claim housing benefit for the whole of their eligible rent.

Foster Parents

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether short-term foster parents are exempt from the *(a)* availability for work and *(b)* actively seeking work requirements for income support and unemployment benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: For income support purposes, foster parents and natural parents are treated similarly. To receive income support, single parents fostering children do not have to be either available for, or actively seeking, work. Where there are two parents, one of them has to be both available for and actively seeking work, unless exempted from the requirements for some other reason. To receive unemployment benefit, all claimants normally have to be both available for, and actively seeking, work.

Helios Programme

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the participation of the United Kingdom in the Helios programme.

Mr. Scott: The Government are committed to ensuring that the United Kingdom plays a full and active role in the European Community's second action programme in favour of disabled people, called HELIOS. The main purpose of the programme is to promote good practice through links between local projects in the field of disability services, covering vocational training and rehabilitation, and economic, social and educational integration. We encourage United Kingdom projects to meet regularly with each other and with their counterparts in other member states. The programme also includes the development of a project to link national data bases on disability, initially for equipment only. We have designated the Disabled Living Foundation as the first United Kingdom centre to participate in the system, called HANDYAIDS, which is ecpected to come into operation in the course of next year. We are also cooperating with the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation in the organisation of a conference early next year to disseminate information about the programme to a wide range of interested parties.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list any changes to regulations since the invalid care allowance was introduced in 1976 which may affect the entitlement to benefit of someone who has ceased to receive the allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: There have been no changes in regulations specifically directed at former invalid care allowance recipients. If the right hon. Member has a particular problem in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what benefits a person of working age may be entitled after ceasing to be in receipt of invalid care allowance, assuming that he or she satisfies the first contribution condition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: On ceasing to receive ICA, a person may be entitled to any benefit depending on his or her circumstances at the time of the claim. Prior receipt of ICA

does not confer automatic title to any benefit, however, credits awarded during periods of ICA do count towards the satisfaction of the second condition for contributory benefits.

National Insurance (Staff)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the latest available year *(a)* the number of whole-time equivalent staff engaged on national insurance contribution work within his Department, *(b)* the proportion of their time spent on each class of contribution and *(c)* the amount of contributions, by class, recovered as a result of their investigations.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total number of posts currently allocated by the Department of Social Security to national insurance contribution work is 7,449. However, many of those staff do not spend their time solely on this work and the exact ratio could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Similarly, no information is held on the amount of time spent on each class of contribution.

The value of contributions collected by the Department for the year ending 1988-89 is as follows:

	£
Class 1	1,559,099,000
Class 2	323,685,000
Class 3	25,034,000
Class 4	2,536,000

Family Credit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many families receiving family credit have *(a)* single earner and *(b)* two earners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: At the end of July there were 17,000 families where there were two earners at the time the award of family credit was made and 296,000 with one earner.

National Insurance

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate *(a)* the cost of changing the national insurance threshold into a tax allowance in 1990-91 and *(b)* the savings of abolishing the national insurance ceiling in 1990-91.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Using the rates expected to apply in the 1990-91 year it is estimated that removing employees' liability for national insurance contributions on the first £46 of weekly earnings (that is earnings up to the lower earnings limit) would cost about £0·9 billion in a full year. If the upper earnings limit for employees' contributions were to be abolished, the additional income would be about £2·3 billion.

Share Fishermen

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider restoring the special status of share fishermen in respect of their entitlement to unemployment benefit during regular non-working periods.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Conditions of entitlement to unemployment benefit have always been the same for share fishermen as for all other claimants except insofar as share fishermen have certain additional conditions to satisfy. We have not altered this position. However, we will be monitoring the effect of the recent earnings rule changes on all claimants.

Pension Schemes

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the effect of his proposals concerning the investment of small self-administered pension scheme funds in the company to which they relate; and what response he has made.

Mr. Newton: In the case of pension schemes covering employees, the proposal to restrict to 5 per cent. investment by the scheme in the company to which it relates has been generally well received. It is widely agreed that it must be right to avoid the risk of "double jeopardy" to both jobs and pensions if a company should get into difficulties.

We have however received numerous strong representations that different considerations apply to small self-administered pension schemes (SSAPs), which cater mainly and often exclusively for shareholding directors, who are themselves normally the trustees, and whose investment decisions therefore can only create that double risk for their own jobs and pension prospects rather than those of other people.

We accept the force of this argument, and have therefore decided that the proposed restrictions will not apply to SSAPs in cases where all members are trustees, each member is a "20 per cent director" as defined for Inland Revenue purposes, and trustee decisions require a "nem con" vote.

Restrictions on SSAP's investments for tax purposes will, of course, continue.

Computerisation

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress is being made with his Department's computerisation programme; and what are the next steps in its implementation.

Mr. Newton: The computerisation programme, known as the operational strategy, is proceeding well. The three main systems in the plan are in place—those that administer the income support and retirement pensions, and the departmental central index, which links the various systems. Two of the four area computer centres are now in operation, at Washington managed "in house" by the Information Technology Services Directorate and at Livingston managed on contract by Electronic Data Systems. Forty-two local social security offices are now fully linked with the systems through these centres, and the number is currently increasing by two per week. This progress is beginning to be reflected in significant improvements in the speed and accuracy of the service we can provide to our customers, and I am grateful to the many staff throughout the Department who have contributed to this success.

The next step is to complete the network of area computer centres, in order that the benefits of the new systems can be steadily extended to all social security

offices and thus to everyone who depends on the service they provide. As has already been announced, these will be at Norcross and at Swindon.

Work is now nearing completion to enable the centre at Norcross to begin operation in January 1990. Following consideration of a tender from Electronic Data Systems, I have decided that this centre will be managed on contract by that company. The contract will be on the same basic terms as their existing management contract at Livingston. As at Livingston civil servants in the area will be free to apply for the new jobs being generated.

The Swindon centre is planned to commence operation towards the end of 1990. The management of the centre will be subject to the outcome of a competitive tendering exercise which I intend to initiate shortly. A formal request for information will be issued.

Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the gross and net cost of reducing the pensionable age for men to 60 years *(a)* at the present pension rates and *(b)* with a minimum pension, including guaranteed minimum pension from occupational schemes, for both men and women, regardless of marital status and past contributions, of 80 per cent. of average national earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 6 December 1989]:* I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The latest estimates, based on 1985-86 benefit rates, of the gross and net costs to public funds of reducing state pension age for men to age 60 are £4,200 million and £3,000 million respectively.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which local authorities have received and processed the most applications for transitional payments.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* Applications for housing benefit transitional payments were sent direct to the Department's transitional payments unit in Glasgow where they were processed. The 10 local authority areas which have generated the largest number of applications processed to date are as follows:

	Numbers
Glasgow	39,153
Sheffield	13,424
Liverpool	12,598
Birmingham	10,401
Manchester	10,241
Edinburgh	9,037
Newcastle-on-Tyne	8,720
Waltham Forest	8,131
South Tyneside	7,839
Newham	7,127

Research Projects

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research projects are currently being carried out under total or partial sponsorship of his Department; whom they are being carried out by; and when they will be completed and published.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[pursuant to her answer, 15 December 1989]:* I regret that the following projects were omitted:

Project, contractor and completion date

Survey of retirement and retirement plans—Social survey division, OPCS—Late 1990.

Study of maternity benefits[1]—Policy Studies Institute—Mid 1990.

[1] This study is partially sponsored by the Department.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of his electricity privatisation proposals.

Mr. Michael Spicer The Government remain on target to complete the privatisation of the industry within this Parliament.

Electricity Price Increases

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the level of *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial electricity price increases from April 1990.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Prices to consumers will depend on the outcome of negotiations between generators, suppliers and customers, subject to any relevant statutory and licence requirements.

Coal Industry (Productivity)

Mr. John Marshall To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on trends in productivity in the coal industry since 1984.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Coal's productivity has increased by more than 75 per cent. from pre-strike levels.

Nuclear Electric plc

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman-designate of the new Nuclear Electric plc; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has met the chairman-designate of Nuclear Electric on a number of occasions to discuss aspects of the nuclear industry.

Private Mines

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will direct British Coal not to seek to contract to purchase any additional production from private deep mines and opencast sites.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. However, the British Coal Corporation's statement on licensing policy and practice, placed in the House of Commons Library on 29 June (*Official Report* columns *509-10* refers), makes it clear that they would support the efforts of licensees to secure contracts with third parties. It also emphasises that it is for the licensee to determine whether to sell coal to third parties or to British Coal, and that the licence is issued free from any delivery requirement (para 15 and annex B of the statement). The Government welcome this freedom for

licensed operators, and consider it important that it should apply equally to the larger licensed mines proposed in the Coal Industry Bill.

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will review the royalty paid by private mine operators to British Coal on each tonne of coal produced.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Royalties are a matter for the British Coal Corporation, as owner and licensee of coal reserves. In its recent statement of licensing policy and practice, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House on 29 June, British Coal has reaffirmed its intention to set royalties at levels which will permit efficiently-managed operators to develop their businesses profitably, and to continue to review standard levels of royalty from time to time in accordance with this principle. It has assured me that in setting the standard levels of royalties it will include the general health of the licensed sector in the matters taken into account. I am continuing to discuss with British Coal methods of monitoring the profitability of the licensed sector.

British Coal has also undertaken to reduce royalties for new licences in any case where accounting evidence is provided which demonstrates that profit expectations would otherwise be cut to unreasonably low levels. I do not believe that it is in the national interest that otherwise economic small coal deposits capable of competing with imports should be left unworked because of a high royalty.

National Fuel Distributors

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will direct British Coal to ensure that any sale of National Fuel Distributors by British Coal will be on the open market and that all interested parties will have opportunities to submit bids.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a commercial matter for British Coal. However, I expect the Corporation to seek to maximise the proceeds from any asset disposals, consistent with the need to ensure that the purchaser does not acquire an unduly dominant position in the coal distribution sector.

Concessionary Coal

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will direct British Coal to put the distribution of concessionary fuel out to open tender.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government expects the British Coal Corporation to organise, whether through its subsidiary, National Fuel Distributors Ltd, or through other channels, the distribution of concessionary fuel in as cost-effective manner as possible. Where the distribution is handled by British Coal and its subsidiaries, it is for them to decide what degree of competitive tendering is appropriate to achieve this, in the light of competition legislation.

Coal Distributive Trades

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will refer the relationship between British Coal and the coal distributive trades to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Michael Spicer: References to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, or the Director General of Fair Trading.

Solid Fuel

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to increase competition in the distribution of solid fuel.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Although I monitor developments in the solid fuel distribution sector, questions relating to competition are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the European Commission.

We have, however, made it clear that further acquisitions by British Coal, or its wholly owned subsidiaries, of businesses valued at over £0·5 million, where my approval is required, are likely to gain my consent only in exceptional circumstances. British Coal have also given assurances that trading between them and British Fuels Ltd. will continue to be on an arm's length basis.

British Coal (Loyalty Agreements)

Dr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will direct British Coal to bring its loyalty agreements into line with general agreement on tariffs and trade regulations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I believe that restricting competition from coal imports by discriminatory pricing arrangements is not in the best interests of the consumer. Questions relating to the GATT are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a list of all accidents to personnel on oil rigs since the Piper Alpha tragedy.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have today placed in the Library a list of fatal and serious accidents on offshore installations which were notified to my Department under the Offshore Installations (Inspectors and Casualties) Regulations 1973 during the period from 6 July 1988 to 3 December 1989. A further 774 incidents involving less serious injuries resulting in an absence from work for a continuous period of three days were also notified to my Department.

On 3 December 1989 there were 141 fixed and 71 mobile installations operating on the United Kingdom continental shelf. The latest figures for the number of persons emplpoyed offshore are those for June 1988 when the Inland Revenue estimated that the total workforce was 29,300. The serious accident rate per 1,000 employees was 2·9 in 1988 and is 2·3 for the period from 1 January to 3 December 1989.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 4 December, *Official Report*, column *30*, to the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller), what assessment has he made of the reasons for the decline in the demand for domestic energy efficiency equipment during the past year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Building Energy Efficiency Confederation wrote on 13 November to say that there was a decline in the sales of domestic energy efficiency equipment of between 6 per cent. and 20 per cent. during the first six months of 1989.

I replied recognising the concern of members of the confederation, but explaining that they should be aware that the Government's economic policies aimed at bringing down inflation have similarly affected other market sectors and that the confederation was not, therefore, in a unique situation.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the Energy Efficiency Office's findings about the alleged unproven cost-effectiveness of energy efficiency promotional activities directed at householders.

Mr. Wakeham: Surveys and other information have shown that the EEO's television and press advertising has had a good initial impact as regards bringing energy efficiency to the attention of householders, but that in many cases they have not gone on to implement energy efficiency measures. Market research has confirmed that those moving and improving their homes are significantly more likely to implement energy efficiency measures, and hence the EEO is targeting these groups, as well as low income households, as part of its total strategy of improving energy efficiency.

Opencast Mining (Exhibition)

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to opencast coal mining to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that under procedures agreed by the Services Committee arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall starting on 29 January for four days.

Home Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many low-income homes will be insulated in the current financial year.

Mr. Wakeham: For the current financial year as a whole I would expect to see not less than 140,000 homes benefit from the services provided by community insulation projects.

Energy Audits

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will introduce legislation to require building societies to undertake energy audits for mortgage applicants.

Mr. Wakeham: No. The Government believe that a voluntary approach to energy audits is the right way forward, and has already taken an initiative with the building societies to that end.

Standing Charges

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will withdraw the legal powers available to the new electricity companies to charge standing charges to pensioners on income support and families in receipt of family credit;

(2) if he will now commission an independent review of electricity standing charges and poor consumers;

(3) if he will now seek the necessary legislative changes to abolish standing charges for the supply of domestic electricity for pensioners and claimants of family credit;

(4) what percentage of electricity sales revenue is currently derived from standing charges to domestic consumers; and what estimate has been made of any change to the proportion of sales revenue so devised in future;

(5) whether any research has been undertaken to study the financial impact of standing charges for electricity to pensioners and claimants on low incomes and benefit.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The question of standing charges has been considered by successive Governments. They have consistently taken the view that standing charges are the fairest means of recovering the costs attributable to each consumer. The social security system provides effective means of targeting assistance on those in need.

The percentage of revenue represented by standing charges in 1988 was 6·5 per cent. of total sales revenue from domestic, industrial and other users. Forward estimating of revenue is a matter for the electricity industry.

Powers to include standing charges in electricity tariffs are set out in Section 18 of the Electricity Act 1989. I have no intention of seeking to change these powers.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Secure Office Automation Project

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what system he proposes to instal by way of the secure office automation project in the diplomatic wing by way of replacement for FOLIOS.

Mr. Sainsbury: An independent review of the FOLIOS project is underway to determine the reasons for its failure. No replacement secure office automation system for the diplomatic wing will be proposed until the review report has been considered.

The diplomatic wing of the FCO is currently reviewing its strategy for the delivery of information systems.

Berlin

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conference held between ambassadors of the four occupying powers of Berlin on 11 December 1989.

Mr. Maude: At Soviet suggestion, the three western ambassadors met the Soviet ambassador on 11 December. Discussion focussed on western proposals, originally presented to the Russians in 1987, for a package of improvements for Berlin. The Soviet ambassador made some more general remarks about developments in Europe. All parties agreed on the importance of stability.

Poland

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current United Kingdom relations with Poland.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have close and friendly relations with Poland. We were delighted to welcome Mr. Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity, to the United Kingdom recently. We admire the courage with which the Polish Government are tackling their economic problems and will continue to give substantial help to ease the transition to democracy and a market-based economy.

South Africa

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with the Government of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We maintain regular contact with the South African authorities on a wide range of issues, both here and via Her Majesty's ambassador.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Vietnamese authorities on the circumstances in which jobs and education can be obtained without identity papers in Vietnam.

Mr. Maude: No representation has been made to the Vietnamese on this subject.

United Nations General Assembly

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resolutions on *(a)* arms control and disarmament, *(b)* environmental improvement and protection and *(c)* energy security and resources have been tabled at the latest general assembly of the United Nations in New York; how the United Kingdom voted on each resolution; and if he will set out the reason for the vote in each case.

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resolutions on arms control and disarmament were tabled by the United Kingdom at the latest United Nations General Assembly in New York; and what support they received.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom tabled two resolutions on arms control and disarmament at the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in 1989:

(i) On "Objective Information on Military Matters" (designed to encourage the disclosure of more information about military capabilities and budgets). This resolution was supported by 132 countries; no countries voted against; and 13 abstained.

(ii) On "Bilateral negotiations" (welcoming progress made in bilateral arms control talks in 1989 and calling for sustained progress in the year ahead); 91 countries voted for the resolution; no countries voted against; and 61 abstained.

Hong Kong

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people have been refused entry to Hong Kong from the Chinese land border annually for each of the past five years; and what was the daily average figure.

Mr. Maude: The number of people refused entry into Hong Kong from the Chinese land border for each of the past five years is as follows:

Year	*Total*	*Daily average*
1984	9,653	26·5
1985	13,882	38
1986	18,045	49·4
1987	23,969	65·7
1988	15,935	43·7
1989[1]	7,096	21·2

[1] January-November.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people were resident in Hong Kong in *(a)* 1960 and *(b)* 1989, or the latest available date.

Mr. Maude: The estimated population of Hong Kong in mid-1960 was 3,075,300. In mid-1989 it was 5,713,700.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the rate of unemployment benefit in St. Helena, what is its purchasing power; and what are the equivalent figures for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: The weekly rates of unemployment benefit in St. Helena are £14·60 for a married couple and £10·90 for a single person. In addition, claimants receive 75 per cent. rent rebate and a weekly allowance in respect of each dependent child; the rates are £1·55 for a child aged 10 or less, and £1·95 for a child aged 11 or over. The basic weekly income of a labourer in the public sector is £36·95.

The weekly rate of unemployment benefit in the United Kingdom for a single person is £34·70. A married person, who also claims successfully for their spouse, receives an additional £21·40 per week. The average gross weekly income of all adults in full-time employment is £239·70.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[pursuant to the reply, 6 December 1989, c. 233]*: I am unable to provide the full information requested by the hon. Member, as the figures are not held centrally and could not be assembled without disproportionate cost. I can state, however, that we are aware of 38 persons over the age of 60 having been appointed by my right hon. Friend.

WALES

Health and Personal Social Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for Wales for each year since 1974-75 (i) total National Health Service expenditure, (ii) current expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iii) capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services, (iv) expenditure on the family practitioner services, (v) expenditure on centrally funded National Health Service services and (vi) expenditure on personal social services, giving each in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* adjusted using the relevant pay and prices index and *(c)* adjusted using the gross domestic product deflator; and if he will place in the Library details of the methods used to make these adjustments.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Separate pay and prices indices for Wales are not avaivable, and the information shown has thus been constructed by reference to indices maintained by the Department of Health from English data.

(i) Total National Health Service gross expenditure

at 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the relevant pay and prices index*	*Adjusted by the gross domestic product deflator*
1974-75	209·9	977·3	828·9
1975-76	281·8	1,022·7	885·0
1976-77	316·8	1,018·2	877·8
1977-78	358·6	1,052·8	872·9
1978-79	411·2	1,046·5	904·3
1979-80	481·6	1,063·4	906·9
1980-81	619·7	1,074·6	986·0
1981-82	705·5	1,122·5	1,022·3
1982-83	777·9	1,152·1	1,051·4
1983-84	825·7	1,165·1	1,066·2
1984-85	892·6	1,187·2	1,098·1
1985-86	953·2	1,204·8	1,112·9
1986-87	1,024·8	1,218·5	1,157·4
1987-88	1,136·5	1,252·4	1,218·9
1988-89	1,270·5	1,270·5	1,270·5

(ii) Hospital and community health services: Gross current expenditure

at 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the relevant pay and prices index*	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	145·0	674·1	572·6
1975-76	193·4	698·0	607·4
1976-77	221·1	701·3	612·6
1977-78	249·0	727·3	606·1
1978-79	282·7	753·4	621·7
1979-80	335·7	742·2	632·1
1980-81	435·7	752·9	693·2
1981-82	490·5	783·3	710·8
1982-83	529·5	793·7	715·7
1983-84	557·9	795·6	720·4
1984-85	599·0	807·5	736·9
1985-86	640·5	821·1	747·8
1986-87	683·1	819·0	771·5
1987-88	762·5	842·6	817·8
1988-89	853·8	853·8	853·8

(iii) Hospital and community health services: Gross capital expenditure

at 1988-89 prices

	£ million cash	*Adjusted by the relevant pay and prices index*	*Adjusted by the GDP deflator*
1974-75	15·3	59·8	60·4
1975-76	23·1	69·2	72·5
1976-77	18·0	48·1	49·9
1977-78	21·1	49·4	51·4
1978-79	23·7	49·6	52·1
1979-80	24·4	42·3	45·9
1980-81	32·1	44·2	51·1
1981-82	41·4	55·3	60·0
1982-83	47·1	61·9	63·7
1983-84	49·9	64·3	64·4
1984-85	53·3	65·9	65·6
1985-86	55·1	64·4	64·3
1986-87	60·6	67·4	68·4
1987-88	61·1	64·6	65·5
1988-89	63·5	63·5	63·5

(iv) Family practitioner services: gross expenditure

at 1988-89 prices

	£ million Cash	*Adjusted by the relevant pay and prices index*	*Adjusted by the GDP Deflator*
1974-75	46·3	220·8	182·8
1975-76	60·9	226·3	191·3
1976-77	72·4	242·2	200·6
1977-78	82·6	253·5	201·1
1978-79	97·5	264·8	214·4
1979-80	113·3	262·5	213·3
1980-81	142·5	263·8	226·7
1981-82	162·5	266·3	235·5
1982-83	188·2	276·5	254·4
1983-84	202·5	282·3	261·5
1984-85	221·3	287·7	272·2
1985-86	234·5	290·3	273·8
1986-87	253·1	298·2	285·9
1987-88	280·2	309·1	300·5
1989-90	314·9	314·9	314·9

Note: Includes the cost of family practitioner services administration and related services

(v) Centrally financed national health services: gross expenditure

at1988-89 prices

	£ million Cash	*Adjusted by the GDP Deflator*
1974-75	3·3	13·0
1975-76	4·4	13·8
1976-77	5·3	14·7
1977-78	5·9	14·4
1978-79	7·3	16·1
1979-80	8·2	15·4
1980-81	9·4	15·0
1981-82	11·1	16·1
1982-83	13·0	17·6
1983-84	15·4	19·9
1984-85	19·0	23·4
1985-86	23·1	27·0
1986-87	28·0	31·6
1987-88	32·7	35·1
1988-89	38·4	38·4

Note: No pay and prices index exists for centrally financed services

(vi) Personal social services: gross expenditure at 1988-89 prices

Year	£ million cash	Adjusted by the relevant pay and prices index	Adjusted by the GDP deflator
1974-75	37·1	142·6	146·5
1975-76	50·4	160·9	158·3
1976-77	57·9	163·2	160·4
1977-78	63·0	162·0	153·4
1978-79	76·9	182·6	169·1
1979-80	92·7	186·6	174·6
1980-81	111·6	186·9	177·6
1981-82	120·3	179·2	174·3
1982-83	131·3	182·5	177·5
1983-84	143·5	189·4	185·3
1984-85	147·8	187·4	181·8
1985-86	155·9	187·2	182·0
1986-87	169·9	194·7	191·9
1987-88	185·8	198·2	199·3
1988-89	202·0	202·0	202·0

Local Government Finance

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing grant income received by precepting authorities under the current grant system to each area in proportion to the adult population in that area *(a)* the rate support grant payable for 1989-90 uprated to 1990-91 prices and *(b)* the estimated amount of revenue support grant which would be payable in 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Charging authority	[1] Rate support grant payable for 1989-90 (1990-91 prices) £ million	[2] Revenue support grant payable for 1990-91 £ million
Alyn and Deeside	23·885	25·348
Colwyn	18·929	20·065
Delyn	23·006	22·666
Glyndŵr	14·215	14·621
Rhuddlan	21·051	20·435
Wrexham Maelor	39·269	40·865
Carmarthen	22·857	22·147
Ceredigion	28·143	25·368
Dinefwr	15·659	14·984
Llanelli	31·044	30·472
Preseli Pembrokeshire	28·700	27·469
South Pembrokeshire	16·130	17·157
Blaenau Gwent	31·660	31·072
Islwyn	26·262	25·923
Monmouth	27·649	27·948
Newport	45·760	52·197
Torfaen	32·679	34·306
Aberconwy	20·426	21·234
Arfon	19·852	22·003
Dwyfor	11·153	12·818
Meirionnydd	12·449	14·924
Ynys Môn	25·938	26·652
Cynon Valley	31·451	29·075
Merthyr Tydfil	28·540	26·346
Ogwr	61·952	57·759
Rhondda	39·768	36·703
Rhymney Valley	47·374	42·393
Taff Ely	41·285	39·218
Brecknock	20·434	19·269
Montgomeryshire	24·951	23·942
Radnorshire	11·143	10·581
Cardiff	89·793	114·679
Vale of Glamorgan	34·121	43·629
Port Talbot	18·254	21·356
Lliw Valley	22·690	23·805
Neath	22·240	25·975
Swansea	69·995	74·512
All Welsh charging authorities	1,100·708	1,139·918

[1] 1989-90 figures are expressed in real terms at 1990-91 prices using the GDP (market prices) deflator.

[2] The 1990-91 revenue support grant entitlements of county councils have been attributed to districts within each area in proportion to numbers of community charge payers on registers at 1 December 1989.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing business rate income received by precepting authorities under the current system to each area in proportion to the adult population in each area *(a)* the estimated revenue received in 1989-90 from the non-domestic rate uprated to 1990-91 prices and *(b)* the estimated amount which will be paid from the national non-domestic rating pool in 1990-91 to each area.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Charging authority	[1] Estimated revenue received in 1989-90 from non-domestic rates (1990-91 prices) £ million	Amount to be paid from the non-domestic rating pool in 1990-91 (£ million)
Alyn and Deeside	13·426	11·634
Colwyn	6·120	8·823
Delyn	7·190	10·332
Glyndŵr	4·704	6·925
Rhuddlan	8·376	8·687
Wrexham Maelor	19·026	18·160
Carmarthen	6·031	8·837
Ceredigion	6·776	9·980
Dinefwr	2·990	6·129
Llanelli	9·199	11·778
Preseli Pembrokeshire	10·487	11·218
South Pembrokeshire	15·042	6·612
Blaenau Gwent	7·953	11·998
Islwyn	5·542	10·637
Monmouth	10·684	12·359
Newport	32·135	20·507
Torfaen	13·549	13·880
Aberconwy	7·233	8·547
Arfon	12·185	8·484
Dwyfor	3·448	4·724
Meirionnydd	6·658	5·775
Ynys Môn	11·485	10·235
Cynon Valley	6·753	10·363
Merthyr Tydfil	7·820	8·935
Ogwr	15·616	21·066
Rhondda	5·462	12·312
Rhymney Valley	10·654	15·697
Taff Ely	16·051	14·178
Brecknock	4·662	6·865
Montgomeryshire	5·942	8·428
Radnorshire	3·232	3·790
Cardiff	54·257	42·417
Vale of Glamorgan	18·644	16·891
Port Talbot	17·974	8·081
Lliw Valley	6·712	9·544
Neath	10·113	10·305
Swansea	33·350	27·867
All Welsh charging authorities	437·479	443·000

[1] 1989-90 figures have been expressed in real terms at 1990-91 prices using the GDP (market prices) deflator.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each charging authority area, attributing grant income received by precepting authorities under the current grant system to each area in proportion to the aggregate of rateable values in that area *(a)* the rate support grant payable for 1989-90 uprated to 1990-91 prices, *(b)* the estimated amount of revenue support grant which will be payable in 1990-91 with safety nets and special grants and *(c)* the estimated amount of revenue support grant which would be payable in 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested for *(a)* and *(c)* is shown in the table. I am no longer proposing to make safety-net adjustments to revenue support grant entitlements and I will announce the final amounts of transitional relief grant payable to each district area for 1990-91 in due course.

Charging authority	[1] *Rate support grant payable for 198-90 (1990-91 prices) £ million*	[2] *Revenue support grant payable for 1990-91 £ million*
Alyn and Deeside	27·346	25·348
Colwyn	18·007	20·065
Delyn	21·730	22·666
Glyndŵr	12·368	14·621
Rhuddlan	21·622	20·435
Wrexham Maelor	39·281	40·865
Carmarthen	19·507	22·147
Ceredigion	24·823	25·368
Dinefwr	11·256	14·984
Llanelli	28·144	30·472
Preseli Pembrokeshire	30·238	27·469
South Pembrokeshire	28·565	17·157
Blaenau Gwent	24·935	31·072
Islwyn	19·521	25·923
Monmouth	25·963	27·948
Newport	62·569	52·197
Torfaen	31·020	34·306
Aberconwy	18·924	21·234
Arfon	21·367	22·003
Dwyfor	9·976	12·818
Meirionnydd	13·880	14·924
Ynys Môn	25·672	26·652
Cynon Valley	28·815	29·075
Merthyr Tydfil	29·687	26·346
Ogwr	64·967	57·759
Rhondda	29·311	36·703
Rhymney Valley	46·127	42·393
Taff Ely	51·463	39·218
Brecknock	19·492	19·269
Montgomeryshire	24·688	23·942
Radnorshire	12·347	10·581
Cardiff	92·712	114·679
Vale of Glamorgan	31·203	43·629
Port Talbot	26·638	21·356
Lliw Valley	17·286	23·805
Neath	20·097	25·975
Swansea	69·159	74·512
All Welsh charging authorities	1,100·708	1,139·918

[1] 1989-90 figures are expressed in real terms at 1990-91 prices using the GDP (market prices) deflator.

[2] The 1990-91 revenue support grant entitlements of county councils have been attributed to districts within each area in proportion to numbers of community charge payers on registers at 1 December 1989.

Natural Heritage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales why he decided not to issue a consultation document in respect of his proposed merger of the Nature Conservancy Council and Countryside Commission in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The requirement to introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity to give effect to Ministers' announced intentions precluded the possibility of formal consultation. Nevertheless, interested parties have been encouraged to submit their views on how the changes might be implemented and these are being considered.

Grants

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure on *(a)* derelict land grant, *(b)* regional selective assistance, *(c)* the Welsh Development Agency, *(d)* the Cardiff Bay Development Agency and *(e)* the urban programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is shown in the following table:

£ million

	1987-88 Outturn	*1988-89 Outturn*	*1989-90 Estimated Outturn*	*1990-91 Plans*
Regional selective assistance (gross)	35	43	53	67
Welsh Development Agency (gross)	99	115	130	150
of which: derelict land	13	12	24	24
Cardiff Bay development corporation	12	18	29	32
Urban programme	20	[1]21	26	29

[1] Estimated outturn

Teachers

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers are employed by each local authority in Wales; how many teachers are in receipt of an incentive allowance for each local authority in Wales; what percentage this is of the total employed by each local authority; and how many teachers in receipt of an incentive allowance in each local authority in Wales hold allowances that are *(a)* incentive A, *(b)* incentive B, *(c)* incentive C, *(d)* incentive D and *(e)* incentive E.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest information, based on the position at March 1988 is shown in the table:

	Number of teachers[1]	Incentive Allowances A	B	C	D	E	Total (number)	Total (per cent.)
Clwyd	2,774	123	748	21	269	95	1,256	45·3
Dyfed	2,561	48	643	18	193	21	923	36·0
Gwent	3,313	171	664	84	223	93	1,235	37·3
Gwynedd	1,795	72	409	6	103	26	616	34·3
Mid Glamorgan	4,439	6	963	3	234	122	1,328	29·9
Powys	913	51	200	1	40	10	302	33·1
South Glamorgan	2,836	162	617	11	217	74	1,081	38·1
West Glamorgan	2,903	159	697	23	179	58	1,116	38·4
Wales	21,534	792	4,941	167	1,458	499	7,857	36·5

[1] The number of teachers shown excludes headteachers and deputy headteachers but includes teachers in special schools.

School Premises

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what action he has taken to ensure that all schools in Wales will meet the standards laid down in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 by September 1991; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the cost of bringing *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools up to the standards laid down in the Education (School Premises) Reglations 1981 in (i) Wales and (ii) by local education authority; whether he is making any special arrangements to meet those costs; and if he will make a statement on progress in meeting the provisional arrangements required by the regulations.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The duty of ensuring that school premises conform to the standards prescribed by the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 rests with local education authorities. Information about the extent of their compliance with the regulations is not held centrally, but we are aware that not all schools yet meet the standards. Local authorities have been aware since 1981 of the requirements of the regulations. It is for them to meet their obligations from within existing resources.

Salmonella

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make a statement concerning his inquiry into the Clwyd salmonella outbreak; if he will publish his inquiry; if he will meet the Clwyd health authority to discuss his findings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: As I announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) on 6 November at col. *669* the Department is undertaking an internal review to establish any lessons that could be learned for the future. Any such lessons will be conveyed to the authorities concerned and, if appropriate, will be made available more widely.

The review is now under way and will be concluded as soon as is consistent with completing the task properly.

The question of a meeting with Clwyd health authority and the other statutory authorities who were involved in the handling of this outbreak can be considered when the review has been concluded.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will assess the number of households in Wales which, on the basis of his assessment of levels of community charge as outlined in his statement of 18 December, will incur *(a)* an increase of over 50 per cent., *(b)* an increase of between 25 per cent. and 50 per cent. and *(c)* an increase of up to 25 per cent. in the total community charge to be paid by each such household in 1990-91 as against the total rate payment of such a household in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made, in each local authority in Wales, in compiling the community charge register for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have now received estimates of the registered population as at 1 December 1989 from each community charge registration officer in Wales. A very high rate of registration has been achieved. The following table shows that estimates of adult population based on the registers are very close for all authorities to the equivalent estimates based on data provided by the registrar general.

Estimates of adult population (thousands)

Authority	Registrar General's estimate 30 June 1988	Based on Community Charge Register 1 December 1989	Percentage difference
Alyn and Deeside	54·8	56·3	3
Colwyn	43·2	44·9	4
Delyn	49·5	51·4	4
Glyndwr	32·2	33·2	3
Rhuddlan	44·3	45·0	2
Wrexham Maelor	88·5	92·3	4
Carmarthen	43·6	44·2	1
Ceredigion	52·2	51·5	−1

Authority	Registrar General's estimate 30 June 1988	Based on Community Charge Register 1 December 1989	Percentage difference
Dinefwr	30·4	30·0	−1
Llanelli	58·1	58·6	1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	54·0	53·0	−2
South Pembrokeshire	32·1	31·8	−1
Blaenau Gwent	59·5	59·7	0
Islwyn	50·9	50·3	−1
Monmouth	62·7	59·9	−5
Newport	97·2	103·4	6
Torfaen	70·2	70·5	0
Aberconwy	42·9	42·2	−2
Arfon	41·9	44·3	6
Dwyfor	21·4	21·3	−1
Meirionnydd	25·0	26·0	4
Ynys Môn	53·4	50·8	−5
Cynon Valley	49·3	50·2	2
Merthyr Tydfil	44·3	44·7	1
Ogwr	105·1	107·3	2
Rhondda	58·6	60·3	3
Rhymney Valley	77·7	78·0	0
Taff Ely	71·5	73·8	3
Brecknock	32·1	32·4	1
Montgomeryshire	39·8	41·0	3
Radnorshire	17·7	17·8	1
Cardiff	215·9	223·9	4
Vale of Glamorgan	90·9	85·2	−6
Port Talbot	38·0	40·0	5
Lliw Valley	47·9	47·5	−1
Neath	50·2	50·7	1
Swansea	144·1	141·9	−2
TOTAL WALES	2,191·1	2,215·2	1

Note: The difference in time between the two estimates should be borne in mind. Over the period the adult population in Wales as a whole is projected to have grown at about 1 per cent. per annum.

Water (Charging)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to place limits on charges in any new system of charging for water and allied services to replace the water rates in Wales in such a way as to take account of ability to pay;

(2) if he will make it his policy to take steps to ensure that any new system of charging for water and allied services to replace the water rates in Wales shall not involve: *(a)* a water poll tax or *(b)* compulsory metering.

Mr. Grist: Initial limits on charges are specified in the instruments of appointment of water and sewerage undertakers. Future regulation of charges will fall to the Director General of Water Services. In doing so the director general will be under a duty to ensure that the interests of customers are protected and that no undue preference or discrimination is shown by the scheme of charges which is principally a matter for Welsh Water plc to determine. Their future charging policy is outlined in their prospectus, a copy of which is in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmentally Friendly Products

Mr Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many environmentally friendly products were purchased for each year since 1979, by year, and by the following categories: *(a)* aerosols, *(b)* recycled paper, *(c)* organic produce, *(d)* recycled tin cans and *(e)* recycled bottles/glass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do not have this information.

Nature Conservancy

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will have a duty to agree common standards for the selection, designation, management and monitoring of national nature reserves, sites of special scientific interest and other categories of land.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will have a duty to assemble and disseminate compatible statistics for nature conservation on a Great Britain or United Kingdom basis.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff in which disciplines he envisages will need to be allocated to support the work of the joint committee of successor bodies of the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will have a duty to agree common priorities and methodologies for research on nature conservation issues.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the joint committee of successor

bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will have management responsibility for ensuring the operation of agreed standards and programmes.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will have a duty to agree common criteria for the provision of management agreements, land purchase grants and grants for posts and projects, including those to voluntary conservation agencies operating throughout Britain.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The main duties and responsibilities of the joint committee were set out in the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 23 November (*Official Report*, cols *17-18*). Initial proposals for the detailed programme of work to be overseen by the Committee, and the resources required to carry it out, will be drawn up in consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council and other relevant bodies. The Government will also wish to consider any recommendations of the Select Committee on Science and Technology in another place, which is currently considering future arrangements for the NCC's science base.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the duty of the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council to provide advice on nature conservation matters will be based on *(a)* nature conservation considerations, *(b)* recreation, *(c)* access and *(d)* landscape considerations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). The responsibilities which the successor bodies will be required to remit to the joint committee for consideration will relate to nature conservation.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will have a duty to agree common procedures and timetables for the implementation of European Community and international agreements and conventions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Implementation of European Community and international agreements and conventions is, and will remain, primarily a matter for Government.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what mechanisms the proposed joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will employ to ensure that its decisions are reflected by all the individual bodies; and whether it will have any authority over them.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). The individual country bodies will be bound by a statutory requirement to deal with certain matters (to be specified in legislation) through the joint committee.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how such disagreements will be resolved and by whom, in the event of disagreement among individual bodies on the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The successor bodies will have a statutory duty to agree the advice to be tendered or the action to be taken on the matters within the remit of the joint committee. Reserve provisions will be included in the legislation to be brought before the House shortly to enable the Secretary of State to direct that matters within the remit of the joint committee should be dealt with by one or more of the country bodies. It is expected that such directions will be needed on only very rare occasions.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the joint committee of successor bodies to the Nature Conservancy Council will have sole responsibility for providing advice at Great Britain level on *(a)* ecological issues, *(b)* agricultural and forestry issues, *(c)* air and waterborne pollution, *(d)* marine and migratory species conservation, *(e)* international representation and *(f)* education and publicity.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government draw on many sources of advice on these issues and will continue to do so, but the joint committee may wish to consider the relationship between these matters and nature conservation in a Great Britain context.

Mortgage Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will bring up to date the information on average interest rates on building society mortgage advances given in his letter to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) of 3 August 1983 in pursuance of his written reply of 29 July 1983, *Official Report*, column *705*.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Year	*Average building society mortgage interest rate (gross) per cent.*
1982	13·30
1983	11·03
1984	11·84
1985	13·47
1986	12·07
1987	11·61
1988	11·05
1989[1]	13·46
1989[2]	13·43

[1] Quarter 1.
[2] Quarter 2.

Monthly figures on average building society mortgage interest rates are published in *Financial Statistics*, which is available in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to allow for the reduction of personal community charges on environmental grounds along the lines of the present arrangements for reduction in rateable values.

Mr. Chope: The reductions in rateable values to which my hon. Friend refers are an automatic concomitant of a system which links payment for local services to the rental value of property. Most local authority services, such as

education, public transport and social services are people-related rather than property-related, and the cost of providing those services is not affected by environmental factors. There is therefore no logical reason for varying the community charge to reflect such factors.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether each occupant of a household's application for a rebate on the personal community charge will be assessed of their own personal income and savings; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The assessment of community charge benefit will be based on the personal and financial circumstances (both income and capital) of the claimant and any partner. The personal and financial circumstances of adults in the household, other than any partner of the claimant, are immaterial to the assessment of the claimant's community charge benefit.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide statistics for 1987-88 showing *(a)* the total value of construction work carried out by direct labour organisations as a proportion of local authority expenditure on construction, *(b)* the 10 local authorities where the value of work carried out by direct labour organisations as a proportion of the authorities' construction expenditure was highest and *(c)* the 10 local authorities where the value of the work carried out by direct labour organisations as a proportion of the authorities' construction expenditure was lowest.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The 1987-88 statitics requested are as follows:

(a) In the 333 English authorites required to report to the Secretary of State the total reported expenditure on construction work carried out by direct labour organisations was £178 million, representing 23 per cent. of the total.

(b) The 10 local authorities where the value of the work carried out by the direct labour organisations as a proportion of the construction expenditure was the highest were: Walsall; Ellesmere Port and Neston; Durham; Barrow-in-Furness; Scunthorpe; Hackney; Waltham Forest; Chesterfield; Stafford and Colchester.

(c) The 10 local authorities where the value of the work carried out by the direct labour organisations as a proportion of the construction expenditure was the lowest were: Carrick; Tameside; Doncaster; Kingston; Thanet; Westminster; Liverpool; Nottingham; Bolsover; and Mansfield.

Rates Bills, Bolton

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in the Bolton Metropolitan borough area are currently paying rates bills of below £350.

Mr Chope: The information requested is not available centrally.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis on which the decision was taken to reduce the number of G4 posts in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution from two to one.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There has been no reduction in the number of grade 4 posts on the staff complement of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Local Government Finance

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the loss of revenue if all contributions to the safety net were limited to *(a)* £40 and *(b)* £20.

Mr. Chope: Limiting the contributions to the safety net shown in the provisional figures which were placed in the Library on 6 November to £40 per adult would reduce contributions by £125 million. If contributions were limited to £20 per adult the reduction in contributions would be £316 million.

Departmental Circulars

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the circulars and consultation papers issued to *(a)* county councils, *(b)* metropolitan district councils and *(c)* non-metropolitan district councils since 1 January, together with dates they were despatched.

Mr. Patten: I wrote to the hon. Member on 30 November enclosing the information requested, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Gas Emissions (Domestic Properties)

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what commercially co-sponsored research into domestic property green labelling and greenhouse gas emissions from homes is being conducted by *(a)* the Building Research Establishment or *(b)* consultants to the Building Research Establishment; and what is the total current departmental investment into this programme.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* The Building Research Establishment is not currently engaged in any commercially co-sponsored research into domestic property green labelling or greenhouse gas emissions from homes, either directly or through consultants.

BRE is engaged in the following activities which are of relevance:

(1) work on the emission of greenhouse gases from buildings, as part of the research programme of the environmental protection directorate of DOE;

(2) the development of energy labels for housing, with commercial interests;

(3) the management of a project for a group of companies looking into the long-term future development of housing, which is expected to cover "green" issues;

(4) the development of "green" labels, initially for non-domestic buildings, with commercial interests.

The total current departmental investment in this general area at BRE amounts to some £400,000.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each year since 1978 the spending by local authorities on heating and other energy efficiency measures consistent with the 1986 figure of £900 million given in paragraph 3.40 of the National Audit Office's "National Energy Efficiency."

Mr. Chope: The figure given in paragraph 3.40 of the National Audit Office's report was based on analysis of the 1986 English house condition survey. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Departmental Guidelines

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines his Department has issued which advise local authorities on when to be ready to defend their decisions on papers which have been lodged with his Department.

Mr. Moynihan: Guidelines to local planning authorities on procedures for the conduct of planning appeals are set out in Department of the Environment circulars 18/86, 11/87 and 10/88, copies of which are in the Library.

Churston Galmpton Golf Course

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the inspector completed hearing the evidence on the public inquiry appeal regarding the planning matter concerning Churston Galmpton golf club, Torbay; what progress has been made since his answer to the hon. Member for South Hams of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *144;* what are the outstanding causes of delay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The appeal is being dealt with by an exchange of written representations and no public inquiry was held. An inspector visited the site on 22 August 1988 and his report was submitted to my right hon. Friend on 12 September 1988. On 6 April 1989 my right hon. Friend indicated that he was minded to allow the appeal, subject to comments from the parties about amended highway proposals, submitted by the developer. The reason for delay since then has been the need to consider and exchange further representations about the effect of the development on access to neighbouring properties and about land ownership which must be resolved before the appeal can be determined. I expect the decision to be issued early in the new year.

Housing Corporation

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give details of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1990-91.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend announced on 15 November that provision for the Housing Corporation's gross capital expenditure will double over the next three years, rising from £818 million this year to £1,736 million in 1992-93, demonstrating the Government's commitment to the housing association movement as the main providers of new subsidised homes. The Housing Corporation will also receive £73 million over the next two years under our special homelessness initiative. Altogether, gross provision in 1990-91 at £1,220·5 million will be nearly 50 per cent. higher than this year's level of expenditure.

The programme that we have now approved for 1990-91 with provisional plans for the following two years should enable the Housing Corporation to approve nearly 43,000 new homes for rent and low-cost home ownership in 1992-93. Over 38,500 homes should be completed with Housing Corporation funds in 1992-93, well over twice last year's total.

These very significant increases in housing associations' output will be archieved partly through greater use of private investment to supplement public subsidy. During the next three years we expect over 13,000 more homes to be provided than would have been possible without the use of private finance. We shall set the Housing Corporation and the housing association movement a cash target for the amount of private finance to be drawn in by schemes approved by the corporation in 1990-91. This will be based on our expectation that 75 per cent. of new schemes can be approved on a mixed funded basis, combining grant with private loans. In the light of this new target, there will be no need for a national average grant rate for mixed funded schemes of the kind that the corporation operated this year. Grant rates for schemes individually will be similar to those currently in force; the corporation will announce details nearer the start of the new financial year.

The distribution of the corporation's programme is guided by the housing needs indicator (HNI), which has been reviewed this year. I have accepted the technical recommendations of the review group, whose report I am placing in the Library. I have decided, however, to phase in the distributional pattern implied by the new HNI over two years so as to ensure that all regions see an increase in funds next year and can approve more units. I have also given a degree of protection to all regions affected by the move to the revised HNI. I have decided to increase the allocations of the 57 local authority areas with urban programme status by a total of £100 million in recognition of the special needs of inner-city areas. The funds allocated to the corporation's regions will be cost-compensated so that planned unit output is not distorted by varying costs of provision in different parts of the country.

This is an exciting and challenging time for the Housing Corporation and the housing association movement. The plans that I have set out for the corporation's programme over the next three years should enable resources to be targeted on the areas that need it most and in particular to allow the corporation to help meet the needs of the homeless. I have confidence that housing associations, through the Housing Corporation, will make the maximum impact on housing needs with the massive levels of public subsidy we are now entrusting to them.

The breakdown of the approved development programme for 1990-91 and provisional plans for the following two years is as follows:

£ million

	1990-91 ADP	*1991-92 plans*	*1992-93 plans*
Housing for rent[1]	1,040·5	1,341	1,499
Miscellaneous works (including major repairs)	68·0	88	63
Mini-HAG	5·0	7	8
Tenants Incentive Scheme	33·0	33	34
Low cost home ownership[2]	68·0	88	126
Other Expenditure[3]	6·0	6	6
Total gross expenditure	1,220·5	1,563	1,736
Receipts	−115·0	−117	−120
Total net expenditure	1,105·5	1,446	1,616

[1] Includes public expenditure on mixed funded for rent schemes and 100 per cent. publicly funded rented schemes.
[2] Includes shared ownership, leasehold for the elderly and rehabilitation for sale.
[3] Includes right to buy mortgages, self build, and tenants participation grants.

Details of expenditure from additional homelessness funds (included in main totals)

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Major repairs	10	30	—
Acquisitions for rent	13	—	—
Tenants Incentive Scheme	13	—	—
Hostels	—	7	7
Total	36	37	7

Regional shares of the revised Housing Needs Indicator (including distribution of extra funds for inner city areas but before cost compensation) and the planned regional distribution of the programme are as follows:

Percentage

	Revised HNI	*Unit distribution 1990-91*	*Unit distribution 1991-92*
London and Home Counties North East	10·8	10·5	10·7
London and Home Counties North West	11·5	9·7	11·4
London and Home Counties South	15·1	13·3	15·0
West	13·8	10·6	13·7
East Midlands	9·5	9·2	9·4
West Midlands	10·4	12·5	10·3
North East	13·9	15·6	13·9
North West	11·5	12·2	11·4
Merseyside	3·5	6·4	4·2
England	100·0	100·0	100·0

Planning Permission

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy with regard to the use of his powers under section 276 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 to revoke planning permission granted by local planning authories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Section 276 is a default power. Among other things, it enables the Secretary of State to take action to revoke a planning permission, after following specified procedures. There is provision for compensation to be paid.

My right hon. Friend's practice has been to use this power only rarely. He has taken the view that the power should be used only if the original decision is judged to be grossly wrong, so that damage is likely to be done to the wider public interest.

Recently, however, a particular kind of case has come to the attention of my right hon. Friend in which he may be prepared to exercise his power to revoke a planning permission. This is where he considers that consistency is needed between a local planning authority's decisions in different cases, to ensure that similar circumstances give rise to similar decisions and that the provisions of the development plan, so far as it is material, and other material considerations have been fully taken into account.

My right hon. Friend wishes to remind planning authorities of the importance of behaving equitably as between applicants, and being seen to do so. Where applicants for similar permissions in similar circumstances have been treated differently, it can seem capricious and unfair. Although there is a place in the planning system for consideration of personal circumstances, my right hon. Friend thinks that these have to be very marked indeed to justify treating similar applications differently. He also wishes to remind all members of planning committees that their decisions should be governed by material planning considerations alone. They should be most careful to avoid even the appearance that they may have been influenced by immaterial considerations.

My right hon. Friend will continue to consider each case on its merits bearing in mind this policy.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in relation to special shares in water public limited companies.

Mr. Chris Patten: The existing articles of association of the English water plcs seek for a period of five years to prevent the ownership or control by any one person of 15 per cent. or more of the voting rights. My consent as special shareholder is required before any change to this provision. The privatised water companies are embarking on a major capital investment programme to achieve a number of environmental objectives and it is important that there is a period of stability and ownership of management through the protection of the special share. It is not my intention, therefore, either to redeem my special share before 31 December 1994 or to consent to a change to the provision on ownership or control.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the level of the uniform business rate in England in 1990-91; and what will be the effect on rate bills of the uniform business rate and of the non-domestic revaluation.

Mr. Chris Patten: I intend to specify in the revenue support grant report, which will be laid before the House in the new year, a non-domestic rate of 34·8p in the pound for England for the year 1990-91. This is lower than the provisional figure which I announced in November because the results of the non-domestic revaluation indicate that, on average, rateable values will increase by eight times, slightly more than earlier forecasts. By fixing the poundage at this level we are meeting our undertaking to raise from private business and the nationalised industries in real terms broadly the same amount in rates as in 1989-90. This poundage takes account of inflation, measured by the annual rate of increase of 7·6 per cent. in the retail prices index for September 1989.

The valuation office is sending to local authorities today drafts of the new rating lists. Authorities are required to deposit these at their principal offices as soon as practicable. Some authorities may not be able to make them available for public inspection until 2 January. The lists will also be available for inspection at local valuation offices from that date. The draft lists take effect on 1 April 1990. Some of the values which they contain may change before that date in the light of later information.

I am placing in the Library an anlysis of the combined effects of the introduction of the uniform business rate and of the revaluation. In general this confirms the results of the Inland Revenue survey published in July, subject to the slight increase in the average revaluation factor which I have mentioned.

Factories and warehouses will on average see reductions in rate bills everywhere except in inner London. Shops and offices, on the other hand, will on average attract higher bills, except in the north and midlands where average rate bills for properties of this type will fall. Overall, once the transition is complete, the rate burden on businesses in the north and midlands will be reduced by about £930 million in real terms.

The analysis also shows the effects of the uniform business rate and of revaluation in Wales, where the rate will be 36·8p in 1990-91, as announced by my right hon. Friend on 18 December.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the rules under which urban development corporations carry out the process of tendering or seek contracts for the disposal of land or property or the provision of services; and how those rules differ from those applying to *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* central Government.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* Like local authorities and Government Departments urban development corporations are required to secure best price when disposing of assets, and value for money when letting contracts. They are advised that these objectives are normally best achieved by competitive tendering.

Urban development corporations are also subject to the competition provisions of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 in respect of construction and maintenance work and of the Local Government Act 1988 in respect of certain defind services. Part II of the 1988 Act, concerning public supply and works contracts, also applies to urban development corporations.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, further to his reply of 11 December, he will list the precise details of the numbers of those shares not yet available when they become available; and if he will write to the hon. Member for Nottingham North.

Mr. Howard: Once precise details of the Government's residual shareholdings in the 10 water companies are available, I will write to the hon. Gentleman listing them.

Homelessness

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest available figure for homelessness; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 4 December 1989]:* In the 12 months to September 1989 English local authorities accepted responsibility for 122,280 households; in 1979 the figure was 57,200. However, because of a change in the reporting system between 1980 and 1982, the figure for 1979 is not strictly comparable with those for later years.

For Welsh figures I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Rent Officers

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he is expecting to announce that the 1989 pay award to rent officers in England and Wales will be fully implemented.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* Rent officer pay is set by reference to a Civil Service analogue, at present HEO. Rent officers have received the 4 per cent. increase awarded to HEOs from 1 April 1989, and negotiations are still proceeding on the application of other aspects of the 1989 HEO award.

Works of Art (Restitution)

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government intend to sign the international convention for the restitution of works of art which have been stolen or removed from their country of origin; and if he has established whether an earlier signature to this convention would have guaranteed the return of the Icklingham finds which were illegally taken to America.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

Signature of the UNESCO convention would not have guaranteed the return of the alleged Icklingham finds. The Government are not convinced that the convention is the most suitable instrument for dealing with such issues.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest available figures for the numbers of sheltered dwellings for the elderly; and what were the figures in 1979.

Mr. Chope: Preliminary estimates for April 1989 derived from English local authorities' housing investment programme returns (HIP1) show that the number of sheltered housing units has risen by 70 per cent. since 1979. During this same period the total stock of housing has risen by 10 per cent.

Sheltered housing for the elderly: 1979 and 1989

thousands

	1979	*1989*	*increase*
Local authorities	209	300	91
Housing associations	48	117	69
Private	7	34	27
All (including other)	270	455	185

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the proposed reorganisation of the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his answer, 23 November, 1989, Official Report,* Vol. 162, columns *16-17*]: The Government have re-examined their proposals for the constitution of the joint committee of the proposed country bodies which I announced on 23 November was to be established to deal with questions with a Great Britain or international dimension and certain scientific issues. In that statement I said that the Government had not been persuaded by the nature Conservancy Council's argument that the Committee should have an independent chairman appointed by the Government. That was the only major point on which the Government dissented from the advice submitted by the council.

Having considered further representations from the council and others we have reached the conclusion that an independent chairmanship would have advantages in maintaining the confidence of the wider scientific community about the standards to be set for the new country bodies, and ensuring that matters of national and international importance for nature conservation are viewed from the correct perspective. The Government will therefore bring forward the necessary amendments to the Environmental Protection Bill at Committee stage to alow for the chairman of the joint committee to be directly appointed by the Secretary of State.

HEALTH

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Freeman: The number of accountancy firms currently employed by the Department of Health is five. Accountancy firms are invited to tender for the provision of advisory services to Departments on the basis of their suitability to provide the relevant advice. In making such appointments, consultations are carried out as necessary and where appropriate in the light of advice given by the Treasury on consultancy appointments.

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many contracts over £92,500 have been let by his Department in the 1988-89 financial year and the current financial year to date; and how many of these were *(a)* automatically renewed and *(b)* advertised throughout the European Community.

Mr. Freeman: The figures for 1988-89 relate to the Department of Health and Social Security. It is not possible to apportion expenditure to each Department separately.

The number of contracts awarded by the then Department of Health and Social Security and covered by the provisions of the EC Supplies Directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was 40 in the 1988-89 financial year. Of these, 37 were awarded following advertisement in the EC Journal and one was considered to be exempt from advertising and may have been awarded to the previous supplier.

The number of contracts awarded by the Department of Health, and covered by the provisions of the EC Supplies Directive, for which the current threshold is £92,000, was four in the current financial year to date. All of these were awarded following advertisement in the EC Journal. None was considered to be exempt from advertising.

National Physiotherapy Week

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to national physiotherapy week to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 19 to 23 March 1990.

Medicines

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the proposed increase in fees relating to the Medicinal Products for Human Use Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 418) by the Medicines Control Agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 24 November 1989 the Medicines Control Agency, in accordance with Section 129(6) of the Medicines Act 1968, wrote to all licence holders and interested organisations to consult them about proposed amendments to the Medicines (Fees Relating to Medicinal Products for Human Use) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No 418).

The letter contains a statement by the joint consultative group comprising senior representatives of the Department of Health (including the Medicines Control Agency) and of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) and the Pharmaceutical Association of Great Britain (PAGB). In that statement the group recognise that the deficit in the agency's fee income for 1989-90 will need to be carried forward into the calculation of fees for 1990-91. Also in 1990-91 the agency may require additional resources to improve its performance further and to eliminate the substantial backlog of applications. The group has concluded that, subject to statutory consultation, fee levels will have to be increased by 70 per cent. from 1 February. They go on to say that this may not be enough to put the agency into a sound financial position in 1990-91 to enable it to carry out its function effectively. They will, therefore, consider the matter further in the new year in the light of additional information which will become available. This will include better information on the likely volume of different types of licence applications and more precise costing information. It is hoped that this information will enable

the group to consider a fee structure that will provide stable funding and will place the agency on a sound financial basis.

Subject to the results of the consultation exercise amending regulations will be laid before the House in January.

A copy of the consultation letter (MLX 178) has been placed in the Library. The letter contains examples of the fee increases and explains the reasons behind these. Comments on the fee proposals have been requested by 22 December 1989.

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if the new formularies set up under the new proposals will be established on a local and voluntary basis; and whether new medicines will be included;

(2) if there will be any disincentive on the use of new medicines by general practitioners and hospitals under the reorganisation proposals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The aim of indicative prescribing budgets which will apply to general medical practitioners and not to hospitals, is to encourage more cost-effective prescribing to the advantage of patients individually and the NHS overall. General practioners will remain free to prescribe the medicines which are clinically necessary for their patients including of course new medicines.

The development of formularies at local level represents a further initiative to improve the quality of prescribing. It will be for each formulary's authors to decide which drugs to include. There should be no disincentive to the adoption of new medicines which have therapeutic advantages over existing drugs. It will be for individuals GPs to decide whether they wish to adopt a formulary. The fact that a new drug does not appear on a particular practice's formulary would not prevent a GP from prescribing it, since the use of formularies is voluntary.

Dental Services

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* complete and *(b)* partial sets of dentures were supplied by the National Health Service (i) in 1988 and (ii) in 1989; how many (i) fillings, (ii) teeth capped and (iii) extractions were completed in *(x)* 1988 and *(y)* 1989; and if he will make a statement concerning the future of dentistry in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: The National Health Service has made a considerable contribution to the marked improvement over recent years in the dental health of both adults and children. The Government are confident that this contribution will continue, strengthened by the proposals for a new contract for general dental practitioners.

The detailed information requested on treatment is set out in the table for the general dental service and for the community dental service. No comparable figures are available for dental treatment provided within the hospital service.

Numbers of treatments (England) by financial year:

Type of treatment	*1987-88 000's*	*1988-89 000's*
General dental service		
Synthetic resin dentures		
full	1,083	1,109
partial	664	691
Metal dentures		
full and partial	199	207
Fillings	23,957	22,728
Teeth capped	2,318	2,436
Teeth extracted	4,237	4,392
Community dental service		
Dentures—total supplied (no breakdown by type available)	13	13
Fillings	1,110	939
Teeth capped	9	9
Teeth extracted	434	398

Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale DHA

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have had eye tests since April in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority area; and what was the figure for the comparable period in 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Statistics relating to Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority are collected by Lancashire family practitioner committee and are not separately available. Information on the number of general ophthalmic services sight tests carried out since April 1989 is not yet available centrally.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average time for patients waiting to receive radiotherapy from the time of results of breast screen tests and treatment in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Breast screening is performed on "well women" aged 50 and over to allow early detection of cancer. Fewer than 10 per cent. of women screened are expected to be recalled either to have a repeat mammogram performed for technical reasons or to have a screen-detected abnormality further investigated. Only 1·5 per cent. of women screened should require further referral for biopsy and of these fewer than 1 in 3 are expected to have breast cancer. The decision on whether or not to use radiotherapy in the treatment of these women and, if so, at what stage in their treatment is a matter for clinical judgement. Information on the waiting time for radiotherapy is not collected centrally.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time from testing and screening of women for *(a)* cervical cancer and *(b)* breast cancer until the results are notified in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) on 12 December at columns *619-20*, information on the processing of cervical screening tests is not available in the form requested. Our guidance to health authorities states that laboratories should aim to send results to the doctor who submitted a smear within one month of receiving it. Laboratory processing times are monitored by the Department on a quarterly basis. The information collected relates only to those district health authorities (DHAs) which are failing to meet this one month target time. As at September 1989 (the latest data available) over 75 per cent. of DHAs were meeting this target. No backlogs were reported in respect of the laboratories in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale DHA.

Information on the average time taken to notify women of the result of their screening test under the breast screening programme is not collected centrally.

Mammogram Screening, North-West

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities in the North West regional health authority area provide a full scale mass mammogram screening service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The national breast screening programme for women aged 50 years and over is being set up over the three years to 1990. As at 13 November 1989 North Western RHA had three breast screening programmes operational: Manchester, Bolton and Wigan, which provide a screening service to the districts of North Manchester, Central Manchester and South Manchester; and Bolton and Wigan. Plans to extend these programmes to cover the districts of Stockport, Tameside and Glossop, Oldham, Salford and Trafford (Manchester); Bury and Rochdale (Bolton); and West Lancashire, Chorley and South Ribble (Wigan) are well advanced. Mobile units will be used to deliver the screening service in some areas. The RHA plans to establish two further programmes to cover the Lancashire districts of Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley; Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale; Preston; Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde; and Lancaster.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people suffering from schizophrenia have been convicted by the courts and sentenced to prison for offences committed when released from mental institutions *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the Greater Manchester area, during each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not centrally collected.

Airports (Public Health)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what examination he has undertaken of the proposals to upgrade the port health control unit at Heathrow airport into a health information centre for travellers.

Mr. Freeman: The port health control units at Heathrow airport are sited to deal with incoming passengers and are not accessible to those taking outgoing flights. Proposals for a health information centre for travellers at Heathrow will however, be discussed early in the new year at a meeting between officials from the Department and the London borough of Hillingdon which is responsible for the provision of port health at the airport.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what tropical insects have been found on incoming aircraft at or near British international airports; and if he will make a statement about the health risks to the public.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected centrally.

Local authorities in whose areas airports are situated are responsible for enforcing the Public Health (Aircraft) Regulations. Under these the environmental health department of the local authority concerned has the power to check that disinsection has been carried out and, if not, to ensure that it is done. There has been only one instance in the United Kingdom in the last 20 years in which someone living close to an airport has been bitten by a malarious mosquito. The temperate climate of the United Kingdom makes it most unlikely that tropical insects released from incoming aircraft will survive for more than a few hours.

Service Increment for Teaching

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the sums expended in each National Health Service region and in total on the service increment for teaching in each year since 1980; and if he will express those figures in current and standard April 1989 prices.

Mr. Freeman: Allocations to regional health authorities for the service increment for teaching between 1980-81 to 1990-91, are shown in the tables, at current cash levels and at 1989-90 cash levels using GDP deflator.

Service increment for teaching from 1980-81 to 1989-90

	£000s at cash										
	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	7,955	9,756	11,923	11,999	12,431	13,068	13,788	14,435	15,084	15,838	19,866
Yorkshire	7,776	10,126	10,957	11,829	12,183	12,455	13,178	13,797	14,418	15,527	19,753
Trent	18,205	23,576	26,656	29,088	30,438	31,232	34,036	36,342	37,920	40,175	43,824
East Anglian	3,488	3,507	3,791	4,874	5,166	5,738	6,065	6,350	6,636	8,971	9,605
North West Thames	28,748	36,498	32,554	33,725	27,134	27,534	29,019	30,380	31,219	32,714	34,943
North East Thames	25,403	31,514	34,126	39,638	48,118	48,261	49,555	51,779	54,321	57,135	61,283
South East Thames	17,867	22,480	24,098	29,008	29,968	31,182	32,384	33,766	35,245	37,050	40,103
South West Thames	6,069	7,242	7,541	10,235	11,339	12,966	13,791	14,437	15,087	15,841	16,960
Wessex	5,799	7,090	7,662	8,446	8,797	9,186	9,710	10,165	10,623	11,154	11,942
Oxford	4,472	5,627	6,081	6,739	6,982	7,388	7,810	8,176	8,544	8,971	9,605
South Western	6,476	8,200	8,822	9,741	10,263	10,160	10,316	10,792	11,295	12,159	13,448
West Midlands	8,724	10,637	11,637	12,716	13,175	13,926	14,736	15,384	16,077	16,880	18,843

	£000s at cash										
	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Mersey	8,516	10,733	11,599	13,092	13,750	14,472	15,789	16,071	16,616	17,039	19,201
North Western	13,314	16,771	18,125	20,085	20,808	22,265	23,476	24,578	25,683	26,967	31,078
Total	162,812	203,757	215,572	241,215	250,552	259,833	273,653	286,452	298,768	316,421	350,454

Service increment for teaching from 1980-81 to 1989-90

	£000s at 1989-90 cash levels										
	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Northern	13,542	15,127	17,242	16,578	16,362	16,324	16,661	16,565	16,140	15,838	18,920
Yorkshire	13,237	15,701	15,845	16,343	16,035	15,558	15,924	15,833	15,427	15,527	18,812
Trent	30,991	36,556	38,548	40,188	40,062	39,013	41,129	41,705	40,574	40,175	41,737
East Anglian	5,938	5,438	5,482	6,734	6,799	7,167	7,329	7,287	7,101	8,971	9,148
North West Thames	48,939	56,592	47,077	46,595	35,714	34,393	35,067	34,863	33,404	32,714	33,279
North East Thames	43,245	48,864	49,351	54,764	63,333	60,284	59,882	59,421	58,123	57,135	58,365
South East Thames	30,416	34,856	34,849	40,078	39,444	38,950	39,133	38,749	37,712	37,050	38,193
South West Thames	10,332	11,229	10,905	14,141	14,924	16,196	16,665	16,568	16,143	15,841	16,152
Wessex	9,872	10,993	11,080	11,669	11,579	11,474	11,734	11,665	11,367	11,154	11,373
Oxford	7,613	8,725	8,794	9,311	9,190	9,228	9,438	9,383	9,142	8,971	9,148
South Western	11,024	12,714	12,758	13,458	13,508	12,691	12,466	12,385	12,086	12,159	12,808
West Midlands	14,851	16,493	16,829	17,569	17,341	17,395	17,807	17,654	17,202	16,880	17,946
Mersey	14,497	16,642	16,774	18,088	18,098	18,077	19,079	18,443	17,779	17,039	18,287
North Western	22,665	26,004	26,211	27,750	27,387	27,812	28,368	28,205	27,481	26,967	29,598
Total	277,162	315,934	311,745	333,266	329,776	324,562	330,682	328,726	319,681	316,421	333,766

Disabled People

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to promote and encourage independent case management schemes for disabled people.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to paragraphs 3.3.2 to 3.3.6 of our recent White Paper "Caring for People" (Cm. 849) which sets out our views on the value of case management in targetting resources and planning services to meet specific needs of individual clients.

Embryo Research and Abortion

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received for each of the past 10 years concerning *(a)* embryo research and *(b)* abortion; of each of these categories how many representations where (i) for and (ii) against; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received a very large volume of correspondence representing a wide range of views on these subjects during this period. I regret that the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Porton Down

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the consultants' reports from PA and Shearman Lehman and Hutton on the future for the centre for applied biology and research at Porton Down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is not our normal practice to publish reports by consultants. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 12 December at column *632*.

Dr. Bray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what agreement was made in 1985 between the Secretary of State and Porton International regarding the construction by the latter of a fermentation plant at the centre for applied microbiology and research at Porton Down; and when he expects it to be built.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what date the Government's contract with Porton International stipulates the fermentation unit at the centre for applied microbiology and research should be built.

Mr. Freeman: The construction by the Porton International Group of a fermentation plant at the centre for applied microbiology and research was one of the provisions of an agreement between the company and the Public Health Laboratory Service Board in 1985. Construction of the plant will be conditional upon the completion of a lease the terms of which are still under discussion.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of the centre for applied microbiology and research; and if he will list the companies he is considering as possible purchasers.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 12 December at column *632*.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what payments have been made to the Government by Porton International under its contract to commercialise inventions from the centre for applied microbiology and research.

Mr. Freeman: There is no contract between the Government and Porton International Group in respect of

the centre for applied microbiology and research; the contents of the agreements between the group and the Public Health Laboratory Service Board, and any associated transactions, are commercially confidential.

Long-Stay Mental Hospitals

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give by region for each of the last five years the amount of money paid to regions for resettlement of discharged patients from long-say mental hospitals.

Mr. Freeman: These sums are not identified separately by the Department in the resource allocation process. Regional health authorities make provision for the resettlement of patients discharged from long stay mental hospitals from within their main allocations, together with any resources which are made available from the planned rundown and closure of these hospitals.

Clinical Grading

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has with regard to clinical grading on the cost of subsequent appeals to district health authorities in the north-west; and what money has been provided to health authorities towards this cost.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The extra funds which the Government made available in 1988 to meet the costs of the nurses' and midwives' 1988 pay award were intended to cover the full costs of the clinical regrading exercise. Information on appeals to district health authorities is not collected centrally.

Professional Association of Nursery Nurses

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now recognise the Professional Association of Nursery Nurses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS management is free to extend local recognition to organisations such as the Professional Associaton of Nursery Nurses when they have a significant level of membership locally. Membership of the staff side of the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council is for the staff side to determine.

West Lambeth Health Authority

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will establish a full independent inquiry into allegations of financial mismanagement in West Lambeth health authority.

Mr. Freeman: No. The South East Thames regional health authority is already taking appropriate action with the district health authority, and Ministers have asked the chief executive to keep Ministers informed of the outcome.

Helios Programme

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy towards the increase proposed by the European Parliament in Budget line 6450, the Helios programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that several proposals to increase the budget for the Helios programme relating to disabled people, were put forward in the European Parliament but that none of them was adopted by the Budgets Committee.

Erythropoietin

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has now completed its assessment of the likely need for erythropoietin and its expenditure implications, on the basis of information supplied by health authorities; if he has now determined the best way forward as referred to in the *Official Report*, column *316-17*, of 23 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Erythropoietin has still not received a product licence. Information from health authorities has revealed significant variations in assumptions about the usage of the product after licensing. Discussions are taking place with the medical profession on the clinical indications for the prescription of the product.

Cochlear Implants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects his review of future national funding for a cochlear implant programme to be completed; when he will make an announcement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We hope to complete the review shortly.

Unit General Managers

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service unit general managers are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Nurse Prescribing

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends publishing the report of the advisory group on nurse prescribing; and when he intends to implement it.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As we have made clear on many occasions, we support the idea of prescribing by certain community nursing staff. Various issues need to be sorted out before a scheme can be introduced. The advisory group on nurse prescribing was set up last year to look at these issues, and the group has now submitted its report. We welcome the report, which is being published today and are grateful to the advisory group for its excellent work.

The group's major recommendation is that nurses with a district nurse or health visitor qualification should be allowed to prescribe items necessary for the care of those conditions for which they take independent clinical responsibility.

The report will be sent to interested bodies for their comments. In the meantime, officials are carrying forward work on some of the outstanding issues. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library.

First European Conference on Environment and Health

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the first European conference on environment and health.

Mr. Freeman: I attended the first European Conference on Environment and Health, held in Frankfurt on 7-8 December 1989, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government. The conference, which was organised by the European Region of the World Health Organisation and attended by Ministers and representatives of 29 of the 32 states in the region, endorsed a charter on environment and health. In my address to the conference I drew attention to the United Kingdom's positive record both in relation to global environmental issues and to the protection of its citizens against environmental health risks, and to its commitment to provide a healthy environment for its population. I made it clear that the United Kingdom accepts the charter as a statement of general principles on environmental health protection but without prejudice to the development of international law in this area. I have placed copies of the charter and of my address in the Library.

NHS Reform

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, under his proposals for National Health Service hospitals, he anticipates that general practitioners will be able to obtain without charge telephone advice from such hospitals outside their own catchment area concerning the treatment of patients not being considered for hospital admission.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Yes. We have no reason to believe that the present informal arrangements between individual GPs and hospital doctors will not continue.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the National Health Service of the prescriptions for benzodiazepines issued by community pharmacists during 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The total basic price (net ingredient cost) of the prescriptions for benzodiazepines dispensed by community pharamacists in Great Britain during 1988 was £23·6 million.

ARGICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Aggregate Dredging

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will carry out a full survey, to be paid for by the aggregate dredging industry, of inshore fishing resources in any area scheduled for possible aggregate dredging, before the issuing of licences is considered.

Mr. Curry: The revised procedures for consideration of applications to dredge marine aggregate make provision for an environmental assessment where effects on the environment are likely to be significant. In deciding whether to require such an assessment, the Crown estate and the Department of the Environment must consider certain criteria including whether a commercial fishery, nursery area or spawning ground is involved. My Department will also make its own assessment of the potential effects, if any, of any dredging application on fishing and fisheries.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will undertake to consult the inshore fishing industry before he discusses the granting of licences for aggregate dredging with, and by, the Crown Commissioners.

Mr. Curry: Under new arrangements recently agreed between the Crown Estate Commission and Government Departments, informal consultation between the Crown Estate Commission and the fishing industry is the first step in consideration of application for licences to extract aggregate from the seabed. Subsequently, formal consultation is held with all interested parties, including the fishing industry. This is a continuation of arrangements which have existed for many years.

Fish Producers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the fish producers' organisations; and what items were discussed.

Mr. Curry: I have visited a number of fishing ports recently and on each occasion met representatives of the local fish producers organisations. I met representatives of the Fleetwood FPO on 21 September 1989, the Grimsby FPO on 5 October, the Yorkshire and Anglia FPO on 2 November, the Fish Producers Organisation (Hull) on 17 November and the Cornish FPO and the South Western FPO on 22-23 November.

A wide range of fisheries issues were discussed including fleet rationalisation, vessel licensing and quota management, and the forthcoming Community measures on fish hygiene.

Beer and Bakery Products (Safety)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives he has taken in the last three months to improve the quality of beer and bakery products.

Mr. Maclean: I announced on 8 November (*Offical Report,*) column *676* my acceptance of the Food Advisory Committee's recommendation that approval for potassium bromate as a flour improver should be withdrawn. On the same day, draft regulations which would prohibit this use from 1 April 1990 were circulated for public comment. The brewing industry has also been asked as a matter of priority to carry out the studies requested by the Committee in order to confirm the absence of residues of bromate in malt and beer and I understand the results of this work will be available shortly.

Milk Production

Mr. French: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to pay compensation to farmers whose milk production was made subject to restriction orders but was subsequently found to have been safe.

Mr. Curry: No.

Food Safety Directorate

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column *108* to the hon. Member for Billericay if he will list the names of the organisations and individuals whose views he took into account when deciding to establish the food safety directorate.

Mr. Maclean: The views expressed to me to which I referred in my reply of 4 December were put to me on an informal basis and it would not therefore be appropriate to list the individuals and organisations concerned. In coming to my conclusions about the establishment of the Food Safety Directorate I did, however, take particular note of the Report dated June 1989 of the National Consumer Council entitled "The Future of Food Regulations—a discussion document."

Antibiotics

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those antibiotics approved by his Department for prophylactic use, indicating the appropriate animal specimen in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The following antibiotic substances are approved for prophylactic use in acordance with product licences issued under the Medicines Act:

Name of substance and animal species

Amoxycillin
Cats, cattle, dogs, pigs, sheep

Ampicillin
Cats, cattle, dogs, horses, pigs, poultry, sheep

Apramycin
Pigs

Aureomycin
Cattle, horses, pigs, poultry

Cloxacillin
Cattle, sheep

Framycetin
Cattle, pigs, poultry

Fumagillin
Honey bees

Lincomycin
Pigs, poultry

Maduramicin
Chickens

Monensin
Chickens, turkeys

Neomycin
Cattle, chickens, pigs, turkeys

Novobiocin
Cattle

Penicillin
Cats, cattle, dogs, goats, horses, pigs, poultry, sheep

Salinomycin
Cattle, chickens

Spectinomycin
Cattle, chickens, pigs, sheep, turkeys

Streptomycin
Cattle, pigs, poultry

Tiamulin
Pigs

Tylosin
Chickens, pigs, turkeys

Organic Produce

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will be conducting an investigation into the current price differences between organically and non-organically grown produce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans for such a survey. Prices are set by market forces. I have been encouraging British farmers to respond to the strong demand for organic produce.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, any recent guidance concerning the release of agricultural land for afforestation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I recognise the important role that forestry can play as an alternative use of agricultural land and this is reflected in the woodland grant scheme and in the farm woodland scheme which we introduced last year. I have not, however, issued any recent guidance on the subject.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy for each county of England and Wales for the four-week period ending 16 December.

Mr. Maclean: The information is as follows:

County	*Number*
Bedfordshire	2
Cambridge	2
Essex	10
Hertfordshire	2
Lincolnshire	5
Norfolk	11
Northamptonshire	4
Suffolk	3
Cheshire	11
Derbyshire	5
Hereford and Worcester	7
Lancashire	14
Leicestershire	15
Merseyside	1
Nottinghamshire	5
Salop	25
Staffordshire	15
Warwickshire	11
Cumbria	5
Durham	4
Humberside	3
Yorkshire North	12
Yorkshire South	1
Yorkshire West	1

County	Number
Berkshire	7
Buckinghamshire	9
Hampshire	34
Isle of Wight	5
Kent	19
Oxon	12
Surrey	12
Sussex East	12
Sussex West	20
Avon	9
Cornwall	57
Devon	82
Dorset	62
Glostershire	26
Somerset	44
Wiltshire	50
Clwyd	8
Dyfed	21
Glamorgan South	3
Gwent	4
Gwynedd	2
Powys	10
Total	682

Hexham

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will visit the Hexham constituency.

Mr. Gummer: I hope to visit Newcastle university early next summer and to make a tour of the surrounding area, which may include a visit to my hon. Friend's constituency.

Food Colouring

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies he is pursuing to control the use of colouring materials in food.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to my Ministry's press release number 493/89 of 29 November 1989, a copy of which I have sent to him direct.

Eggs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether imported eggs are subject to the same standards as those now applied to domestically produced eggs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: All eggs marketed in the United Kingdom must meet the standards prescribed in Council Regulation (EEC) 2772/75 and Commission Regulation (EEC) 95/69 (both amended).

As regards monitoring for salmonella I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on 11 December (*Official Report*, column *522*.)

Brogdale Experimental Horticulture Station

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the future ownership and access to breeding material and alternative varieties of fruit at the Brogdale experimental horticulture station.

Mr. Gummer: As my noble Friend announced on 14 December, the national fruit collection is to be moved from Brogdale experimental horticulture station to Wye college. The Government will continue to provide financial support for the collection, so the collection will remain in public ownership. Detailed arrangements have yet to be finalised, but we intend that the present level of access to the collection will be maintained. This will include the provision of breeding material to, and access for, bona fide plant breeders. In addition, we expect the collection's proximity to Wye college will result in improved access for scientific and educational purposes.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many different plant species are currently held at the Brogdale experimental horticulture station; who has access to this material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Some 16 species of fruit are featured at Brogdale experimental horticultural station. In total they comprise 3,800 varieties in the heritage collections, 750-800 varieties in new fruit variety trials and 75 in plant variety rights trials. Access to the material in the collections is available to the public for a small handling charge.

New variety trial information is available to growers via charged—ADAS advice.

Plant variety rights trials are confidential to the Plant Variety Rights Office and the plant breeders entering them.

Plant material from breeders at home and abroad is protected by agreements which prevent wider distribution without reference to owners.

Microwaves

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the findings of the study on amino acid isomerisation and microwave exposure by G. Lubec Cle. Wolf and B. Barbosch of the university of Vienna, as published in a letter in the *Lancet* on 9 December, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 13 December at column *698*.

Fish Diseases

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take to prevent the introduction of the fish disease, infectious salmon anaemia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Infectious salmon anaemia (or infectious laxanaemia) is a viral disease of salmon which causes high mortalities in farmed fish and for which there is no known effective treatment. It may be spread by the movement of live fish and can be carried in the viscera of salmon carcasses. It has been found only in Norway where a number of farms are now infected.

We already prohibit imports into Great Britain of all live fish of the salmon family. The importation of dead, ungutted fish is also generally prohibited save, under an exemption licence, from the Irish Republic, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and Norway.

As a further safeguard, and in view of the serious nature of infectious salmon anaemia and its establishment in Norway, we have decided to modify the exemption licence

so that ungutted salmon and trout may not be imported from Norway. This prohibition will take effect on 25 December and will be until further notice.

As an additional precautionary measure, we have decided that infectious salmon anaemia will be made a notifiable disease throughout Great Britain in accordance with the terms of the Diseases of Fish Act 1937.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Brussels Fisheries Council held on 18 and 19 December.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made earlier today.

Cook-chill Foods

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the reheating of cook-chill foods from retail outlets is required for safety reasons prior to consumption; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* In any food, the possibility cannot be ruled out that microbiological contamination may occur at some stage before the consumer eats it. With food that is to be heated, therefore, as a matter of prudence consumers should ensure that it is heated until piping hot right through.

Animals and Birds (Transport)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to bring the live export of domestic animals by sea under the regulations governing farm animals.

Mr. Maclean: The Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973, as amended, will continue to apply to such animals until new EC measures are agreed on the protection of all animals during transport.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take urgent steps to improve the conditions under which live animals and birds are transported.

Mr. Maclean: Extensive national legislation is already in place to protect animals and birds in transit. The Commission has submitted proposals for Community measures and we will be seeking to ensure that these lay down high standards of welfare and that the measures are effectively enforced.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Kingdom rules which currently provide minimum values designed to prevent the export of horses for slaughter, indicating which rules, if any, would continue under the draft European Community regulation on protection of animals during transportation.

Mr. Maclean: Sections 40 and 41 of the Animal Health Act 1981 provide for minimum values for exports of ponies and certain types of horses. These arrangements cannot be maintained if the proposed EC regulation is adopted as drafted.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what figures are easily available regarding the importation both of pet birds and captive birds for 1988; and how many birds in each category *(a)* were dead on arrival and *(b)* died in quarantine.

Mr. Maclean *[pursuant to his reply 18 December 1989, c. 31]:* I have placed in the Library of the House today copies of the results of a survey by my Department into mortalities of imported birds during 1988. The figures cover deaths on arrival at quarantine premises and during the statutory quarantine period. Broadly, the study shows that of 185,000 birds, 5,000 were dead on arrival and a further 21,000 died during post-import quarantine. The average mortality was 13·7 per cent. These losses are in addition to unquantified deaths during capture in the country of origin and subsequent handling and transport.

This study, the first of its kind in Europe, provides a basis for considering what further measures need to be taken. I share the widespread concern about the high level of mortality in this trade.

Our existing arrangements relating to the import of captive birds have been strikingly successful in dealing with the disease risks which such imports would otherwise constitute, but in the light of the results of the survey I will be taking further steps to ensure that our requirements are being fulfilled. My officials will be visiting major exporting countries to determine how effectively they fulfil our certification requirements and impress upon them the importance of following IATA standards for shipment to the United Kingdom. These visits will enable us to decide whether it is necessary to impose additional conditions and whether there are any countries from which imports should no longer be accepted on health grounds. They are an essential prerequisite because action must be seen to be securely founded on proven risk if it is to be compatible with our international obligations regulations.

I will also review the conditions that are imposed after birds reach the United Kingdom, including stocking rates in quarantine premises (which my officials are already examining) and the possibility of requiring post-import prophylactic treatment for certain important diseases. Officials will be meeting representatives of the bird trade to discuss the implications of the results of the survey and the possibility of a code of practice which could for example tackle the question of restricting imports to less vulnerable species. I will be contacting the airlines to emphasise how much importance I attach to compliance with satisfactory practice in transporting birds and will be considering whether any further welfare safeguards are needed.

Measures to deal with the high mortality found among imported birds will not, however, be effective on a national level. I therefore propose to raise this issue in Community discussion at an early opportunity and intend that the United Kingdom should ensure that the Community fully recognises the seriousness of this welfare issue.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 December 1989

ENERGY

Power Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether West Burton, Rugeley, Staythorpe and Aberthow power stations are to be transferred from National Power to PowerGen.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government do not intend to reopen the existing non-nuclear split of assets between National Power and PowerGen.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department has made no expenditure on the arts during the last financial year. However, my Department has commissioned original design and artwork for publications, exhibitions and advertisements. The amount spent on this work cannot be separately identified.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Capital Allocations

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1978-79 to 1989-90 the capital spending allocations for *(a)* local education authorities and *(b)* voluntary aided and special schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Total capital allocations for LEAs, which may be topped up from capital receipts and other sources, from 1981-82 to 1989-90 were as follows, together with figures for actual gross expenditure financed by allocations, capital receipts, and other sources.

	£ million Allocations	*£ million Gross expenditure*
1981-82	355	406·1
1982-83	338	456·1
1983-84	295	469·2
1984-85	300	501·2
1985-86	315	530·2
1986-87	297	574·9
1987-88	306	592·8
1988-89	387	702·0
1989-90	352	n/a

Details of initial allocations to individual LEAs for these years were provided in the reply given to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) by my right hon. Friend on 7 November 1989, at columns 588-636, and gave the information requested in respect of local education authorities from 1981-82 to 1989-90. Comparable information is not available prior to 1981-82, as local education authorities did not receive block allocations, but were notified annually in the context of a rolling programme of the limit of the value of building starts in the following year.

Payments of grants to voluntary aided and special agreement schools for capital expenditure were as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	16·4
1979-80	20·3
1980-81	22·1
1981-82	24·0
1982-83	26·1
1983-84	22·4
1984-85	29·1
1985-86	36·5
1986-87	31·8
1987-88	37·2
1988-89	50·4
1989-90	65·3

Notes:

1. Grant represents 85 per cent. of gross expenditure, 15 per cent. of which is met by governing bodies.
2. Capital grant figures for 1978-79 to 1981-82 are not separately identified from a single building grant figure which included repairs and maintenance. The capital figures shown for this period are based on an apportionment of the building grant figure using the average ratio between capital and repairs during 1982-83 and 1985-86.

Children (HIV)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines have been issued to local education authorities about the admission to schools of children who are HIV positive.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Bulk copies of the booklet "Children at School and Problems Related to AIDS" were issued to all chief education officers in England and Wales in June 1986, sufficient in number for copies to be sent to all maintained schools. The booklet advises that the fact of HIV infection should not be a factor taken into account by LEAs, governing bodies or headteachers in discharging their duties concerning school admissions, transfer and attendance, or exclusion from school. The booklet also provides guidance on safety measures to be taken by schools to avoid any risk of transmission of HIV infection. There are no known cases in the United Kingdom of transmission of HIV infection in the school setting.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1988-89 the Department made direct grants totalling some £15·7 million to individual bodies primarily concerned with the arts and design education. In addition, central grants to universities and other directly funded institutions of higher education were used to cover expenditure on arts and design education. However, information on the amounts involved is not held centrally.

Religious Education

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent local education authorities in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland have complied with the requirement to establish statutory advisory councils on religious education.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand that all local education authorities in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland have established standing advisory councils on religious education.

Research Equipment (Survey)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be publishing the ABRC survey of academic research equipment.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the ABRC will be publishing the report of this survey very shortly.

Teacher Shortages

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secreatry of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the likely level of teacher shortages in January 1990.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department carries out a survey of teacher vacancies in January each year. I will report the results in the usual way.

Teacher Vacancies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he makes of the number of teacher vacancies in schools at 31 October or the latest available date.

Mr MacGregor: The most recent comprehensive survey of teacher vacancies was conducted by my Department in January 1989. Numbers of vacancies for full-time permanent teachers in maintained schools in England are given in the table.

Full-time permament teacher vacancies in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools—England, January 1989

Local Education Authority/Region	*Number of vacancies*	*As a percentage of teachers in post*
Gateshead	31	1·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	50	2·3
North Tyneside	0	0·0
South Tyneside	0	0·0
Sunderland	13	0·5
Cleveland	12	0·2
Cumbria	22	0·6
Durham	15	0·3
Northumberland	11	0·4
North	154	0·6
Barnsley	5	0·3
Doncaster	22	0·8
Rotherham	32	1·4
Sheffield	12	0·3
Bradford	28	0·6
Calderdale	20	1·2
Kirklees	30	0·9
Leeds	61	1·0
Wakefield	70	2·6
Humberside	29	0·4
North Yorks	46	0·9
York and Humberside	355	0·9
Knowsley	10	0·6
Liverpool	20	0·4
St. Helens	9	0·5
Sefton	3	0·1
Wirral	19	0·7
Bolton	11	0·5
Bury	14	1·0
Manchester	55	1·4
Oldham	7	0·3
Rochdale	33	1·7
Salford	58	2·8
Stockport	14	0·6
Tameside	38	2·1
Trafford	9	0·6
Wigan	9	0·3
Cheshire	24	0·3
Lancashire	193	1·8
North West	526	1·0
Derbyshire	76	1·0
Leicestershire	44	0·6
Lincolnshire	52	1·2
Northamptonshire	10	0·2
Nottinghamshire	108	1·3
East Midlands	290	0·9
Birmingham	188	2·2
Coventry	24	0·9
Dudley	48	1·9
Sandwell	25	0·9
Solihull	27	1·6
Walsall	4	0·2
Wolverhampton	24	1·0
Hereford and Worcester	50	1·0
Shropshire	13	0·4
Staffordshire	50	0·6
Warwickshire	31	0·8
West Midlands	484	1·1
Cambridgeshire	39	0·8
Norfolk	31	0·6
Suffolk	36	0·8
East Anglia	106	0·7
Barking	51	4·0
Barnet	85	3·9
Bexley	31	1·9
Brent	32	1·6
Bromley	10	0·6
Croydon	39	1·7
Ealing	116	5·5
Enfield	72	3·6
Haringey	128	8·5
Harrow	16	1·2
Havering	51	2·7
Hillingdon	58	3·5
Hounslow	24	1·5
Kingston	9	0·9
Merton	47	4·1
Newham	194	8·2
Redbridge	36	2·3
Richmond	1	0·1
Sutton	21	1·9
Waltham Forest	75	4·2
ILEA	1,028	6·5
South East and Greater London	2,124	4·3
Bedfordshire	117	2·8
Berkshire	91	1·7
Buckinghamshire	73	1·6
East Sussex	74	1·9

Local Education Authority/Region	Number of vacancies	As a percentage of teachers in post
Essex	123	1·1
Hampshire	134	1·3
Hertfordshire	109	1·4
Isle of Wight	0	0·0
Kent	224	2·1
Oxfordshire	9	0·3
Surrey	131	2·2
West Sussex	74	1·7
Other South East	1,159	1·6
Avon	21	0·3
Cornwall	47	1·4
Devon	122	1·9
Dorset	11	0·3
Gloucestershire	0	0·0
Somerset	73	2·4
Wiltshire	68	1·7
South West	342	1·1
Total England	5,540	1·5

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all projects funded by *(a)* the European Community and *(b)* Her Majesty's Government regarding global climate changes and all the environmental factors associated with the greenhouse effect.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* The provision of information in respect of projects funded by both the European Community and Her Majesty's Government is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Details of work relevant to global climate change undertaken by the research councils are as follows:

Natural Environment Research Council:

- Application of weather radar to the alleviation of climatic hazards.
- Development of deep ocean pH instrument.
- Contribution to the world ocean circulation experiment.
- Fine resolution Antarctic modelling.
- Biogeochemical ocean flux study.
- Automatic submersible development programme.
- North sea project.
- Marine laboratories programme.
- Atmospheric sciences programme.
- United Kingdom universities global atmospheric modelling programme.
- Palaeoclimatology.
- BGS data collection for climatology.
- Pattern and change in Antarctic physical environment.
- Geological evolution of west Antarctica.
- Dynamics of the Antarctica terrestrial and freshwater ecosystem.
- Structure and dynamics of the South ocean ecosystem.
- Terrestrial and freshwater science programmes and support of research in universities and higher education institutions.

Agricultural and Food Research Council:

- The absorbtion or release of carbon dioxide by plants in photosynthesis and respiration and the effects of carbon dioxide on growth, production and development.
- The fate of nitrogen in plants and soil and the release of gases such as nitrous oxide to the atmosphere.
- Predictive mathematical modelling of the response of plants and plant communities to the interacting effects of carbon dioxide, light, photoperiod, temperature, desiccation, water logging, pH and nutrition.
- Effects of temperature of growth and development and the tolerance to extremes.
- Plant water relations and adaption to water shortage.
- The effects of changing environmental factors on pests and diseases.
- A significant part of the AFRC programme, especially in the plants and environment research area, bears on environmental aspects.

Science and Engineering Research Council:

- The stratospheric and mesospheric sounder (SAMS) instrument for the NASA Nimbus 7 satellite.
- The improved stratospheric and mesospheric sounder (ISAMS) and the microwave limb sounder (MLS) instruments for the NASA upper atmosphere research satellite.
- The along track radiometer (ATSR) instrument for the ESA earth resources satellite (ERS-1).
- The geophysical data facility at the Rutherford Appleton laboratory.
- A mesosphere-stratosphere-troposphere (MST) radar facility is being constructed by University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, in collaboration with the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory.
- In addition, SERC supports some research on chemical reactions relevant to the atmosphere, on improved combustion processes, on renewable energy sources, on the effects of environmental changes on civil engineering structures, projects on lower atmosphere and climate research and provides supporting computer facilities.

In addition to the specific projects listed, other work of the councils has a relevance to factors associated with the greenhouse effect.

Student Maintenance Award

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what was the average level of net student maintenance award and parental contribution for each year since 1979, at 1990-91 prices.

(2) if he will give figures for the levels of student maintenance award, loan and parental contribution for students with average levels of maintenance award and parental contribution, at 1990-91 prices, from 1989-90 to 2007-8.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The table shows average grant (including average supplementary allowances), contribution (including any contribution assessed against a spouse's or the student's own income), and, for the relevant years, loan, in constant 1990 prices. The figures take into account the recently announced main rates of student grant for 1990-91, and assume an inflation rate of 3 per cent. per annum from that year onwards.

Academic year	Average main tenance payment[1,2]	Average contribu-tions[1,2]	Average loan	Total average resources
1979-80	2,133	548	—	2,681
1980-81	2,137	533	—	2,660
1981-82	2,007	588	—	2,595
1982-83	1,906	645	—	2,551
1983-84	1,857	647	—	2,504
1984-85	1,684	838	—	2,522
1985-86	1,505	972	—	2,477
1986-87	1,515	963	—	2,478
1987-88	1,488	1,008	—	2,496
1988-89	1,463	990	—	2,453
1989-90	1,448	974	—	2,422
1990-91	1,462	972	420	2,854
1991-92	1,419	941	494	2,854
1992-93	1,381	913	559	2,854
1993-94	1,344	886	623	2,854
1994-95	1,309	860	685	2,854
1995-96	1,274	835	745	2,854
1996-97	1,240	811	803	2,854

Academic year	Average main tenance payment[1 2]	Average contribu-tions [1 2]	Average loan	Total average resources
1997-98	1,207	787	859	2,854
1998-99	1,176	764	914	2,854
1999-2000	1,145	741	968	2,854
2000-01	1,115	720	1,019	2,854
2001-02	1,086	698	1,070	2,854
2002-03	1,057	678	1,118	2,854
2003-04	1,030	658	1,166	2,854
2004-05	1,003	639	1,212	3,854
2005-06	977	620	1,256	2,854
2006-07	952	602	1,300	2,854
2007-08	928	584	1,342	2,854
2008-09[3]	900	571	1,383	2,854

Notes: [1] Figures for 1987-88 and previous years are outturn recorded by local authorities; for 1988-89 estimated; and for 1990-91 and later years compatible with the latest government spending plans.

[2] Assuming a cash freeze on maintenance grant rates and average contributions from 1990; and average total resources constant in real terms from 1990, at an annual inflation rate of 3 per cent.

[3] If supplementary allowances are excluded the sum of the remaining maintenance element and contribution equals the average loan by 2008-09.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Estate of Mr. Freddie Andrews

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made to date by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in their investigations into the handling of the estate of Mr. Freddie Andrews (1976 No. 516); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The Chief Constable has informed me that the RUC fraud section has carried out a thorough investigation of this complex matter. As a result one person was prosecuted and convicted for theft and deception. Any further information which may come to light will be carefully examined.

Food Safety

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning difficulties experienced by public health officers in enforcing existing regulations in relation to the display and sale of cooked and uncooked meats in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Health and Social Services has from time to time received representations from organisations representing enforcement interests about difficulties in enforcing these regulations. Similar representations have been received on the Government's recently published proposals for amending the existing law on food hygiene matters generally.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to strengthen the legislation governing the recommendations relating to hygiene regulations applying to the display and sale of cooked and uncooked meats in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: As part of a United Kingdom exercise, the Department of Health and Social Services recently completed consultations with interested parties on proposals for new legislation to tighten food hygiene law generally. Comments are now being considered and the Government intend that new regulations should be made as soon as practicable.

RUC

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost to date of the Stevens inquiry into the Royal Ulster Constabulary and security; and when the inquiry will be in a position to make its findings available.

Mr. Cope: Precise costs for the investigations now being conducted by the deputy chief constable of Cambridgeshire, Mr. John Stevens, and his inquiry team are not yet available. However, it is estimated that they will be in the region of £100,000 to £125,000 per month, for the duration of the inquiry team's secondment to Northern Ireland.

I understand that Mr. Stevens hopes to be able to report to the Chief Constable early in the new year.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the expenditure of operating the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the running of the conference and the operation of the secretariat in Maryfield, Belfast, in 1989; and what was the comparable expenditure for previous years.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Details of expenditure are available only on a financial year basis. Between 1 April 1989 and 31 October 1989 identified expenditure by the British Government in holding meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and operating the secretariat amounted to £529,000. Comparable expenditure in previous years is as follows: Expenditure by the Irish Government on conferences and the secretariat is a matter for them.

	£ million
1985-86	[1]0·53
1986-87	[1]1·09
1987-88	[1]0·96
1988-89	0·93

[1] Includes estimated expenditure on additional policing.

Harbour

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by category the number of *(a)* yachts, *(b)* fishing boats, *(c)* pleasure boats and *(d)* other sea-going vessels registered at Portrush, Ballycastle, Bangor, Ardglass, Donaghadee and Portstewart harbours.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

I regret that this information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

London Assessment Studies

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the estimate of the number of homes likely to be lost as a result of the decisions relating to stage 2B report of the London assessment studies;

(2) what levels of public transport fares increases and fuel cost increases were assumed in assessing the options in the London assessment studies;

(3) what would be the estimated cost of implementation of each of the preferred options for each of the London assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins: The consultants assumed that public transport fares would rise in line with expected growth in gross domestic product, and that fuel costs would rise midway between the Department of Transport's high and low forecast. Forecast increases for the period from 1986 until 2001 are 46·3 per cent. and 13·7 per cent., respectively.

Information on the cost and effects of the consultants' options is set out in their stage two reports, which have been placed in the Library.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those European Community countries in which it is unlawful to give private driving tuition to learner drivers;

(2) what studies have been undertaken by his Department of the practices employed in other European Community countries in the supervision of learner drivers.

Mr. Atkins: The Department is a member of the Commission Internationale Des Examens de Conduite Automobile (CIECA) which exists to exchange information and experience about driver testing and training throughout Europe. We are participating in its latest update of national requirements. The value of these requirements needs to be assessed in the context of the accident records and problems of the countries concerned. CIECA data at present available indicate that Denmark, West Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Portugal do not allow learners to obtain practical driving experience other than through paid professional tuition.

Aircraft Safety

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to implement the aircraft safety recommendations set out in the Civil Aviation Authority's report on aircraft evacuations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority has the statutory responsibility for regulating safety in civil aviation. Consequently it is for the CAA to consider the results of the Cranfield trials, which were commissioned, funded and published by the CAA.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward an amendment to the Railways Act 1968 to permit British Rail to invest speculatively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail's duties and powers, which are defined mainly by the Transport Act 1962, enable British Rail to carry out any investment required for the purpose of its business. If my hon. Friend has a particular point in mind, I should be grateful if he would write to me.

Penalty Points

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will report the results of the monitoring by his Department of the effects of the Penalty Points (Alteration) Order 1988;

(2) what consultation he has had with the Magistrates Association concerning the effects of the Penalty Points (Alteration) Order 1988.

Mr. Atkins: We have invited the Magistrates Association to participate in monitoring the effects of the penalty points alterations which came into force on 1 March this year. No problems have been drawn to our attention so far.

Traffic Area Organisation

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken on the Palmer report on traffic area organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Parkinson: A number of interested organisations were invited to comment on the recommendations contained in the Palmer report. These are being considered. I expect to reach decisions on the main recommendations early in the new year.

Gatwick Airport

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to when the TNA security equipment being installed at Gatwick airport will become operational.

Mr. McLoughlin: The machine, which will be only the third of six production machines to be installed, will be loaned by the FAA for a 12-month trial and evaluation in a United Kingdom airport. We are in close touch with the FAA and Gatwick Airport Ltd. about the arrangements for its installation and operation. Many questions have had to be resolved and other agencies have had to be consulted. Negotiations and consultations are nearing completion. Before the machine can be delivered modifications requested by Gatwick Airport Ltd. will need to be completed by the American manufacturer. It will not become operational as part of the national aviation security programme until initial tests have been satisfactorily carried out.

Lowlands Airports Policy

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision on the Scottish lowland airports policy review.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend expects to be in a position to announce his decision in the new year.

British Rail

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the disposal of British Rail land in Nottingham;

(2) what rate of return he requires from British Rail on the sale of derelict land holdings;

(3) what rules apply to the sale of British Rail land and the putting out to tender of such land.

Mr. Portillo: The disposal of British Rail land is the responsibility of the British Rail Property Board (BRPB). The board's objectives require it to manage its operational property in accordance with best commercial practice, and to identify and divest itself of all underused or surplus land and property as rapidly as possible, at a proper commercial price.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the electrification of the midlands main line.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of British Rail regularly. We welcome worthwhile proposals for electrification schemes. I understand that British Rail has no plans to electrify the midland main lines at present.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what correspondence he has had with British Rail regarding the sale of land in Nottingham;

(2) what fiduciary duties apply to the sale of British Rail land.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend has had no such correspondence. The objectives for the British Rail Property Board require it to secure a proper commercial price when disposing of underused or surplus land.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will place in the Library a copy of the exchange of letters between British Rail and Eurorail referred to in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *81*.

Mr. Portillo: No. The letters deal with commercially confidential matters.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what points he will require to be satisfied before giving his approval to the detailed shareholders' agreement for the joint venture between British Rail and Eurorail.

Mr. Portillo: I shall wish to be satisfied that the proposed joint venture offers value for money for British Rail, for the public and for the taxpayer. The details will depend on the ground to be covered by the agreement.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much direct funding has been provided by Her Majesty's Government to British Rail for *(a)* capital investment and *(b)* revenue subsidy in each year from 1980-81 to 1989-90 and projected for 1990-91, all expressed at constant prices.

Mr. Portillo: Her Majesty's Government do not usually provide direct funding for British Rail's capital investment programme, but the public service obligation grants meets the difference between costs and revenues for grant supported services. Eligible costs include depreciation, a supplement to fund capital renewals, and interest. Grant therefore provides support for capital investment, but grant is not allocated to particular categories of expenditure. The figures for "rail" investment and for revenue subsidy (PSO and level crossings grants paid in each financial year) are as follows, in £ million and at constant 1989-90 prices:

Year	*Rail investment*	*Revenue subsidy*
1979	526	1,040
1980	537	1,035
1981	439	1,262
1982	357	1,222
1983	352	1,202
1984	[1]374	1,110
1985-86	498	1,060
1986-87	482	912
1987-88	604	915
1988-89	609	[2]590
1989-90	[2]691	[3]517
[4]1990-91	962	462

[1] 1984-85 was a 15 month financial period. The figure shown for 1984 is the 12 month equivalent.
[2] Current forecast.
[3] PSO cash ceiling plus estimate for level crossings grant.
[4] Estimates.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Atkins: In the last financial year the Department made no expenditure on the arts. The Department is involved in many aspects of design across a wide range of activities, with work undertaken both in-house and commissioned from outside bodies. It is not possible to establish the level of expenditure on design, except at disproportionate cost.

C. Maine Company

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning his Department's inspection of the C. Maine Company, Milford Haven, under the terms of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988; in the light of the European Court judgment in the Jaderow case delivered on 13 December.

Mr. McLoughlin: This judgment has no bearing on the registration of fishing vessels under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

Pacer 142 Trains

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chairman of British Rail on the safety of doors on Pacer 142 trains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is required under the statutory accident reporting procedure to notify the Department of a failure on any part of a train which causes, or is likely to cause, an accident. The railway inspectorate is discussing the problems with power doors with the British Railways Board.

Oil Discharges

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the flag states of eight non-United Kingdom ships alleged to have been responsible for illegal oil discharges in United Kingdom waters since 1984; and when were these cases passed on the competent authorities in the relevant flag states for investigation.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is as follows:

Flag state	*Date case passed to competent authority*
Liberia	13 August 1986
Liberia	7 April 1988
Liberia	27 July 1988
Bahamas	10 December 1988
Turkey	27 June 1989
Cyprus	3 November 1989
Brazil	9 November 1989
Antigua	11 December 1989

Stratford Station

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there have been any changes in the plans to refurbish Stratford station, London E.15.

Mr. Portillo: The planning of station improvements is entirely a matter for the British Railways Board.

Traffic, (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding the total cost per annum arising from traffic congestion in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department does not make estimates of the annual cost of traffic congestion in London. Congestion causes major problems and the Government have just announced further proposals for dealing with them.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he takes to consider the implications for London traffic flows arising from various building developments in the capital.

Mr. Atkins: The traffic implications of most new development in London is for the boroughs to consider as part of their development control and planning responsibilities under the Town and Country Planning Acts. The Government consider the traffic implications of new development affecting trunk roads on a case-by-case basis. It has established special liaison arrangements with the boroughs and the London Docklands development corporation over developments in docklands.

Newbury Bypass

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision about the proposed route for the Newbury bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport are carefully considering all the objections and representations made together with the report and recommendations of the independent inspector who held the public inquiry. They hope to be able to announce their joint decisions very early in the new year.

Road Excavations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those authorities and organisations, both public and private, having a statutory right to dig up roads in London in *(a)* 1980 and *(b)* the current year.

Mr. Atkins: Information is not available in the form requested. All highway authorities have statutory rights to carry out roadworks. The main public utilities have statutory rights of long standing to place and maintain their apparatus in the public highway. In addition various organisations have powers under public and private legislation or specific authority under licence to carry out excavation in the highway.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what efforts are made to co-ordinate road repairs and road excavation in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Individual highway authorities co-ordinate those roadworks in London for which they are responsible. The Department attaches particular importance to the careful programming and traffic management arrangements of works on its own roads. The Department also encourages highway authorities to promote co-operation between organisations having statutory rights to excavate roads and to co-ordinate these works with their own. The Goverment have proposed, as part of the legislation they intend to bring forward to implement the recommendations of the Horne report, that in future highway authorities will be given a positive duty to co-ordinate all excavations in the highway with a view to minimising the disruption to road users.

Greater Manchester Northern Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who were the consulting engineers for the centre section of the Greater Manchester northern relief road M6 to M66.

Mr. Atkins: Allot and Lomax with G. Maunsell and Partners (in consortium) are looking at options for the M56-M62 section of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Planning, (London)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what organisation he has established in his Department to deal with the strategic planning of London's transport; what is its name; what is its staffing; and at what ranks and grades.

Mr. Atkins: Work on the strategic planning of London's transport is undertaken by a number of directorates within the Department, in particular highways, railways, public transport. The heads of these directorates, and colleagues from the Department of the Environment's London regional office, meet regularly to discuss London's transport problems and to co-ordinate action. In this they are supported by a secretariat from the transport policy unit. The unit is headed by a grade 5 and is at present made up of four grade 7s, a senior economic assistant and a personal secretary.

Driver Testing and Training Division

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the annual report and accounts for driver testing and training division are available.

Mr. Atkins: The driver testing and training division's annual report and accounts for 1988-89 have now been issued. I am placing copies in the Library.

Accounting Procedures

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether in the last 10 years he or his predecessors, either by direction or informally, secured changes in the accounting conventions followed by the British Transport Docks Board, Associated British Ports, the British Airports Authority or British Airways, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* British Transport Docks Board accounts were prepared under the historic cost convention during the period up to privatisation, adding current cost accounts as supplementary from 1980. British Airways accounts were produced under the historic cost convention with current cost accounts as supplementary for the whole period up to privatisation. British Airports Authority accounts were changed from modified historic cost convention to current cost convention in 1980-81 and produced on that basis up to privatisation. The change of convention was decided by the authority and agreed by the Government.

PRIME MINISTER

Homelessness

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to visit a shelter for the homeless in London or other major city in the United Kingdom during the Christmas period.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Meetings (Mr. David Hart)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister (1) when Mr. David Hart last met Mr. Charles Powell; in what capacity; and for what purpose;

(2) when Mr. David Hart last met Sir Percy Cradock; and for what purpose;

(3) when Mr. David Hart last visited Downing street; in what capacity; and for what purpose;

(4) when Mr. David Hart last visited the Cabinet Office; in what capacity; and for what purpose;

(5) when she or her officials last met Mr. David Hart; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) at column 1169. Mr. Hart is not employed by me or by 10 Downing street in any capacity.

My normal practice is and will continue to be neither to confirm nor deny that meetings with private individuals have taken place even in those cases where no such meeting has occurred.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit the proposed relocation site for the Inland Revenue in Nottingham.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Relocation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what co-ordination exists between the Treasury and the Department of Transport on the use of British Rail land for the relocation of Government Departments.

The Prime Minister: The use of British Rail land is a matter for the British Railways Board, which is free to deal with Government Departments.

Official Historian

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to establish an official historian's office for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: No.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister what expenditure was made by her office on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

The Prime Minister: The total expenditure incurred by my office on the arts and design in 1988-89 was £9,794.

Methodist Church

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received in the last two years asking her to meet leaders of the Methodist Church; when she last met them; and when she next proposes to meet them.

The Prime Minister: I receive a considerable number of requests for official meetings each year. I have at present no plans to meet leaders of the Methodist Church.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Select Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward a substantive motion to give effect to the recommendations of the Liaison Committee report of Session 1984-85, HC 363, in respect of the automatic nomination of Select Committees after a general election.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government's view of the recommendations of the 1984-85 Liaison Committee was given on 23 November 1987 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham) who stated that he did not consider that the existence of a Standing Order providing for nominations for these Committees to be put forward within a prescribed period would necessarily have expedited their establishment in this Parliament.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the expenditure on full-time specialist staff appointed to service departmental Select Committees in each year since 1979.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The grade of temporary assistant (later to become specialist assistant) to Select Committees was introduced to the Clerk's Department in October 1980. The table sets out the numbers of specialist assistants in post at 1 April 1981 to 1 April 1989 and their total annual gross salaries payable at that date. All specialist assistants work for departmental Committees.

1 April	*Numbers in post*	*Total annual gross salary (£)*
1981	5	49,730
1982	6	66,168
1983	6	72,646

1 April	Numbers in post	Total annual gross salary (£)
1984	5	64,892
1985	4	53,756
1986	5	69,909
1987	5	75,862
1988	4	61,128
1989	7	117,691

Voting Records (Press Fee)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council under what arrangements newspapers and broadcasting stations are being asked to pay a fee to publish details of the Division voting records of hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no knowledge of any such arrangements.

CIVIL SERVICE

Staff (Pay Scheme)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement about the discretionary pay scheme for grades 2 and 3 staff in the home Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: In the third round of awards made under the arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 April 1987, awards have been made to 18 grade 2s and 77 grade 3s. The total number of staff currently granted awards following the first three rounds of the scheme is 36 grade 2s and 149 grade 3s, respectively 26 per cent. and 30 per cent. of each grade. This is within the ceiling of 35 per cent. of each grade recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body earlier this year.

The full year cost of these awards is £463,400 or about 1·8 per cent. of the annual pay bill for the grades concerned.

Next Steps

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will set out in the *Official Report* a table of bodies announced as candidates for Next Steps executive agency status, showing the date of announcement of candidature, date of establishment as agency (where appropriate) and the number of staff and expenditure-turnover for each candidate-agency at latest convenient date.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Agency	Date announced as candidate	Established
Vehicle Inspectorate	18 February 1988	1 August 1988
Companies House	18 February 1988	3 October 1988
HMSO	18 February 1988	14 December 1988
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	7 June 1988	18 April 1989
Warren Spring Laboratory	7 June 1988	20 April 1989
Resettlement Agency	18 February 1988	24 May 1989
Civil Service College	9 May 1988	6 June 1989
QE11 Conference Centre	18 February 1988	6 July 1989
Historic Royal Palaces	18 February 1988	1 October 1989
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	7 June 1988	30 October 1989
Total 10 Agencies		

Announced Candidates for Executive Agency Status

	Dates
Building Research Establishment	24 October 1988
Cadw	23 October 1989
Central Office of Information	9 February 1989
Central Statistical Office	5 April 1989
Central Veterinary Office	20 April 1989
Civil Service Commission	13 April 1989
Civil Service Occupational Health Service	9 May 1988
Defence Accounts Organisation	18 October 1989
Defence Research Agency	18 February 1988
Department of Registers of Scotland	29 April 1988
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Directorate	18 February 1988
Driving Standards Agency	25 July 1988
Employment Service	18 February 1988
Forensic Science Service	23 May 1989
Fuel Suppliers Branch	28 July 1988
Historic Buildings and Monuments	29 April 1988
Hydrographic Office	18 October 1989
Insolvency Service	13 July 1988
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	11 January 1989
Land Registry	26 October 1988
Meteorological Office	18 February 1988
Military Survey	18 October 1989
National Engineering Laboratory	24 July 1989
National Physical Laboratory	7 June 1988
Ordnance Survey	14 December 1989
Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute	19 December 1989
Passport Office	18 February 1988
Patent Office	13 July 1988
Planning Inspectorate	21 December 1988
Property Holdings	27 September 1989
Radiocommunications Division	13 July 1988
RAF Training	18 October 1989
Royal Mint	23 November 1989
Royal Parks	18 February 1988
Service Childrens Schools	18 October 1989
Social Security IT Services	17 May 1989
Social Security Benefits	17 May 1989
Training Agency	5 December 1988
Vehicles Certification Agency	25 July 1988
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	20 April 1989

Total 43 Agencies (This includes three in Northern Ireland that are not listed here)

The numbers of staff and expenditure/turnover for each agency and candidate are contained in annex A of the White Paper "The Finance and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies" (Cm. 914, published on 14 December 1989), except in the case of the Overseas Development Natural Resources Institute (ODNRI) which employs 453 staff and has an annual expenditure of £16·4 million.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of tax units receiving mortgage interest relief in each income band in 1988-89 and the number with investment income; and if he will provided a forecast for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is in the tables. These estimates are subject to revision.

Tax units receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1988-89

(Thousands)

Range of total income	*With no investment income*	*With investment income*	*Total*
Up to £5,000	240	280	520
£5,000-£10,000	590	1,380	1,970
£10,000-£15,000	590	1,970	2,560
£15,000-£20,000	310	1,510	1,820
£20,000-£30,000	160	1,350	1,510
£30,000 +	50	670	720
Total	1,940	7,160	9,100

Tax units receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1989-90

(Thousands)

Range of total income	*With no investment income*	*With investment income*	*Total*
Up to £5,000	210	240	450
£5,000-£10,000	490	1,160	1,650
£10,000-£15,000	530	1,790	2,320
£15,000-£20,000	340	1,690	2,030
£20,000-£30,000	190	1,680	1,870
£30,000 +	50	930	980
Total	1,810	7,490	9,300

Estimates of the numbers of tax units receiving mortgage interest relief are based on information from the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes. In the projections to 1988-89 and 1989-90, it is assumed that the proportions of mortgagors in each income range with investment income are the same as those for 1988-89 provided in previous reply to the hon. Member on 29 July 1988 at columns *732-34*.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the next revaluation of the exchange rate mechanism; and whether he will be making representations to that revaluation meeting.

Mr. Ryder: Any future realignment of the currencies in the exchange rate mechanism will take place in accordance with the resolution of the European Council of 5 December 1978 on the establishment of the European monetary system and related matters.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each type of tax currently levied on companies and the number of prosecutions for tax evasion in each category for the latest year in which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: The four main taxes on companies and the number of completed prosecutions for evasion involving these taxes in the year to 31 March 1989 are:

Tax	*Prosecutions*
Corporation Tax	6
Petroleum Revenue Tax	0
VAT	33
Rates	[1]

[1] Being a tax on property rates cannot be "evaded" in the sense that the term is normally understood. It follows there can be no prosecution in respect of rates although there are many civil actions for non-payment.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the change in retail prices over the period June 1979 to October 1989, or the most recent month for which figures are available, measured against the retail prices index, of gas, electricity, bread, beer, four star/premium (97-99 RON) petrol net of duty and taxes and of four star/premium (97-99 RON) petrol including duty and taxes.

Mr. Ryder: The following table shows the percentage increase in the retail prices index (RPI) between June 1979 and November 1989, together with the equivalent increases for gas, electricity, bread, beer and petrol and oil (inclusive of duty and taxes).

	Percentage increase in the RPI between June 1979 and November 1989
All items	112·9
Gas	144·2
Electricity	122·3
Bread	86·7
Beer	176·7
Petrol and oil	88·8

The RPI does not measure net prices; nor is a comparison for four-star petrol available separately from the RPI. However, using other sources, it is estimated that the price of four-star petrol increased by some 25 per cent. over approximately the same period net of duty and taxes, and by some 95 per cent. including duty and taxes.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenues he receives from the value added tax levied upon the sale of insulation, double glazing and heating control equipment; and whether he will make an estimate regarding the proportion of that tax which is reclaimed by value added tax registered traders.

Mr. Ryder: Details of the VAT charged on the supply of insulation, double glazing and heating control equipment are not available separately from other VAT revenue. Neither is it possible to determine the amount of such tax which is recovered by registered traders as part of their normal input tax deductions. When these products are incorporated in new domestic dwellings there is no burden of tax because the supply of new housing is zero rated to the consumer.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the conditions under which value added tax may be recovered from privatised contracts for ancillary services within the National Health Service; and when these conditions were first made known.

Mr. Ryder: The conditions under which VAT may be recovered in respect of these contracted out services are set out in the Treasury directions made under the provisions of section 11 of the Finance Act 1984. The first such

direction was made in 1984 and the latest direction was published in the *Edinburgh Gazette* in the issue dated 7 April 1989. A copy is in the House Library.

Tobacco

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would have been the effect on the retail prices index had tobacco excise duty, inclusive of value added tax, been index linked for 1989-90.

Mr. Ryder: It is estimated that the impact effect on the retail prices index of an indexation of tobacco excise duty in 1989-90 would have been to increase the index by 0·15 per cent.

Cash Limits

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it Government policy to increase the appropriate cash limits in the Autumn Statement in line with inflation.

Mr. Lamont: No. Public expenditure is planned and managed in cash.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the exchange rate of the pound on the date of the publication of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in terms of *(a)* the dollar, *(b)* the deutschmark, *(c)* the Japanese yen and *(d)* the sterling index; what are the latest available exchange rates for these categories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: At the close of business on 15 November and 19 December, the exchange rates against sterling for the specified currencies were as follows:

	$/£	*DM/£*	*Yen/£*	*£ERI*
15 November	1·5825	2·9113	227·2	88·7
19 December	1·6030	2·7764	230·4	86·6

Green Pound

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the National Farmers Union concerning a realignment of the green pound and other proposals; and what response he has made.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend receives a large number of representations on a wide variety of subjects.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure the successful relocation of the Inland Revenue in Nottingham.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue remains committed to its plans to relocate some 2,000 headquarters posts to Nottingham. However, it has always made it clear that its decision is conditional on obtaining a suitable site reasonably quickly on satisactory terms. I very much hope that, with the continuing support of the city and county councils, the department will be able to obtain a site in the near future.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last discussed the relocation of the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Lilley: I keep fully up to date with developments on the Inland Revenue's proposals to relocate some 2,000 headquarters posts to Nottingham.

HMSO

Mr. Wood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial target he has set Her Majesty's Stationery Office for 1990.

Mr. Ryder: I have today laid a further Treasury minute setting HMSO the financial target for 1990 of achieving a profit after interest in current cost accounting terms of £2·9 million. This compares with the target for 1989 of a profit after interest in current cost accounting terms of £1·7 million.

Public Servants

Mr. Wood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the Government's policy of abating the pensions of retired public servants who are re-employed in the public service.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have been reviewing the current abatement policy and has decided upon a change. In future, the pay or pension of retired public servants will no longer generally be subject to abatement if they are re-employed in a different public service after retirement. However, those who retire early may continue to be subject to abatement until they reach the normal retirement age in the public service from which they first retired. The administrative arrangements to give effect to the change will be made as soon as possible.

Abatement will continue to apply for those who are re-employed in the same public service from which they draw pension. The review of this arrangement is not yet complete. I will make a further statement in due course.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Wood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 October.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 1 October 1989 there were 565,075 staff in post in central Government Departments. Of these 497,294 were non-industrials and 67,781 were industrials. The figures for 1 April 1990 will be published next, when available.

Non-domestic Construction (VAT)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue has been raised to date due to the ending of zero-rating on non-domestic construction.

Mr. Ryder: Details of the revenue raised in the year to date as a result of the ending of zero rating on non-domestic construction are not available.

Charities

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to legislate for the removal of taxation on charitable fund raising by appeals like that

for Children In Need or to make compensatory ex-gratia payments to such appeals of equivalent amounts to any taxation deducted.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* Donations to charitable appeals are not liable to income tax, corporation tax or VAT, provided the donors receive no benefit in return. One-off fund-raising events held by charities are exempt from VAT, and non-charitable bodies can also obtain VAT exemption when organising one-off events as agents of an appeal fund which has charitable status. Income tax or corporation tax may be payable where the fund-raising activities amount to trading but, by concession, the Inland Revenue does not charge tax on the profits where certain conditions are satisfied. Full details of the concession (C4) are contained in the Inland Revenue leaflet IR1 1988.

Building Societies

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what action the Building Societies Commission has taken with regard to full distribution by the Guardian building society to its members;

(2) what advice the Building Societies Commission gave to the Guardian building society and the Cheltenham and Gloucester building society in respect of prudential matters relating to the proposed merger of the two societies;

(3) why the Building Societies Commission's advice to the Guardian building society in regard to the proposed merger with the Cheltenham and Gloucester building society had excluded the need for the Guardian building society to obtain an up-to-date valuation of its gross assets, including freehold property.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply to two previous questions on this matter on 11 December 1989 at column *448*.

The discussions between the building societies concerned and the Building Societies Commission are confidential. Interested parties will have an opportunity to put their representations to the hearing now scheduled by the Commission for 15 February 1990, if the special investors' and borrowers' resolutions are passed.

Cigarettes

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the burden of excise duty and value-added tax on cigarettes has outstripped the all items retail prices index since 1979.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* The combined excise duty and value added tax levied on a typical packet of 20 king-size cigarettes increased by 32 per cent. more than the retail prices index in the 10 years between October 1979 and October 1989.

HEALTH

"Working for Patients"

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Heath (1) what is the distribution by National Health Service region, by spending head, and by spending head within each National Health Service region of the sums so far announced for the implementation of the proposals in "Working for Patients" for the financial year 1989-90;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the distribution between functions and National Health Service regions of the extra resources to implement "Working for Patients" including sums available for medical audit and information technology training.

Mr. Freeman: The £73 million available to the hospital and community health services in 1989-90 has been distributed as shown in the table.

Distribution of £73 million available to the Hospital and Community Health Services to implement the proposals in the White Paper Working for Patients in 1989-90

£ million

	Personnel function	*Finance function*		*Asset registers*	*Medical audit*		*Local projects*	*Resource management initiative (RMI)*[1]	*RMI (capital)*	*Hospital information systems strategy (HISS) revenue*	*Training*[2]	*NHS White Paper development projects*	*300 consultants*	*Total allocated*
		Staff	*Training initiatives*		*Basic*	*Methodology development*								
Northern	0·366	0·634	0·015	0·865	0·051	—	0·053	1·472	0·080	0·255	0·072	0·025	0·397	4·255
Yorkshire	0·411	0·711	0·042	0·920	0·053	—	0·016	1·794	0·113	0·000	0·054	0·025	0·307	4·446
Trent	0·512	0·887	0·028	0·946	0·064	—	0·043	1·260	0·410	0·225	0·054	0·050	0·124	4·603
East Anglian	0·220	0·381	0·032	0·460	0·031	—	0·020	0·300	0·000	0·000	0·054	0·994	0·112	2·604
North West Thames	0·427	0·739	0·021	0·865	0·051	—	0·107	0·027	0·000	0·000	0·072	0·050	0·119	2·478
North East Thames	0·526	0·910	0·030	1·062	0·063	—	0·030	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·036	0·000	0·171	2·828
South East Thames	0·463	0·801	0·030	0·959	0·060	—	0·084	1·435	0·392	0·225	0·054	0·085	0·200	4·808
South West Thames	0·374	0·648	0·018	0·800	0·044	—	0·070	0·000	0·000	0·000	0·036	0·025	0·162	2·177
Wessex	0·307	0·532	0·006	0·643	0·042	—	0·032	0·332	0·050	0·000	0·036	0·062	0·333	2·375
Oxford	0·247	0·427	0·112	0·518	0·048	0·090	0·040	0·960	0·060	0·000	0·036	0·000	0·100	2·638
South Western	0·364	0·631	0·033	0·738	0·044	—	0·054	0·005	0·000	0·000	0·054	0·302	0·265	2·490
West Midlands	0·587	1·016	0·029	1·288	0·077	—	0·017	0·686	0·050	0·000	0·072	0·040	0·162	4·024
Mersey	0·294	0·509	0·041	0·601	0·036	—	0·059	1·115	0·060	0·000	0·036	0·025	0·138	2·914
North Western	0·502	0·869	0·045	1·108	0·067	—	0·026	1·044	0·070	0·000	0·054	0·000	0·348	4·133
RHAs Total	5·600	9·695	0·482	11·773	0·731	0·090	0·651	10·450	1·285	0·675	0·720	1·683	2·938	46·773
Others[3]	0·100	0·174	0·100	0·227	0·019	0·120	0·065	0·453	0·000	0·650	0·500	0·000	0·100	2·508
Grant Total	5·700	9·869	0·582	12·000	0·750	0·210	0·716	10·903	1·285	1·325	1·220	1·683	3·038	[4]49·281

[1] Includes RMI training.
[2] Excludes RMI training.
[3] Includes London post-graduate SHAs and NHSTA.
[4] A further £23·757 remains to be allocated.

Sight Tests

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in the Durham area have had eye tests since April 1989; and what was the figure for the same period in 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Statistics relating to private sight tests have not been gathered since April 1989. It is not therefore possible to supply directly comparable figures for the periods in question.

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to monitor the volume of private sight tests.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is instituting a survey covering Great Britain which will begin next month. The results should be available in the early spring.

Miscarriages

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the number of miscarriages caused by pregnant women coming into contact with chlorydiosis infected sheep.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have assumed that the question was intended to refer to sheep infected with chlamydia psittaci. The information available for the years since 1984 is shown in the table:

Chlamydia B/Chlamydia Psittaci 1984-88
Laboratory reports to PHLS CDSC of miscarriage/abortions in cases of known contact with aborting sheep or who had ovine infections.

Year	*Total lab reports*	[2]*Miscarriage/ Abortions*
1984	410	1
1986	326	2
[1]1989	568	2
Total	2,516	[2]5

[1] Provisional.
[2] Evidence for ovine origin is difficult to determine.

HIV-positive Children

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines have been issued to establishments under his control about the admission of children who are HIV positive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department manages two youth treatment centres which look after adolescent boys and girls. Testing for HIV antibodies is not carried out routinely.

The centres have been advised that a young person infected with HIV antibodies could be managed satisfactorily and in the normal way until or unless the need for specialised medical treatment or nursing care became necessary. They have been further advised that the best protection for people working and living there is to adhere scrupulously to sensible and basic standards of hygiene, to ensure the close supervision of the young residents and to provide them with planned sex education curricula within their broader health education. In addition, the centres have been asked to provide staff training directed towards the understanding of infections such as AIDS and hepatitis B and their prevention.

Adoptions

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children from overseas countries have been adopted by British citizens during each of the last five years; and, of this number, how many were from countries which do not operate similar adoption procedures to the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available.

Airports (Public Health)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Heath what steps are being taken to strengthen public health regulations at Britain's international airports to reduce the risk of diseases being brought into the United Kingdom on aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Public Health (Aircraft) Regulations 1979 relate to incoming and outgoing aircraft and authorise measures to be taken to prevent danger to public health and the spread of infection. They are being considered within the review of the law on infectious disease control in England and Wales currently being conducted by the Department as I announced on 24 October 1989 in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) at columns *411-12*.

Doctors

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Heath if he will give for each year since 1959 the number of doctors employed by the National Health Service, with each year also expressed as a percentage change of the previous year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Comparable data are not available prior to 1971. Informtion from 1971 is as shown in the table. Prior to 1975 comparable community health service medical staff figures are not available and are therefore not included.

Year	*All doctors*[1]	*Percentage change*
1971	44,950	
1972	46,498	3·4
1973	48,110	3·5
1974	49,107	2·1
1975	55,629	
1976	57,167	2·8
1977	58,502	2·3
1978	60,001	2·6
1979	61,554	2·6
1980	63,130	2·6
1981	64,612	2·3
1982	65,591	1·5
1983	66,910	2·0
1984	67,282	0·6
1985	68,194	1·4
1986	68,839	0·9
1987	69,532	1·0
1988	[2]70,995	2·1

[1] Includes permanent paid and honorary staff; excludes locum staff, hospital practitioners and clinical assistants in the hospital and community health services. Includes general medical practitioners.
[2] Includes 129 additional posts not shown in the main census, which have been returned late by regions.

Abortion

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received from *(a)* men and *(b)* women regarding abortion, in the past six months; how many of each of those categories were (i) for and (ii) against; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not always possible to tell from a signature who wrote the letters or to distinguish between those in favour of a lower time limit or against abortion.

Research Data

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will make an assessment as to the ownership of anonymised data for research purposes produced by general practitioners on computers provided by third parties.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 13 December at column *681*.

Amniocentesis Tests

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the rate of miscarriage in pregnant women as a result of receiving an amniocentesis; and if he will give the source of his information.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A recent report from the Royal College of Physicians states that the best studies suggest a 1 per cent. excess risk of spontaneous abortion following amniocentesis. (Source: *Prenatal diagnosis and genetic screening*. Royal College of Physicians, September 1989, paragraphs 2.33-2.35.)

Conductive Education

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money the Government have put into Peto clinic-style rehabilitation in each of the years since 1979 at constant prices; and what additional funding his Department has put aside for local authorities to assist such treatment over the same period.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in the form requested. Health authorities provide a wide range of treatment and rehabilitation services for disabled children. It is for individual authorities to allocate resources to these services in the light of their own circumstances.

Hospices

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will obtain a copy of the proceedings of the annual conference of "Help the Hospices" regarding current funding for his departmental library.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding his Department gives to the Nottingham hospice of 384 Woodborough road, Nottingham NG3 4JF.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. I understand that the project is funded by a trust and a contribution from local finance.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to bring funding arrangements for hospices in England into line with those in Scotland.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 15 December at columns *846-47*.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has had from *(a)* the Nottingham hospice and *(b)* the Nottingham district health authority regarding the funding of the hospice; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no representations from the Nottingham hospice and the district health authority regarding funding of the hospice. I understand that the health authority provides some 25 hospice beds and has given the Nottinghamshire hospice some funds until April 1990.

Midwives

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the grading of those post-registration midwives whose courses began prior to 1 April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of representations since the staff and management sides of the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council agreed in October 1988 on a new provision for staff who entered training after 1 April 1988.

The Government have made their position clear in their response to the fourth report from the Social Services Committee 1988-89 "Resourcing the National Health Service: Midwives' Regrading 1988-89".

Elderly People

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available to him on services currently being provided under section 45 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 which could not be provided under other legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We do not collect information in this form.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of *(a)* board and lodgings for military personnel, *(b)* use of military petrol and vehicles, *(c)* police overtime, *(d)* payments to St. John Ambulance and *(e)* payments to the Red Cross Society so far incurred in the ambulance dispute.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not available centrally of the costs of police overtime or of payments to St. John Ambulance and the Red Cross Society incurred so far in the ambulance dispute. It is understood that extra costs have been incurred by the armed forces of £0·792 million up to 30 November 1989.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in the form requested.

Emergency Calls

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulance personnel have been *(a)* killed, *(b)* seriously injured and *(c)* slightly injured in each of the past 10 years (i) in accidents while proceeding to an emergency call and (ii) while at the scene of an emergency call.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Vaccination Leaflet

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why the Health Education Authority has withdrawn the leaflet MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccination reference 1D19 ISBNI 85448 050 2 printed by Graphoprint 8/88 and replaced it with an edition which is identical save for the photograph of the child on the cover; how many copies were printed of the 1988 edition; how many remained in stock at the time of its replacement by the 1989 edition; how many copies of the 1989 edition have been printed; what was the reason for the replacement of the original photograph by the new one on the front of the 1989 edition; what was the cost of the 1988 and 1989 editions; and what was the cost of changing the photograph.

Mr. Freeman: A new edition of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccination leaflet (ID19) was produced only after all stocks of the original leaflet were used. A new photograph was used after Health Education Authority research indicated that the original had limited appeal.

The original leaflet cost £16,198 for 1,279,000 copies, and a reprint cost £6,095 for a further 400,000 leaflets. The new printing cost £9,785 for 850,000 leaflets, plus £400 for the new photograph.

Self-governing Hospitals

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what central funding is being made available for feasibility studies by hospitals considering self-governing status.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No central funds have been allocated specifically for work on feasibility studies by hospitals which have expressed an interest in NHS trust status.

AIDS

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list (i) the numbers of HIV positive persons, (ii) the numbers of AIDS patients and (iii) the number of deaths from AIDS, in each standard region and in the United Kingdom since the AIDS epidemic began; and if he will show *(a)* the numbers of haemophiliacs so affected and *(b)* the numbers of non-haemophiliacs so affected as a consequence of infected blood products.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The table shows the total numbers of HIV positive reports, AIDS cases and deaths of people with AIDS reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre and the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit to the end of September 1989, the numbers of those who were haemophiliacs, and the numbers of non-haemophiliacs thought to have been infected through receipt of blood or blood products in the United Kingdom or abroad.

The regional breakdown is by regional health authority rather than standard regions as requested. All numbers in the tables which are fewer than 10 are represented by an asterisk to safeguard confidentiality, in line with the procedure followed in reports under the AIDS (Control) Act.

Region	*All*			*Haemophiliacs*			*Non-Haemophiliac Recipients of blood or blood products*		
	HIV+ (i)	*AIDS cases (ii)*	*AIDS deaths (iii)*	*HIV+ (iv)*	*AIDS cases (v)*	*AIDS deaths (vi)*	*HIV+ (vii)*	*AIDS cases (viii)*	*AIDS deaths (ix)*
Northern	305	54	33	89	17	13	*	*	*
Yorkshire	323	66	37	65	19	10	*	*	*
Trent	283	51	27	63	*	*	*	0	0
East Anglia	171	32	18	39	*	*	*	0	0
North West Thames	3,089	1,063	499	33	*	*	17	*	*
North East Thames	2,048	497	265	163	27	18	29	*	*
South East Thames	979	271	154	113	19	*	*	*	*
South West Thames	303	92	54	22	*	*	10	*	*
Wessex	251	57	32	27	*	*	*	*	0
Oxford	349	52	30	115	14	*	*	*	*
South Western	259	55	31	36	*	*	*	*	*
West Midlands	375	56	27	147	*	*	*	0	0
Mersey	162	34	24	46	*	*	*	*	*
North Western	388	93	59	28	*	*	*	*	*
Channel Islands	20	*	*	*	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	144	43	29	18	*	*	*	*	*
Northern Ireland	62	13	*	16	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	1,707	118	58	76	*	*	12	*	*
Total	11,218	2,649	1,388	1,097	161	102	110	44	32

Speech Therapists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the independent experts which have been called in to advise at the Department of Health—National Health Service manpower planning advisory group on the recruitment and retention of speech therapists;

(2) on what dates discussions have taken place on recruitment and retention rates of speech therapists at the Department of Health—National Health Service manpower planning advisory group;

(3) over what period and in which authorities area data collection took place to inform the Department of Health —National Health Service manpower planning advisory group on recruitment and retention rates of speech therapists;

(4) when the Department of Health—National Health Service manpower planning advisory group decided to study recruitment and retention rates of speech therapists;

(5) which areas of speech therapy have been examined in the Department of Health—National Health Service manpower planning advisory group on recruitment and retention patterns of speech therapists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* Work on the recruitment and retention of speech therapists is being undertaken as part of the national professional manpower initiative. This is a joint initiative launched in December 1987 between the Departments of Health, the manpower planning advisory group and the professional bodies concerned. The aim is to improve the quality and flow of information between the service, the professions and the Health Departments. This will enable the more informed analysis of, for example, recruitment and retention issues. For those staff groups covered by the pay review body for the professions allied to medicine, the aim is also to provide improved manpower information for the review body. The initiative covers all health authorities.

The initiative has been discussed with representatives of speech therapy including a nominee from the College of Speech Therapists acting as the formal link between the college and the Department.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to promote alternatives to treatment by benzodiazepine drugs in future.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* That some patients can become addicted to benzodiazepine drugs is well known in the medical profession. This is one of the factors that doctors bear in mind when considering alternative treatment possibilities for their patients, such as counselling. What form of treatment will be more effective for particular patients is a matter for the clinical judgment of their doctors. Ministers would not wish to seek to promote particular forms of treatment, either generally or for particular groups of patients.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about providing compensation for ex-service personnel who took part in the nuclear testing programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of representations have been made by right hon. and hon. Members and by others regarding compensation for participants in the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons test programme. As the Government have made clear on many occasions, we would be ready to pay compensation wherever the Crown's legal liability was established and where there was firm evidence to show that, on a balance of probabilities, ex-service personnel had suffered ill health as a result of exposure to radiation during the course of their duties as members of the armed forces.

British Forces, Germany

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any proposals to change the level of British armed forces based in Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Conventional arms control discussions underway in Vienna concern certain categories of equipment held by the British armed forces. It is too early, however, to assess the impact of a CFE agreement on British forces in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current manpower of *(a)* the Berlin Brigade, *(b)* the Royal Air Force in Germany and *(c)* the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current peacetime establishment figures are as follows:

(a) Berlin Brigade—a little under 3,000
(b) the Royal Air Force in Germany—12,182 and
(c) the British Army of the Rhine—55,200.

Low Flying

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the amount of low flying carried out by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Defence Establishments (Security)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he is taking to improve security at his Department's establishments in West Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It would not be appropriate to comment on individual security measures. However, a wide range of new security measures have been implemented recently in West Germany and further major measures are in prospect. Close liaison is also maintained with the Federal Republic of Germany authorities, which have primary responsibility for the prevention of terrorist crimes outside United Kingdom bases.

RAF Installation (Aird Uig)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the former Royal Air Force installation at Aird Uig, Isle of Lewis, was disposed of and to whom; and what was the price paid.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The NATO communications installation at Aird Uig, which is operated by the RAF, remains in use. Only the adjoining domestic accommodation area amounting to some 12 acres was sold to a private individual in March 1973, but it is known that the site has been resold several times since then. It is not our practice to disclose details of commercial transactions.

Amphibious Warfare

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to implement the Royal Navy's requirement for vessels to maintain its amphibian warfare capability.

Mr Neubert: The Government are committed to maintaining the Royal Navy amphibious capability in the longer term. To this end, we are currently examing the results of studies into replacing the capability offered by HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid, either by extending their planned lives or by new build. A decision will be made in good time before these ships reach the end of their current useful lives. We are also evaluating the tenders we received earlier this year for the aviation support ship. We hope to be in a position to place an order during 1990. We will continue to maintain our force of landing ships logistic.

Crown Immunity

Mr Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many section 10 certificates have been issued since 1979 in respect of members of the services, excluding those who were nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend's responsibilities are limited to issuing certificates, under section 10(3) of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, confirming the duty status of a member of the armed forces on any particular occasion. It is not possible to provide full details of all section 10(3) certificates issued since 1979, as these have not been kept. However, our records show that 11 such certificates have been issued in the four years from 1986 to date; of these, one related to a nuclear test veteran.

Pirbright Ranges

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why it is proposed to extend the danger area at Pirbright ranges; what land clearance has been undertaken in preparation; whether the Nature Conservancy Council has been consulted; why Pirbright parish council has not been notified of these proposals; and if he will now take steps to ensure that local residents are fully informed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to extend the danger area of the Pirbright ranges in the foreseeable future.

Armed Forces (Fatalities)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of Her Majesty's forces have been killed in each of the past five calendar years *(a)* as a result of terrorist action and *(b)* in other ways in the course of their duty; and what would have been the cost to the Exchequer if those killed, in each category, had been guaranteed a mimimum payment to their next of kin by the Ministry of Defence equivalent to one year's salary.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will write to my hon. Friend.

Tanks

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence further to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *822*, if he will list the matters relating to tanks discussed between General Dynamics and his officials.

Mr. Alan Clark: The details of meetings between General Dynamics and my officials to discuss possible future orders for tanks for the British Army are commercially confidential.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Neubert: I am not aware of any expenditure made by my Department on either the arts or design as such during the last financial year. To research the matter fully would incur disproportionate costs.

Reservists

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the steps being taken in his Department towards expanding the size and role of reservists in British military capability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1979 the Ministry of Defence has set in hand measures to increase all volunteer reserve services. The Royal Naval Reserve has 11 new fleet minesweepers and has increased the numbers of communications and medical staffs. The role of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service has been expanded to include participation in the defence of ports and anchorages. Two new detachments of the Royal Marines Reserve have been formed to enhance and support 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines and to undertake home defence tasks. Measures affecting the TA have included the raising of six new TA infantry battalions, an air defence regiment and five batteries, and eight airfield damage repair units. The Home Service Force has been established and 43 companies have now been raised. Seven new auxiliary field squadrons of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force have been formed to defend airfields, together with an auxiliary air movements squadron and an auxiliary aeromedical evacuation squadron. Some additional small measures are also under consideration.

Action continues to recruit volunteers for these services and to improve retention. Response from employers to the campaign to provide support for the Volunteer Reserves has been most encouraging.

Home Defence

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the study of logistic sustainability of home defence being conducted by his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The logistic requirements of our military home defence plans are reviewed periodically. Such a review is currently in progress, but it is not our practice to comment in detail on matters of this kind.

Garrison Stables (Berlin)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel are employed in the garrison stables in Berlin; how many horses are stabled there; how many of these horses are owned by his Department; and how many by private individuals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The British garrison stables in Berlin have three horses owned by the Ministry of Defence, nine ponies and 10 horses of the saddle club and 10 horses at livery owned by private individuals. Four soldier grooms are employed there.

Sea Wolf

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans for further development of vertical launched Sea Wolf.

Mr. Neubert: Pre-feasibility studies have been completed and feasibility studies are expected to start shortly to examine the possibilities of updating all versions of the Sea Wolf point defence missile system.

FMC Company, USA

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has had any discussions about defence contracts with or involving the FMC company of the United States of America.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department has had some discussions with the FMC Company of the United States of America concerning the possible purchase of equipment for the MLRS programme. Our purchases, however, have been made through Prime Contractors, LTV and EPG.

The United Kingdom arm of the company, FMC Corporation UK, is on the defence contractors list. There is no record of any current contract with the company.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Race Relations

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure on section 11 grant.

Mr. John Patten: The amount of grant paid, or estimated to be paid under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for the years in question is set as follows. This represents the Home Office element (75 per cent.) of the total expenditure, the remainder being the local authority contribution.

Financial year	*Grant £ million*
1987-88	93
1988-89	89
1989-90	115
1990-91	110

The figure for the current year includes anticipated payments in respect of earlier years.

Sports Grounds

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to amend the Public Order Act, section 5, in the light of recent reports on crowd safety and control at sports grounds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the powers that regulate and control *(a)* non-Home Office police in the public sector and *(b)* private security firms performing a policing role; and if he will list all groups falling within category *(a)*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The main non-Home Office police forces in the public sector are the British Transport police, the Ministry of Defence police, the Royal Parks constabulary and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary; statutory responsibility for these forces and for legislation or regulation governing them rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport, for Defence, for the Environment and for Energy.

There are also some small bodies of constables operating on private property which are established under private legislation, which are not directly answerable to a Minister, and on which information is not held centrally. We know of one case (at Parkeston quay) where members of a security force, sworn in as special constables under such legislation, were provided under contract to the harbour authority by a private security firm. The accountability of the members of such a force lies to the law and to the courts and to the statutory harbour authority.

Police officers in the main non-Home Office police forces and some of the smaller forces are required to comply with the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the codes of practice within the area of their jurisdiction, by agreements made under section 96 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

The Government look to the private security industry to provide self-regulation. Considerable progress has been made by trade associations and regulatory bodies within the industry. We are currently considering, in the light of the report of a Home Office working group, whether there is scope for further improvement in self-regulation.

Television Licence Fees

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions have been obtained concerning television licence fee evasion for each year of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The following information has been supplied by the national television licence records office. Provision of details for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

Offenders found guilty of television licence fee evasion
United Kingdom

Financial year	*Number of convictions*
1984-85	110,042
1985-86	123,122
1986-87	174,509
1987-88	158,182
1988-89	172,604

The increase in recent years results from improvements in the detection rate.

People who find the licence fee hard to pay in one lump sum can now take advantage of the new budget payments scheme. This enables colour licence payers to obtain a licence on payment of the first of four quarterly direct debit instalments.

Prison Officers' Quarters

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers have been allocated a second quarter while still registered as having a quarter in each of the past five years.

Mr. Mellor: This information could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. However, I am aware of only two cases where a second quarter has been allocated to a prison officer before surrender of the original quarter with vacant possession.

Police Disciplinary Codes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the sections of police disciplinary codes that relate to giving misleading evidence in court.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Depending on the circumstances in which the offence takes place, such behaviour may fall within any one of a number of sections of the discipline code, including those relating to discreditable conduct (section 1), disobedience (section 3), falsehood or prevarication (section 5) or criminal conduct (section 16).

Game Licences

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total net product of the sale of game licences in each of the past 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The face value of game licences sold in England and Wales since 1981 is given in the table. Information on previous years is not readily to hand.

Year	£
1981-82	191,210
1982-83	199,354
1983-84	204,370
1984-85	201,154
1985-86	196,146
1986-87	192,940
1987-88	205,114
1988-89	210,310

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, columns *785-86*, if he will specify the offence and the sentence of the only IRA member on category B, apart from the men convicted of the Birmingham bombings.

Mr. Mellor: The prisoner was convicted on 12 counts of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment on each count. Concurrent sentences of 20 years and five years imprisonment, together with a consecutive sentence of 10 years imprisonment, were also imposed for three convictions for causing explosions likely to endanger life and property.

Irish Foreign Minister

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Foreign Minister of Ireland; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet met the Irish Foreign Minister. My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) last met him as Home Secretary on 13 September 1989. They discussed matters of common concern to both Governments.

Immigration

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total number of immigrants from New Commonwealth, or previously New Commonwealth countries *(a)* admitted for settlement in the United Kingdom or *(b)* admitted on such a basis as may eventually entitle them to United Kingdom citizenship with right of abode.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of persons from the new commonwealth and Pakistan accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in the years 1980-88 is published in table 22 of the annual Home Office volume "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1998" (Cm 726).

Under the British Nationality Act 1981 British dependent territory citizens, British nationals (overseas), British overseas citizens, British subjects and British protected persons who have been accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom, and fulfil the other conditions of section 4(2) of the Act are entitled to British citizenship. There is now no entitlement to citizenship for other adults, though those who have been accepted for settlement and fulfil the other relevant conditions of the Act may apply for citizenship by naturalisation, which is at the Home Secretary's discretion.

The numbers of British dependent territory citizens from Hong Kong (including British nationals (overseas))

and of British overseas citizens, accepted for settlement in recent years is also shown in the aforementioned table 22. The numbers of acceptances for settlement of British dependent territory citizens other than from Hong Kong, of British subjects and of British protected persons are not separately identified in the settlement figures. However, information on grants of British citizenship in 1988 for most of these categories is shown in table 4 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 9/89 "Citizenship Statistics, United Kingdom 1988"

Copies of both these publications are in the Library.

Gun Clubs

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representation he has received concerning his proposals for the control of gun clubs; and if he will ensure that his proposals do not prohibit the practice of day membership for visitors or novices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members, shooting organisations, individual clubs, and members of the public. We shall give careful consideration to the practice of day membership in the light of these and the advice of the firearms consultative committee.

Police Officers (Housing Allowance)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to alleviate the difficulties facing police officers who have moved or will move to other forces before 1 April 1990 who cannot sell their houses in the depressed housing market and who will lose personal protection under the proposed replacement of rent allowance by housing allowance; if he will make it his policy to continue protection whilst present conditions persist; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has already made it clear that he does not wish to see any officer receiving less by way of allowance after 31 March 1990 than he or she was receiving by way of rent allowance on that date. He is not clear that more than this could be justified. He will, however, consider my hon. Friend's point before reaching any final decision.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that police officers continue to be motivated to apply for senior positions in forces other than the one in which they are now serving, in view of the loss of personal protection known as red circling under the proposed replacement of rent allowance by housing allowance.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be receiving shortly the recommendations of the Police negotiating board on rent allowance. In coming to his decisions he will bear in mind the need to ensure that senior police officers continue to be motivated to apply for senior positions.

Emergency Calls

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firemen have been *(a)* killed, *(b)* seriously injured and *(c)* slightly injured in the past 10 years (i) in accidents while proceeding to an emergency call and (ii) while at the scene of an emergency call.

Mr. John Patten: During 1979-1988 fire brigades in England and Wales reported firefighters killed and injured in the course of duty as follows:

	Killed in the course of operational duty		
	as a result of firefighting or a special service call	*as a result of a road accident*	*Injured at an incident causing prolonged absence from duty*
1979	1	2	297
1980	3	1	341
1981	2	0	264
1982	4	2	270
1983	5	0	311
1984	3	0	249
1985	1	4	312
1986	0	1	303
1987	4	3	301
1988	0	0	327
Totals	23	13	2,975

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have been *(a)* killed, *(b)* seriously injured and *(c)* slightly injured in each of the past 10 years in (i) accidents while proceeding to an emergency call and (ii) the execution of their duty.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the following table sets out the number of deaths of police officers on duty during the years 1979 to 1988 inclusive, divided between homicides and other deaths, including accidental deaths.

	Homicides	*Other deaths*	*Total*
1979	1	9	10
1980	1	4	5
1981	1	9	10
1982	5	10	15
1983	4	12	16
1984	3	12	15
1985	1	6	7
1986	0	9	9
1987	2	9	11
1988	2	1	3

Details of the circumstances surrounding these deaths are not held centrally. It is therefore not possible to determine whether deaths occurred in response to an emergency call, or, in the case of deaths not due to homicide whether death was accidental or due to negligence on the part of a person involved in the incident. Details of officers injured on duty are not held centrally.

Elections (Candidates' Expenses)

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress on the proposed review of the system of controls on candidates' expenses at elections, announced on 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *131-33*.

Mr. Waddington: I have placed in the Library copies of a consultation paper on candidates' election expenses, which the Home Departments are issuing today to representatives of the main political parties and local authorities. The paper briefly sets out the main issues which arise and indicates possible ways forward. Views are invited from any interested individuals or organisations,

and copies of the consultation paper can be obtained free of charge from D Division, room 739, Home Office, Queen Anne's gate, London SW1H 9AT; or Division IIA, room 227B, Scottish Home and Health Department, St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh EH1 3DE; or CPL Division, Northern Ireland Office, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AZ.

Radio Authority

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to establish the Radio Authority.

Mr. Waddington: I am setting up the Radio Authority in shadow form on 1 January 1990. The appointment of Lord Chalfont as chairman has already been announced. I have today appointed the following to become members on 1 January:

Mr. John Grant
Mr. Richard Hooper
Mrs. Jill McIvor
Mr. Ranjit Sondhi

One further appointment will be made in due course. Subject to parliamentary approval of the Broadcasting Bill, I intend to establish the authority with its full statutory powers on 1 January 1991.

Independent Television Commission

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to establish the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Waddington: I am setting up the Independent Television Commission (ITC) in shadow form on 1 January 1990. The appointments of Mr. George Russell as chairman and Lord Chalfont as a member have already been announced. I have today appointed Lady Popplewell and Professor James Ring to become members on 1 January. Further appointments will be made in due course. Subject to parliamentary approval of the Broadcasting Bill, I intend to establish the ITC with its full statutory powers on 1 January 1991.

Visas (Indian Sub-Continent)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the refusal rate for queues 1, 2, 3 and 4 at each British post on the Indian sub-continent in 1989; and what were the comparable figures for 1988, 1987 and 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The information requested is not available centrally.

Perjury

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of people convicted of the offence of perjury in 1986, 1987, 1988 and in 1989; and what is the average length of the sentences.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The information requested is given in the table. Data for 1989 are not yet available.

Offenders convicted of perjury and average sentence lengths England and Wales

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Convictions	124	167	205
Numbers sentenced to immediate custody	61	52	77
Average sentence lengths (months)	9	11	8

Diplomatic Bags

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions he has had with his counterparts in other European Community countries to ensure that diplomatic bags are subject to non-intrusive searches;

(2) what plans he has to require the non-intrusive searching of diplomatic bags entering and leaving the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether accountancy firms who enjoy a monopoly of the external audit function are required to publish their financial statements.

Mr. Redwood: Under section 389(6)*(c)* of the Companies Act 1985, a body corporate is not qualified for appointment as auditor of a company. Accountancy practices which undertake statutory audit of companies are established as sole traders or partnerships and, as such, are not required to publish accounts. The Companies Act 1989 removes the prohibition on the appointment of a body corporate as auditors and, once section 25 of the Act is brought into force, it will be open to accountants conducting statutory audits to incorporate if they so wish, in which case they will be subject to the statutory duties and responsibilities of companies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will provide a list of the auditing firms which his Department has criticised since June 1979 that have been allowed to make auditing policy through their membership of the auditing practices committee and its working parties;

(2) whether any Arthur Andersen personnel have representatives on the accounting standards committee or its working parties, and on the auditing practices committee;

(3) whether since 1979 any individuals appointed to the auditing practices committee and its working parties have come from *(a)* firms criticised by his Department's inspectors and *(b)* firms sued for negligence by the Government.

Mr. Redwood: As I explained in the replies I gave on 27 November at columns *92-93*, on 13 December at column *702* and on 18 December at column *22* to questions by the hon. Member, membership of the Accounting Standards Committee and the Auditing Practices Committee is a matter for the Consultative Committee of Accountancy

Bodies, which has made clear that voting members of those committees are appointed on a personal basis and are not to regard themselves as delegates of sectional interests.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the register of auditors which the recognised supervisory bodies are required to maintain under the Companies Act 1989 includes information relating to *(a)* criticisms of the firm by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors and *(b)* criticisms of firms by any disciplinary committee of the profession.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Corporate Insolvencies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of corporate insolvencies in 1988 and 1989, to date, in Britain; and in how many of those cases the companies in question received a going concern qualification in their last accounts prior to going into receivership.

Mr. Redwood: The chief executive of Companies house tells me that in Great Britain in the financial year 1988-89, and up to 30 November in the current year, 1,252 and 1,367 companies were placed in receivership, and 13,900 and 9,056 in liquidation respectively.

No information is available on the number of companies who, in their last accounts prior to receivership or liquidation, received a going concern qualification from their auditors.

Richards Shipbuilders Ltd.

Mr. Carttiss: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about an application from Richards Shipbuilders Ltd. for assistance from the shipbuilding intervention fund.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about an application from Richards Shipbuilders Ltd. for assistance from the shipbuilding intervention fund.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am pleased to announce that I have approved in principle a grant from the shipbuilding intervention fund which will enable Richards Shipbuilders Ltd. confirm an order for a tug which will be constructed at its Great Yarmouth yard for the Alexandra Towing Co. Ltd. This order will maintain employment at this yard.

Credit Cards

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to abolish the no discrimination rule imposed by credit card companies in the light of the Monopolies and Mergers report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: On 22 August, I published the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of credit card services in the United Kingdom. I announced that I would welcome the views of all interested parties on the MMC's recommendation to end the "no discrimination" rule in the United Kingdom. Under this rule, imposed by the credit card companies, traders are required to charge the same price for purchases made with Visa or Mastercard/Eurocard (which includes Access) credit cards as for those paid for by cash or other means.

I have received representations on this issue from a wide range of people including members of the credit card organisations, retailers and the general public. I have considered carefully, the views they expressed. In accordance with the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading, I have concluded that the no discrimination rule is anti-competitive. It restricts the freedom of retailers to set their own prices. This is a serious restriction on competition. Credit card purchases amounted to over £16 billion last year. Therefore I have decided that the rule should be brought to an end. I am asking the Director General of Fair Trading to seek the necessary undertakings. In the meantime, application of the rule remains a matter for the credit card companies.

The effect of ending the rule will be to give retailers the freedom to choose whether or not to charge the same whether payment is made by credit card or cash. It will be for retailers to decide whether to offer different prices. They will not be obliged to do so. I intend, subject to the statutory consultation procedures, to bring in regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 to require that any price indication makes clear whether differential pricing applies.

Whether retailers find it attractive to take advantage of this new freedom will depend in part on the charges they themselves pay to the credit card companies. The MMC concluded that the level of profitability of five credit card companies accounting for some 80 per cent. of credit card lending last year was sufficiently above that which might have been expected in conditions of normal competition to be against the public interest. The MMC did not make any specific recommendations because of the prospect of increased competition. However, during the recent consultation period, considerable concern was expressed about the charges to retailers, including the interchange fee.

I have therefore decided to go further than the MMC recommended by taking steps to increase competition in this area. Credit card companies will have to provide the Director General of Fair Trading with information on the range of charges to retailers and the interchange fees which they have been making and to publish similar information on their current charges. As well as enabling the director general to keep the position under review, this should act as a spur to competition and should strengthen retailers' ability to negotiate the level of charges with them. I intend to discuss these additional remedies with the credit card organisations and their members before initiating the statutory consultation procedure that is required before making orders under the Fair Trading Act.

I announced last autumn that I was accepting the Commission's recommendation that the two credit card organisations, Visa and Mastercard-Eurocard should no longer restrict the freedom of issuers of their cards in the United Kingdom to act as merchant acquirers, recruiting traders to take credit cards and handling the subsequent transactions. The Director General of Fair Trading is seeking appropriate undertakings from these organisations. These measures in combination with increasing competition should remedy the adverse effects identified by the Commission in its report. Nevertheless, with the

Director General of Fair Trading, I will watch developments closely. If necessary, I will consider taking further action.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement indicating his preferred option for insurance cover connected with the use of credit cards in the retail sector.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* In August my Department issued a consultation document which proposed that where credit payment insurance and other ancillary services are offered as optional additions under a credit agreement, acceptance of the option should require a positive expression of acceptance by the borrower, such as the ticking of a box. A number of representations on this proposal have been received and are now under consideration.

Post Office (Procurement Activities)

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made by the Post Office in the implementation of the recommendations made in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the Post Office's procurement activities.

Mr. Forth: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission reported on the Post Office's procurement activities in October 1986. The Post Office's initial response, produced in January 1987, partially rejected one and accepted the remainder of the report's 49 recommendations. A report on progress to October 1987 was placed in the Library in December 1987. Nearly half the MMC's recommendations had been implemented by that time.

I have now received the Post Office's report on progress to October 1989, which I am placing in the Libraries. It indicates that considerable further progress has been made and all but one of the recommendations (relating to the introduction of productivity schemes in supplies department depots) have now been implemented. My Department will continue to monitor the Post Office's progress in implementing this recommendation.

Telecommunications Council

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Telecommunications Council on 7 December.

Mr. Forth: The principal items for discussion were a proposed Commission directive under Article 90 of the treaty of Rome aimed at introducing competition into the Community market for telecommunication services and a related Council directive on a framework for open network provision (ONP) of telecommunication services.

The Council agreed the policy content of the Commission directive with a number of amendments designed to ensure that the introduction of competition would not interfere with the general availability of packet and circuit switched data services in each member state. The Council also agreed amendments on ONP which may be expected to lead to a common position on the proposed framework directive, probably before the end of this year.

The Government believe that this outcome was the best that could be achieved. In particular the essential market opening provisions of the article 90 directive have been retained. While the scope of the ONP directive will be more extensive than we had proposed, it should not impede our objective of enabling competition to develop without the constraint of unnecessary harmonisation.

Deregulation Reviews

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made under the rolling programme of deregulation reviews announced on 31 January by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs.

Mr. Redwood: Of the 22 reviews announced in January all are complete or nearing completion. They have already resulted in a wide range of benefits to business. In some cases it has proved possible to eliminate requirements altogether, in others to update and streamline controls. Quantifiable savings to business from these completed reviews should exceed £10 million per annum. Government communications with business have also been improved through the consultations which have taken place, as has the service provided by Departments.

Our prime aim remains to remove the time loss and frustration caused to business by out-of-date or cumbersome requirements. We are therefore bringing forward consideration of a number of wider issues which have an impact particularly on the development of smaller businesses, together with reviews designed to identify regulatory barriers to building new businesses in various sectors.

The full list of new departmental reviews is as follows:

C & E—
- (i) Industrial oils reliefs; and
- (ii) Methylated spirits reliefs

  Review the burden placed on businesses by current administrative procedures, and consider whether the records required to be kept by users can be simplified.
- (iii) Production and dissemination of information to the trade and public

  Review will include the provision of VAT advice to business and the effectiveness of communications with new business.

DH—Review of CAPRICODE guidance

Review the procedures governing accountability in the NHS Building Programme (CAPRICODE) to ensure that no unnecessary restrictions are placed on the construction industry.

DSS—Service to business in the new National Insurance Contributions Unit

Review those areas of the Unit's work which provide a service to business and make recommendations on how these can be improved and burdens reduced.

DTI—
- (i) Company law exemptions for private companies

  Review the provisions for their impact on non-public companies.
- (ii) Regulations made under Part II of the Consumer Protection Act 1987

  Review the need for regulations in the light of the development of industry standards.
- (iii) CB radio licensing

  Review various options for improving the present system of CB licensing.
- (iv) Fixed-link radio user access system

  Introduce a user accessible database for radio fixed links.

DTp—Type approval procedures for equipment on merchant ships.

Review scope for changing procedures in order to reduce costs of UK ship-owners.

HO—Betting-shop hours of opening

Consider an extension of the permitted opening hours beyond the existing statutory closing time.

HSC—Strategy for negotiating EC health and safety Directives

Assess general lessons for present and future regulatory policy based on experience of negotiating EC health and safety Directives.

IR—PIID's

Review the PIID form and procedures with a view to reducing the burden they impose on employers.

MAFF—Export Refunds and Monetary Compensatory Amounts

Enquiry into product classification for which exports refunds and Monetary Compensatory Amounts are fixed, and the differentiation of refund rates by destination.

SO—

(i) The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

Review the working of the Act, with particular reference to the scope for reducing inconsistencies in optional business licensing powers of local authorities.

(ii) Registration and inspection of independent schools in Scotland.

Review procedures to assess whether the system is burdensome for school proprietors and what scope exists for simplification.

EDU—Faster and simpler business licensing

Review feasibility of developing a cross-departmental public database to enable business to indentify quickly and clearly requirements to be met.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

(a) nil,

(b) £13,874,000.

Grants

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure on *(a)* regional selective assistance, *(b)* English Estates and *(c)* inner city task forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Actual expenditure in England on regional selective assistance, English Estates and inner city task forces for 1987-88 and 1988-89 and planned expenditure for 1989-90 is as follows:

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*[1]
Regional Selective Assistance[2]	122·7	134·9	147·3
English Estates	47·0	45·5	50·0
Inner City Task Forces	[3]5·5	16·4	19·2

[1] Figures contained in the 1989-90 Supply Estimates.

[2] Regional Selective Assistance includes the Business Improvement Services and Exchange Risk Guarantee schemes as well as the main RSA project grants.

[3] DTI expenditure from November 1987 to end March 1988. Prior to November 1987 the Inner Cities Unit was located in the Department of Employment and therefore details of expenditure are not readily available to DTI.

Expenditure plans for 1990-91 will be published in the Public Expenditure White Paper in January.

Telephone Information Services

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the level of funding of the independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services in each year since its establishment;

(2) what have been the sources of the finding of the independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services, in each year since its establishment;

(3) what is the total number of persons currently employed by the independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services;

(4) what are the current funding arrangements for the independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services.

Mr. Forth: These are matters for the independent committee for the supervision of standards of telephone information services (ICSTIS). No Governmnt funding has been provided to ICSTIS. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman, Louis Blom-Cooper, QC, ICSTIS, 67-69 Whitfield street, London W1P 5RL.

Export Credits Guarantee

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries with which trade is not supported by export credits guarantee.

Mr. Ridley: Libya and Zambia are the only countries for which ECGD export credit support is currently not available

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that the introduction of private capital into the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department will not precede the abolition of comparable state-owned agencies in France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Mr. Ridley: I refer to the written answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) on 18 December 1989 at columns *23-24*.

It is the Government's intention that private capital be introduced into the company created from ECGD's insurance services group quickly after its incorporation. The early completion of these changes is in the best interest of ECGD, insurance services, the staff of both organisations, their customers and United Kingdom exporters.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that the headquarters of the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department will remain in Cardiff subsequent to any introduction of private capital into the ownership of the agency.

Mr. Ridley: The location of the new company once privatised will be a matter for decision for the management and shareholder(s).

Mr Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements the Export Credits

Guarantee Department, insurance services group, Cardiff, have made with the Property Services Agency to occupy a new office building subsequent to ceasing to be a Government Department.

Mr. Ridley: Discussions have already been held with the Property Services Agency about possible future accommodation arrangements. No decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of staff at the Export Credits Guarantee Department, insurance services group, Cardiff, have worked at projects group, London, during the past five years and vice versa.

Mr Ridley: The proportion of staff in the insurance services group, Cardiff, who have worked in the project group, London, during the last five years is about 0·15 per cent. and the proportion of staff in the project group who have worked in insurance services group is about 2 per cent.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the work done by the Export Credits Guarantee Department computer centre at Llanishen arises from insurance services group, Cardiff, and how much arises from projects group, Cardiff.

Mr. Ridley: The Export Credits Guarantee Department computer centre at Llanishen currently provides services to the two business units in the following proportions:

Insurance Services Group—	75 per cent.
Project Group—	25 per cent.

It is expected that this will have changed by 1 April 1991 to give the following proportions:

Insurance Services Group—	80 per cent.
Project Group—	20 per cent.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make any future introduction of private capital into the insurance services group of Export Credits Guarantee Department conditional on satisfactory arrangements being made for future employment for the employees of the group.

Mr. Ridley: Any new employer will be bound by existing legislation which provides protection for the employees when the change of ownership takes place. Employment can best be safeguarded by growth in business. The changes I have announced will provide the best basis for such growth.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his written answer of 18 December to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), if he will make it his policy to give preference to the introduction of private capital into Export Credits Guarantee Department, insurance service group, only where due consideration has been given to the need to safeguard employment in the financial services industry in south-east Wales.

Mr. Ridley: Any new employer will be bound by existing legislation which provides protection for the employees when the change of ownership takes place. Employment can best be safeguarded by growth in business. The changes I have announced will provide the best basis for such growth.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the lease held by the Export Credits Guarantee Department, insurance services group, on the Crown buildings, Cathays park, Cardiff, precludes occupation by other than a Government Department or a charity.

Mr. Ridley: The lease on the Crown building land does include covenants about commercial activities and the implications of these are being examined by the Export Credits Guarantee Department and the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the effect on employment at the Export Credits Guarantee Department, insurance group services, of the change of status and ownership announced by him in his written answer of 18 December to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart);

(2) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the effect on total employment at Export Credits Guarantee Department in the Cardiff area of the change of status and ownership announced by him in a written answer to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) on 18 December.

Mr. Ridley: I see no reason why there should be any significant effect on employment. I believe the changes I have announced offer the best prospect of securing jobs for the future.

Toys

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what steps he will take to protect the viability of craft toymakers from the financial costs of adhering to the European Community toy safety regulations;

(2) what representations he has had from craft industries involved in toy making about the financial implications of the European Community toy safety regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have received a number of representations from craft toy-makers about the financial implications of complying with the Toys (Safety) Regulations 1989. The new regulations will require toys to comply with common European safety standards and bear a CE mark as a declaration of conformity. However, where applicable they will replace regulations and requirements dealing with the safety of toys, including those produced by craft toymakers, that have been in force in the United Kingdom for some 15 years. I have explained that where a toy has been manufactured in accordance with the common standards the toymaker will be able to self-certify the toy as conforming and the toy will qualify to bear the CE mark.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to seek to exempt craft toymakers from European community toy safety regulations.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The EC directive on the safety of toys is a treaty obligation and we are required to implement it in full. Although the directive, and thus the United Kingdom implementing regulations, does include exemptions for certain products which might otherwise be thought of as toys, there are no exemptions for particular categories of toy manufacturer.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each region, Scotland and Wales payments of regional development grants, regional selective assistance, regionalinvestment grants and regional innovation grants for this financial year and, where relevant, for 1988-89, and with his projections for 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if he will also express the figures in real terms at 1988-89 prices.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The requested information, with regard to expenditure in 1988-89 and 1989-90 (to end November), in respect of the listed schemes of assistance is as follows:

	Regional Development Grants (£ million)	*Regional Selective Assistance[1] (£ million)*	*Regional Investment Grants[2] (£ thousand)*	*Regional Innovation Grants[2] (£ thousand)*
1988-89				
East Midlands	7·9	1·0	10	nil
North East	78·7	33·5	234	32
North West	49·6	22·0	299	118
South West	6·6	4·9	61	13
West Midlands	nil	24·0	[3]n/a	[3]n/a
Yorkshire and Humberside	19·3	21·1	108	44
Scotland	76·6	37·7	231	51
Wales	58·6	36·2	182	36
1989-90[4]				
East Midlands	6·9	0·5	117	50
North East	28·0	18·6	917	311
North West	17·9	14·9	762	99
South West	1·8	2·1	185	41
West Midlands	nil	13·5	[3]n/a	[3]n/a
Yorkshire and Humberside	8·0	7·0	629	120
Scotland	41·0	19·5	448	436
Wales	15·9	17·8	307	172

[1] Industrial and training grants only. Further payments of £2·9 million and £0·6 million which cannot be allocated to a specific region were made in 1988-89 and 1989-90 respectively.

[2] These grants, which make up the Regional Enterprise Grants scheme, are applicable only in Development Areas and the Intermediate Areas in South Yorkshire designated under the EC RESIDER programme.

[3] No designated areas in this region.

[4] To end November 1989.

Expenditure plans for 1990-91 and 1991-92 will be published in the public expenditure White Paper in January.

Deflators for part-years are not readily available. It would be inappropriate to use the deflator for 1989-90 as a whole to convert the outturn figures for the first eight months of the year only.

Accounting Procedures

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether in the last 10 years he or his predecessors, either by direction or informally, secured changes in the accounting conventions followed by British Telecom, Cable and Wireless, British Steel, Jaguar, Rover, Rolls-Royce or British Aerospace, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* When these companies were in the public sector, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had powers to direct, with Treasury approval, the methods and principles according to which their statements of accounts were prepared. Details of when such directions were issued are not readily available and could be assembled only at disappropriate cost. Since privatisation, the accounting conventions used have been a matter for the chairman and board of each company in consultation with its auditors.

Product Labelling

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what level of resources his Department is currently committing to the promotion of multilingual product labelling in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 12 December 1989]:* It is vital for products to be labelled in a language which the customer understands, and this message forms part of my Department's general single market campaign. However, there are no departmental resources devoted specifically to multilingual product labelling: the costs of such labelling should properly be borne by United Kingdom firms themselves.

ERDF Aid

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his best estimate of the level of European regional development fund aid commitments to all eligible public bodies in each of the last five years in *(a)* Bradford, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* South Yorkshire;

(2) what is his most up-to-date estimate of the total amounts of European regional development fund aid commitments to all eligible public bodies in 1989 and in 1990 in *(a)* Bradford, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* South Yorkshire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The information is as follows:

£ million

	Bradford	West Midlands	South Yorkshire
1984	4	18	21
1985	3	45	10
1986	10	43	19
1987	2	63	17
1988	0	21	3
1989	[1]9	[1]0	[1]21
1990	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—

[1] estimates
[2] estimates not yet available

Footwear Imports

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list the reasons why the United Kingdom representative failed to give a firm response at the consultation meeting between the European Community Commission and member states in committee 288 on 5 December regarding the Commission's inquiry into footwear imports from South Korea and Taiwan; and what advice his Department subsequently gave to the Commission by the stated target date for comments of 15 December.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* My noble Friend the Minister for Trade had been carefully considering the views expressed by the industry and other member states before reaching a final decision on how the United Kingdom should respond to the Commission's report following its inquiry into imports of footwear from South Korea and Taiwan. He has concluded that the report does not make out an economic case for restrictions on imports of footwear from Taiwan and South Korea. The Commission has been told that consistently with our general approach on trade policy issues the United Kingdom Government are therefore opposed to such safeguard action on imports of footwear from South Korea and Taiwan. We have, however, suggested to the Commission that if they were to propose some form of surveillance licensing we would give this sympathetic consideration.

Babcock Fata

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants for research, development and investment in equipment were made to Babcock Fata or related companies from 1984 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* Payments totalling £61,795 have been made to Babcock Fata Ltd under the support for innovation scheme. This scheme closed in January 1988. No other grants have been made.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Unemployed People

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide estimates by sex for the number of claimants who will be removed from the unemployment count as a result of the introduction of the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 1989; and if he will further break down these figures by sex into *(a)* part-time workers, *(b)* part-time and temporary workers and *(c)* short-time workers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that figures are not available in the form requested; overall, we estimate that this measure will have no significant effect on the unemployment count.

Residential Care

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many boarders were paid by each Scottish local office in March for those in residential care on grounds of *(a)* old age, *(b)* very dependent elderly, *(c)* mental disorder, *(d)* drug or alcohol dependency, *(e)* mental handicap, *(f)* physical disability, under pension age, *(g)* physical disability over pension age and *(h)* others; and for those in nursing homes on the grounds of (i) mental disorder, (ii) drug or alcohol dependency, (iii) mental handicap, (iv) terminal illness, (v) physical disability under pension age, (vi) physical disability over pension age, and (vii) others;

(2) what is the number of boarders in nursing homes for Scotland, England and Wales by Department of Social Security region in the years from 1982;

(3) what is the number of boarders in residential care accommodation in Scotland by Department of Social Security local office during the last financial year;

(4) what is the number of boarders in residential care accommodation for Scotland, England and Wales by Department of Social Security region in the years from 1982.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend on 5 December at columns *157-58*.

Miss Jane Brown

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement of the findings by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration on the results of his investigation under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 into a complaint made by Miss Jane Brown, 31 Moray road, Port Glasgow, (C850/88).

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No. The hon. Member has had a full report from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration who considered that his investigation had reached a satisfactory conclusion.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claimants of unemployment benefit will be denied benefit in the travel-to-work areas in the constituency of Roxburgh and Berwickshire by imposition of the £43 weekly earnings rule;

(2) if he will list the proportion of claimants of unemployment benefit in each travel-to-work area in the United Kingdom who will be denied unemployment benefit by the new £43 weekly earnings rule.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people who will be excluded from unemployment benefit by the new £43 weekly earnings rule.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that, in any one week, around 5,000 people declare earnings in excess of £43 and will lose unemployment benefit.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will undertake a full review of benefits available to claimants of unemployment benefit to include the implications of new patterns of work for those claiming benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to undertake a full review of unemployment benefit. We have recently introduced a number of changes to make the benefit more relevant to current needs. We are of course monitoring the effects of those changes.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will contact each of the people who lost their entitlement to unemployment benefit on 1 January 1989 to inform them that they are entitled to reclaim that benefit in line with section 16(1)(c) of the Interpretation Act 1978 and the previous decision of the Social Security Commissioner in paragraph 5 of case CG/069/1988 and in case Z/10/4811/Norwich.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: An appeal has been lodged with the Social Security Commissioner against the social security appeal tribunal's decision. It would not be appropriate to anticipate the outcome.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would have been the present amount of the pensioners' Christmas bonus if it had maintained its 1979 real value.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The present amount of the Christmas bonus had it been raised by increases in prices since 1979 would have been £18.70.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Discretion to make small-scale purchases of items of art is devolved to local managers and some initiatives for the commissioning of larger-scale murals for public waiting areas have taken place. The extent of expenditure and sponsorship in this and other areas of the arts is not normally separately identified, but our Newcastle central office carried out a special exercise and expenditure last year amounted to £4,359.

Personal Pension Plans

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to provide, under social security legislation, for special disclosure requirements by plan managers to those investing in unit-linked personal pension plans.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As part of our response to the Occupational Pensions Board report we intend to review the disclosure requirements for occupational and personal pension schemes. This review will include information required by those investing in unit-linked personal pension plans.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are his assumptions for low community charge calculations of the level of income of a couple, one of whom is in work and who have no dependent children or other dependants, below which they may be eligible for rebate on their community charge.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is shown in the table.

Assumed community charge per person (£)	*Level of income per week (£)*
100	84·72
150	94·95
200	105·17
250	115·40

Notes:

1. The income figure is the level at which the minimum Community Charge Benefit of 50p a week will be payable for a couple under pension age, one of whom is working, neither of whom is disabled, who have no dependants, and who have savings of less than £3,000.
2. 1990-91 benefit rates have been used.

Personal Injuries

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security from what date the recovery scheme in section 22 of the Social Security Act 1989 will apply to compensation payments made for personal injuries; what amount is to be set for the lower limit of compensation payments below which offsetting will apply instead of recovery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The scheme will apply to any compensation payment made on or after 3 September 1990 where the injury occurred on or after 1 January 1989. The lower limit of compensation payments to which recovery will apply is £2,500 gross—that is before benefits have been deducted. This amount is substantially more than the figure suggested by Touche Ross and will reduce the number of cases to be dealt with by around 37 per cent. It recognises the representations made by the Association of British Insurers, the CBI, TUC and others about the lower limit. We expect to lay affirmative regulations before Parliament soon setting out the administrative details of the scheme.

Computerisation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what extent his Department's *(a)* budget and *(b)* staffing level has been cut for the year 1989-90 in the light of anticipated savings to be achieved through computerisation.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department's administration budget for 1989-90 was settled during the 1988 public expenditure survey and published in the 1989 public expenditure Whie Paper (Cm 615). It reflected the wide range of the Department's activities, including its computerisation programme. If this programme had not been undertaken it is estimated that in the year 1989-90 the Department would have required 4,000 additional staff at a cost of some £42 million.

Sick Pay

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people who would become eligible for *(a)* statutory sick pay and *(b)* sickness benefit if they were paid for the first three days of illness, and the cost of making such payments.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Executive Agencies

Mr Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress his Department has made towards establishing executive agencies; and what is the timetable for completion of each agency.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Resettlement Units Executive Agency was established in May 1989. We have also made a good deal of progress towards establishing the Information Technology Services Agency (ITSA) and National Insurance Contributions Unit (NICU), both of which are scheduled to commence in April 1990. The Social Security Benefits Agency is scheduled to commence in April 1991. Staff have been informed of progress.

We expect the agencies to develop further after their launch as they gain experience and adjust their approach to management in line with the needs of their business. Establishment of the agencies is just the first step in improving service to the public and the cost-effectiveness of social security administration.

Adoption

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many instances of complaint against local social security services he has received during the last five years from British citizens who have felt their efforts to adopt children from overseas have been hindered by lack of co-operation from social services staff.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

The Department receives representations from time to time from people who find that local authorities are unable to provide advice and services in connection with the proposed adoption of children from overseas. People who contemplate this very serious step are especially in need of skilled advice and counselling. We would hope that this would be available from local authorities, bearing in mind the guidance issued by the Department in 1987 to introduce the comprehensive adoption service: the guidance stated that counselling of prospective adopters, including those who seek to adopt from overseas, should be provided as part of the service. It is particularly important that such people should know that arrangements to adopt a child from overseas should be made only through properly authorised agencies or charitable organisations.

WALES

Natural Heritage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those representations he has received from voluntary organisations in Wales in response to his proposed merger of the Countryside Commission and Nature Conservancy Council, indicating those which are opposed and those in favour.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have received 13 representations from voluntary organiisations in Wales on the general proposals. It is not possible clearly to state in all cases that particular organisations are opposed or in favour. A number of organisations have raised questions and made some criticisms but I am delighted that many other organisations, including the chairmen and chief officers of the national parks in Wales, the National Farmers Union committee for Wales, the advisory committees for Wales of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission, have all welcomed the proposals.

Motor Neurone Disorders

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a centre for the education of children with motor neurone disorders such as cerebral palsy; if he will visit the Peto Institute in Hungary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend the Minister of State responsible for the disabled announced on 15 December a Government contribution towards the establishment of a new international Peto institute. The Welsh Office has been associated with the discussions leading to that announcement. Subject to the detailed negotiations, Welsh children, along with others from the United Kingdom, will have access to available places at the institute.

The Department is keeping in close touch with progress on the pilot conductive education project in Birmingham. Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any current plans to visit Hungary but we are aware of the work of the Peto institute from reports of visits by other Government Ministers.

Roads

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amounts for road building in north Wales which encompasses the use of European Economic Community money.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1988, £14 million was committed from the European regional development fund for road building projects in the counties of Gwynedd and Clwyd.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the new money for road schemes announced in his publication "A55: the Road to Opportunity".

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The schemes to dual the A5 across Anglesey are being added to the trunk road improvement programme. Firm information on likely costs is not yet available. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers I gave him on Thursday 7 December and Thursday 14 December regarding the A548 Dee crossing scheme.

Schools (Ministerial Visits)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of visits made this year, by county, to *(a)* nursery, primary and junior schools and *(b)* secondary schools by (i) the Secretary of State for Wales and (ii) the Minister of State, Welsh Office; and if he will name the schools involved.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: During 1989 my right hon. Friend visited one comprehensive school and one independent school with an age range of seven to 18. In the same period I visited seven primary schools and six secondary schools. A summary of these visits shown in the following table:

School	*Date*
Schools visits undertaken in 1989 by the Secretary of State for Wales	
Abersychan comprehensive school, Gwent	27 June 1989
Howells independent school for girls (age range 7 to 18), South Glamorgan	21 November 1989
School visits undertaken in 1989 by the Minister of State for Wales	
Ysgol Morfa Rhiannedd (county primary), Gwynedd	13 January 1989
Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy secondary school, Gwynedd	13 January 1989
Kitchener county primary school, South Glamorgan	26 January 1989
Fitzalan high school, South Glamorgan	26 January 1989
Glyncorrwg county primary school, West Glamorgan	3 February 1989
Cwm Tawe comprehensive school, West Glamorgan	3 February 1989
Ysgol Teilo Sant (county primary), Dyfed	17 February 1989
Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin (secondary school), Dyfed	28 April 1989
Coed Cae comprehensive school, Dyfed	17 February 1989
Penywaun infant and junior schools, Mid Glamorgan	24 February 1989
Treorchy comprehensive school, Mid Glamorgan	24 February 1989
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (comprehensive), Mid Glamorgan	31 November 1989
Rhosgoch primary school, Powys	1 December 1989

Isle of Anglesey Road

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of money for dualling the Isle of Anglesey road will come from *(a)* the European Economic Community, *(b)* the local authority and *(c)* central government.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The A5 across Anglesey is a trunk road and duelling will be funded by central Government. At present there are no proposals to apply for EC funding.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what basis of assumed expenditure was his estimate made regarding the likely levels of community charge in the Arfon borough council and Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor areas for 1990-1991.

Mr. Peter Walker: The assumed expenditure levels (consistent with standard spending assessments) of £6·002 million for Arfon and £3·544 million for Dwyfor are based on 1989-90 budgets, adjusted for changes in functions and funding arrangements and inflated to 1990-91 levels.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assumption he made of the amount of income that *(a)* Arfon borough council and *(b)* Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor, would receive from the distribution of business rate when he assessed that their personal community charge per capita would amount to £156 and £155 respectively.

Mr. Peter Walker: My provisional community charge estimates of £156 for the Arfon area and £155 for the Dwyfor area assumed:

(a) £1,361,000 and

(b) £758,000

These figures were updated by my statement to the House on 18 December 1989 to:

(a) £1,347,000 and

(b) £733,000

I now estimate community charge for 1990-91 to be £153 in the Arfon area and £149 in the Dwyfor area if councils spend in line with my assumptions.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the maximum charge per annum on community charge payers in Wales arising from the charge levied on account of the expenditure of a community council.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have made no such estimate.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the relationship between those areas, which have been granted transitional relief for the community charge for 1990-91, and the levels of per capita household incomes, and the indices for deprivation for such areas; and whether any area of the Dwyfor district has met the criteria to be granted such transitional relief.

Mr Peter Walker: Transitional relief is calculated by comparing average rate bills for 1989-90 in community areas with my estimates of community charge levels. As such the scheme is intended to moderate the increases community chargepayers would otherwise face in moving from the domestic rating system. Income levels and indices of deprivation are thus not relevant to the operation of these transitional arrangements.

Provisional details of those communities who may be entitled to transitional relief were placed in the Library on 18 December 1989. No communities in Dwyfor were shown as receiving relief.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of community charge payers in Wales live in those communities eligible for transitional relief by way of additional grant; what is the total number of such people; and what is the maximum increase that will be made by way of individuals payment in such communities, on the basis of his statement to the House of 10 December.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my statement to the House on 18 December. Provisional details of communities which may be entitled to transitional relief have been placed in the Library.

No community area will face a charge more than a threshold amount (about £20) above the average domestic rate bill per adult in 1989-90 (assuming that councils spend in line with the settlement).

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the total payment to be made by non-domestic ratepayers in Wales in 1990-91; and what is the total payment to be made by these ratepayers in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total payment to be made by non-domestic ratepayers in Wales in 1990-91 is estimated to be £446 million, of which £3 million will be retained by charging authorities to meet the costs of collection. No

direct comparison can be made with the 1989-90 payment because of changes in the structure of exemptions and reliefs, and different arrangements for empty property rating, all of which take effect for the first time in 1990-91. The Welsh national non-domestic rating multiplier has been set such that the average business ratepayer will pay broadly the same in 1990-91, in real terms, as in 1989-90.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: These are the responsibility of the Welsh Arts Council and Design Council respectively, neither of which is funded by the Welsh Office.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of *(a)* the total amount of regional selective assistance paid out by his Department since its introduction and *(b)* the average sum granted for each project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expenditure on regional selective assistance[1] in Wales from the inception of the scheme to 31 March 1989 was £306 million. The average grant value[2] was almost £200,000.

[1] The expenditure quoted comprises payments of grants and loans (until 1979-80) under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, exchange risk losses on European loans (since 1981-82) and payments under the in-plant training scheme (since 1984-85) and the business improvement services scheme (since 1983-84).

[2] Based on the cumulative number and value of offers of section 7 assistance accepted to 31 March 1989 published in appendix 6, table 3 of the Industrial Development Act annual report for 1988-89.

Initiatives

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider a similar initiative for west Wales to that in operation in the valleys and proposed for north Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales, the Wales Tourist Board, the local authorities and many others are all working together with the private sector further to develop the economy of west Wales. I am glad to say that unemployment in Dyfed has fallen by 45 per cent. since the last general election.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the amount of development rural initiative venture and enterprise grant paid out by his Department in each year since its introduction; and if he will make a statement as to the future of the grant.

Mr. Peter Walker: The development of rural initiative venture and enterprise grant scheme is operated by the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) and the Development Board for Rural Wales (DBRW) in their respective territories. Since its introduction initially on an experimental basis, in March 1986, these bodies have made grant payments shown in the following tables:

Following an independent evaluation of the experimental scheme it was reintroduced in September 1989. I refer my hon. Friend to answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) on 27 July 1989 for further details.

	WDA £	*DBRW* £
1986-87	250,000	32,361
1987-88	420,000	91,938
1988-89	430,000	117,288

Rural Conversion Grant

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the amount of rural conversion grant paid out by his Department each year since its introduction; and if he will make a statement as to the future of the grant.

Mr. Peter Walker: The rural conversion grant scheme is operated by the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) and the Development Board of Rural Wales (DBRW) in their respective territories. Since the scheme's inception these bodies have made grant payments shown in the following table:

	WDA £	*DBRW* £
1983-84	—	18,900
1984-85	—	17,780
1985-86	163,000	39,500
1986-87	230,000	21,655
1987-88	366,000	15,612
1988-89	967,000	86,784

Urban Investment Grant

Mr. Nicholas Bennett To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the urban investment grant paid out by his Department since its introduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since the introduction of UIG in April 1989, 10 projects have been approved with a total grant award of nearly £2·8 million. This is expected to bring forward over £10·3 million of private sector investment and to create over 600 permanent and nearly 270 temporary construction jobs.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State of Wales (1) if he will place a copy in the Library of letters of warning sent by him in 1989, to the chairman of the board of Cardiff Bay development corporation about development in the Cardiff Bay development corporation designated area;

(2) if he will publish his correspondende with the chairman of the board of Cardiff Bay development corporation asking the corpoartion to expedite development in the bay area;

(3) what requests have been sent by him to the chairman of the board of Cardiff Bay development corporation to expedite development in the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have not made such a request. I am delighted with the progress that is being made to the benefit of Cardiff and of Wales, progress that should have the support of all Welsh Members of Parliament.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his most up to date estimate of total jobs lost to the Cardiff bay area subsequent to the breakdown of negotiations between developers and the Cardiff Bay development corporation in *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Peter Walker: Negotiations between developers and the Cardiff Bay development corporation are entirely a matter for the corporation. The development of the Cardiff bay area will create many thousands of jobs over the coming years and splendid progress has been made to see that this objective is achieved.

Urban Programme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list concerning the urban programme the *(a)* community and social provision and *(b)* voluntary and independent schemes grants and projects in each of the boroughs and districts of each of the counties of Wales giving their cash backing, employment consequences and objectives for 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Grist: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the Clwyd urban programme and urban development moneys and schemes for 1988 and 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The information as requested is shown in the following tables:

Urban Programme 1988-89

Local authority and scheme	*Approved costs* Capital £	Revenue £
Clwyd County Council		
Welfare Benefits Advice Centre	0	50,000
Rhyl and District Community Action Team	0	50,000
Greenfield Valley Youth Centre	0	55,850
Wrexham Technology Park	27,500	0
Deeside Women's Aid	0	501
IT Social Worker—Rhuddlan	0	4,597
Rhyl and District Women's Aid	0	1,665
Delyn Community Agency	0	120,167
Employment of Family Support Worker, Wrexham	0	12,181
Community Development and Local Authority Partnership Project	0	83,600
Employment of Adult Worker, Youth Worker and an Education Home Adviser in the Holywell/Bagillt and Peulwys/Mochdre areas	0	27,693
Employment of 2 Basic Education Co-ordinators for adults	0	34,485
Holiday Projects	0	29,500
Alyn Deeside District Council		
Former Catheralls Brickworks, Pinfold Lane, Buckley, Refurbishment and Redevelopment (Phase 1)	200,000	0
Conversion of Infirmary wing to elderly and bedridden accommodation at Poor Clare Collentine Monastery, Hawarden	16,000	0
Employment of full-time worker at Deeside Women's Aid	0	13,627
Environmental Improvements at River Lane, Saltney (capital slippage)	40,000	0
Holiday projects	0	10,000
Colwyn Borough Council		
Colwyn Community Environmental Improvement Scheme	0	10,920
Community Development Programme	0	19,238
Holiday Projects	0	4,000
Delyn Borough Council		
Further Development of Delyn Enterprise Zone at Greenfield Park	250,000	0
Greenfield Valley Youth Enterprise Centre	0	55,850
Delyn Community Environmental Improvement Scheme	0	44,440
Delyn Women's Aid Support Worker	0	13,561
Expansion of Delyn Enterprise Agency	0	45,536
Assistant Development Officer, Greenfield Valley	0	17,465
Greenfield Valley Development Team	0	13,993
Holiday Projects	0	8,500
Glyndwr District Council		
Contact Warden Scheme, Llangollen	0	8,500
Establishment of an Emergency Alarm and Contact Warden System, Trevor	0	7,820
Rhuddland Borough Council		
Land Preparation for Industrial Development at Prestatyn (Capital Slippage)	10,000	0
Rhyl and District Women's Aid Support Team	0	11,184
Rhuddlan Environmental Improvement Scheme	0	31,350
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council		
Redwither Industrial Estate—refurbishment and infrastructure works	275,000	0
Wrexham Adventure Playground Association—Employment of Play Development staff.	0	11,000
Wrexham Adventure Playground Association—Employment of Assistant Organiser	0	12,600
Wrexham Free Church Federal Council.	0	1,722
Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau.	0	40,107
Wrexham Housing Aid Centre	0	30,322
Wrexham Adventure Playground Association.	0	22,572
Community Litter Abatement Scheme	0	29,072
Rhosymedre Pre-start and Training Workshop	0	54,246
Holiday Projects	0	10,500
Urban Programme 1989-90		
Clwyd County Council		
Shotton and Connah's Quay Business Enterprise Centre	200,000	0
Delyn Community Agency	0	100,000
Provision of a Centre for the Elderly at Rhosllanerchrugog	200,000	0
Business Information Network	0	18,500
Family Support Worker Wrexham	0	13,257
Community Development and Local Authority Partnership Project	0	91,350

Local authority and scheme	Approved costs Capital £	Revenue £
Employment of Adult Worker, Youth Worker and an Education Home Adviser in the Holywell/Bagillt and Peulwys/Mochdre areas	0	29,078
Employment of 2 basic Education Co-ordinators for adults	0	38,672
Welfare Benefits Advice Centre	0	54,600
Rhyl and District Community Action Team	0	54,600
Greenfield Valley Youth Enterprise Centre	0	60,743
Wrexham Technology Park (Capital Slippage)	135,000	0
Holiday Projects	0	29,500
Alyn and Deeside District Council		
Refurbishment and Redevelopment of former Catheralls Brickworks	250,000	0
Holiday Projects	0	10,000
Colwyn Borough Council		
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme	750	20,000
Community Development Programme	0	20,200
Holiday Projects	0	4,000
Delyn Borough Council		
Further Development of Delyn Enterprise Zone and Greenfield Park	450,000	0
Assistant Development Officer, Greenfield Valley	0	13,991
Greenfield Valley Development Team	0	14,693
Delyn Community Environmental Improvement Scheme	0	51,149
Delyn Women's Aid Support worker	0	14,239
Greenfield Youth Enterprise Centre	0	69,861
Holiday Projects	0	8,500
Glyndwr District Council		
Contact Warden Scheme, Llangollen	0	8,448
Rhuddlan Borough Council		
St. Asaph Business Park	200,000	0
Rhuddlan Environmental Improvement Scheme	0	32,918
Rhyl and District Women's Aid Support Team	0	12,227
Holiday Projects	0	4,200
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council		
Redwither Industrial Estate	250,000	0
Refurbishment to Kingsmill Centre	50,000	0
Shelter Wales Housing Aid Service	0	30,322
Wrexham Citizens Advice Bureau	0	40,107
Wrexham Adventure Playground Association	0	6,300
Night Shelter for the single homeless	0	1,491
Wrexham Adventure Playgroup Association	0	26,565
Community Litter Abatement Scheme	0	31,289
Rhosymedre Pre-Start and Training Workshop	0	60,353
Wrexham Adventure Playground Association—Play Development Staff	0	12,915
Holiday Projects	0	11,500

Urban Development Grant

Project	Total UDG awarded £ million	Spend 1988-89 £ million	Spend 1989-90 £ million
Supermarket and Car Park Development at Connah's Quay	0·325	0·041	—
Factory Units at Broncoed Industrial Estate, Mold	0·132	0·132	—
Shops and Office Development at Earl Road, Mold	0·104	0·079	0·025
Industrial Units at Aber Park, Flint	0·085	0·021	—
Engineering Park at Sandycroft	0·227	—	0·215

Second Homes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on second homes in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given on 26 May by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Roadbuilding

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the amount of transport supplementary grant he is making available to county councils in local roadbuilding, *(b)* the amount estimated by his Department to be used in local roadholding from revenue support grant, *(c)* the amount for local roadbuilding from capital receipts and *(d)* the amount for local roadbuilding from the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Transport grant support is given only to eligible (over £5 million) schemes. The amount of grant to be paid in 1990-91 is £26·8 million. The £86·6 million gross capital for roads and transport for 1990-91 which my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State announced on 29 November assumes that authorities will spend £0·6 million of their capital receipts. Revenue support grant is unhypothecated and it is for local authorities to decide their own spending priorities; similarly no estimate is available of the amount for local roadbuilding from the community charge.

Council House Building

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to encourage council house building for 1990.

Mr. Grist: It is for local authorities to decide about housing priorities, taking account of local needs and achieving value for money.

Housebuilding

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of private housebuilding starts for 1987, 1988 and 1989; what is the predicted start number for 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Private housebuilding starts in Wales were:

	Number
1987	8,741
1988	10,892

Figures are not yet available for 1989 as the year has not yet ended but 8,084 were started in the first nine months. Forecasts for 1990 are a matter for the private housebuilding industry.

Salmonella

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to hold a public inquiry allowing tests at public health laboratories in the wake of the Clwyd salmonella outbreak.

Mr. Grist: I have already announced that the Department is conducting an internal review.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to publish his findings following his internal inquiry into the Clwyd salmonella outbreak.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 20 December.

Housing Revenue Accounts Subsidy

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his initial housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1990-91.

Mr. Grist: The housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1990-91 have been made today. Every local housing authority in Wales has been sent a copy of the determinations together with provisional figures on which its subsidy entitlement will be based. The figures for each individual authority are subject to change in the light of new information supplied by the authority itself. Copies of the determinations and of the provisional figures for all authorities are being placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The new housing revenue account subsidy was introduced by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It replaces the existing main housing subsidy, the rent rebate element in housing benefit subsidy and the element in rate support grant related to authorities' own housing costs.

Each authority's subsidy will be determined in accordance with the formulae prescribed in the determinations. For 1990-91, the formula assumes that there will be a national increase of 2 per cent. in gross rent income together with an allowance of 5 per cent. for inflation. However, unlike previous years, the determinations provide for different guideline rent increases in different authorities instead of a uniform increase for all authorities receiving subsidy. The rent guidelines for 1990-91 are set by reference to the value of each authority's housing stock.

For 1990-91, the subsidy formula provides for a 3 per cent. real terms increase in the provision for management and maintenance expenditure. The allowance will be related to authorities' past expenditure.

The subsidy formula also takes into account the full cost of loan charges and of rent rebates, subject to safeguards to prevent double subsidy and to provide an incentive for the efficient operation of the rent rebate scheme.

Rechem (Pontypool)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now arrange for further soil samples to be taken around the Rechem incinerator at Pontypool designed to detect polychlorinated biphenyls at levels significantly lower than 200 parts per billion.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* I am considering what further action may be necessary in the light of the recent results of monitoring undertaken by the Welsh Office in the Pontypool area.

Air Pollution

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what action he intends to take following the identification by Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution of local contamination above background levels by polychlorinated biphenyls at Ordnance Survey grid reference number SH 5101; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he intends to take, following the identification by Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution of local contamination above the established background levels by dioxins and furans at Ordnance Survey grid reference *(a)* SO 5101, *(b)* SN 5101 and *(c)* SH 5151; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given today by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State at the Environment Department in relation to levels at locations in England.

Earnings

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of (1) manual, (2) non-manual and (3) all full-time employees earning less than *(a)* £157, *(b)* £160, *(c)* £163, and *(d)* half average earnings a week, for (i) men, (ii) women, and (iii) all full-time employees excluding overtime, shift and public borrowing requirements premia, in each county in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 11 December 1989]:* I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Monetary System

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with other European Community Ministers regarding the European monetary system and political co-operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: European monetary union was discussed briefly at the Foreign Affairs Council held on 18 and 19 December in Brussels, and political co-operation at the European Council held in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether identity passes are to be provided for Vietnamese boat people returning to Vietnam.

Mr. Maude: All Vietnamese citizens carry identity cards containing a photograph and thumb print. We have no reason to believe that identity cards will not be issued to the returnees. This is one of the issues which will be raised in the course of the embassy's monitoring exercise.

Bulgaria

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make all information in the hands of the Government available to the Lukanor inquiries into corruption in Bulgaria under its former rulers.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received no such request from the Bulgarian authorities.

Diplomatic Bags

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to non-European Community countries urging them to permit the non-intrusive searching of diplomatic bags.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Falklands Fishing Company

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he is making to the report by Mr. Stewart Boyd QC in relation to Mr. Brian Cummings over Falklands Fishing Company losses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Mr. Stewart Boyd QC was commissioned by the Governor of the Falkland Islands to inquire into the affairs of Seamount Limited, a joint venture between Stanley Fisheries Ltd., a subsidiary of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation, and Seaboard Offshore Ltd., a UK company.

The report's contents and findings are entirely a matter for the Falkland Islands Government who are responsible for the operation of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation.

Departmental Papers

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of his Department's papers have been made available to the public since 1 October 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: Between 1 October 1988 and 30 September 1989, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office —excluding the Overseas Development Administration —made the following papers available to the public on request:

Africa
- Britain in Southern Africa
- Britain's Voice in South Africa
- Libya: External Relations and Activities
- Namibia Chronology: March 1988-March 1989
- Soviet Priorities in Africa

Americas and Antarctica
- Antarctic Treaty System
- Antarctic Minerals Convention and Its Role in Protecting the Antarctic Environment
- Britain and Argentina: Attempts at Normalisation
- Cuban Economy
- Democracy and Regional Integration in South America
- Drugs in Latin America

Asia and Pacific
- Afghanistan: Long Road to Recovery
- Afghanistan: Continuing Conflict
- China's Energy Prospects
- China's External Economic Relations
- Fiji Coups, 1987: Context and Chronology
- General Information on Taiwan
- North Korea: Forty Years On
- Religion in China
- Soviet Interest in the Pacific Region
- Vietnam: Current Problems

Europe
- CSCE: Implications of the Vienna Meeting
- Role of the Western European Union
- Western European Union

Near and Middle East
- Demography and Politics in the Middle East and North Africa
- Guide to Arab-Israel Peace Plans
- Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising
- Lebanon: Background to Current Events
- Palestine Liberation Organisation

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
- CMEA at a Standstill
- Common European Home: New Thinking
- Comparison of Soviet and Chinese Economic Reforms
- Crisis in Soviet Agriculture
- East European Energy Prospects
- Party and Government Leadership of the Soviet Union
- Soviet Communist Party's External Propaganda Activities
- Soviet Economic Reforms
- Soviet Energy Prospects
- Soviet Propaganda Organisations: A Survey
- Soviet Union: More Milestones

Disarmament
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 10
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 11
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 12
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 13
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 14
- Arms Control and Disarmament Quarterly Review No. 15
- Chemical and Biological Weapons: Negotiations for an International Ban
- Political Impact of the Process of Arms Control and Disarmament
- The West's Arms Control Objectives and Priorities

Economic
- Aid to the Developing World
- World Food Supplies
- World Shipping Prospects

International
- Annual Review of Consular Work, 1988
- Destablising Effect of the International Drugs Trade in Developing Countries
- International Drug Trafficking: Attacking the Profits
- International Monitoring of Human Rights
- International Parliamentary Union: A Century of Parliamentary Diplomacy
- Non-Aligned Movement: Search for More Effective Role
- 1958 Geneva Conference of Experts on the Prevention of Surprise Attack
- Review of Consular Work in 1987
- Saving the Ozone Layer: A Summary of the London Conference
- The 1989 World Youth Festival: Further Preparations
- World Youth Festivals: Retrospect and Prospect

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 and 19 December.

Mr. Hurd: I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council and at a working dinner with the Soviet Foreign Minister in Brussels on 18 December. My

hon. Friend, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, represented the United Kingdom at a joint EC/EFTA Ministerial meeting on 19 December.

The Council began with a discussion of follow-up to decisions taken at the Strasbourg European Council, in particular on the European bank for reconstruction and development, and on economic and monetary issues.

The Council took note of the Commission's report on meetings with the US Administration on 14 and 15 December and confirmed the importance it attaches to close EC/US relations. I and other Ministers warmly welcomed Secretary of State Baker's wish, expressed in his recent speech in Berlin, to see a further strengthening of the United State's relationship with the Community.

On specific EC/US issues, Ministers discussed the implications of the findings of the GATT panel on the US complaint against the EC's oilseeds regime, and expressed concern at lack of progress in the dispute over import of meat treated with hormones.

The Council then discussed the Community's relations with Japan. It also agreed to the submission in Geneva on 20 December of a paper on long-term agricultural reform in the Uruguay round.

The Council called for early consideration of a mandate for the negotiation of a trade and commercial and economic co-operation agreement with the GDR. It also took note of a Commission report, completed on 18 December, on Turkey's application for EC membership and agreed that it should be examined in depth.

The Council also approved the Commission's negotiating mandate for a trade and commercial and economic co-operation agreement with Argentina and agreed a mandate for the negotiation of a second stage trade agreement with the Gulf Co-operation Council. The Commission informed the Council that negotiations with Andorra on a customs union had been successfully completed. The Council also reached a satisfactory agreement on the Poseidon programme of support for the French overseas departments.

On 18 December, the Commission and presidency, on behalf of the Community, signed a trade and commercial and economic co-operation agreement with the Soviet Union, and a second agreement on textiles. The co-operation agreement is an important landmark in the EC's relations with the Soviet Union, symbolic of the new relationships emerging between the Community and eastern and central European countries as political reforms and economic restructuring take hold. The agreement lays the foundations for a stronger EC relationship with the Soviet Union, which we welcome. Its significance, and the importance of developments in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, was noted at the subsequent dinner with Mr. Shevardnadze.

On 19 December EC and EFTA Ministers agreed to open substantive negotiations on a new, more structured relationship in the first half of next year. Our joint aim is to extend as far as possible the single market to include EFTA. The United Kingdom fully supports this important decision, and will continue to play a full and constructive role in the negotiating process: a successful outcome would open the way to a new stage in EC-EFTA relations, benefitting all parties, and reflecting the Community's commitment to a liberal single market, open to all.

The text of the joint conclusions agreed by EC and EFTA Ministers on 19 December will be placed in the Library of the House.

Central American Presidents

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received on the outcome of the meeting of Central American Presidents in San Isidro de Coronado, Costa Rica, on 10 to 12 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have been encouraged by the positive outcome of the meeting, which condemned armed action and terrorism by rebel forces in the region and expressed solid support for the democratically elected Government of President Cristiani. I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the five Presidents' statement of 12 December.

SCOTLAND

Health Service

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1970 the number of patients on hospital in-patient waiting lists in Scotland at 30 March and 30 September of each year.

Mr. Rifkind: The information available is set out in the table.

Number of persons on waiting lists for NHS hospitals at 31 March and 30 September, Scotland

Year	31 March	30 September
1970	57,305	51,482
1971	51,675	48,066
1972	n/a	52,468
1973	n/a	61,079
1974	n/a	56,182
1975	n/a	53,770
1976	54,442	52,765
1977	53,974	54,715
1978	56,987	61,481
1979	76,968	71,247
1980	70,195	67,387
1981	67,908	65,228
1982	66,880	86,365
1983	96,933	86,338
1984	85,543	83,077
1985	79,262	77,677
1986	81,249	80,732
1987	81,324	77,772
1988	67,226	63,569
1989	61,011	—

The statistical system on which these figures are collected including the revision which took place in 1988 is explained in ISD Statistical Bulletin 1/88, a copy of which is in the Library.

Scottish Information Office

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of recent changes in office accommodation in the Scottish information office corridor of New St. Andrew's house.

Mr. Rifkind: There have been no recent changes.

BBC Scotland

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the occasions on which each Scottish Office Minister, in each of the past 12 months, he required the Scottish information office to make representations about alleged programme bias to BBC Scotland;

(2) if he will make a statement on recent correspondence between BBC Scotland and the Scottish Office concerning alleged editorial bias;

(3) what representations he has made to BBC Scotland concerning the integrity of coverage accorded to his Department by it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Office has had need to make various representations to the BBC on these matters. So far as alleged programme bias is concerned, it is essential that the BBC charter is applied throughout the United Kingdom in a consistent manner.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what distribution was given to recent correspondence between Mr. Jack Regan of BBC Scotland, and Mr. Donald Stewart, of the Scottish information office.

Mr. Rifkind: As with all correspondence, it was distributed to those within the Scottish Office who appeared to have an interest.

Correspondence

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to ensure that correspondence addressed to the Scottish Office is dealt with only from within the Scottish Office and that none is referred for answer to any party organisation.

Mr. Rifkind: It is Scottish Office policy to reply to all correspondence correctly addressed to it. Correspondence not falling properly within the responsibilities of the Scottish Office will normally be forwarded to whatever other body appears to be the correct recipient.

Trials

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *558*, he will list each of the sheriff courts in which the number of summary criminal trials adjourned in the period 1 January to 30 September 1989 due to lack of court time exceeded 5 per cent. of the total number of trials set down in the period; and if, in each case, he will give the actual number of trials so adjourned and the percentage of the total number of trials set down.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The list of courts is as follows.

1 January 1989 to31 March 1989
Haddington[1]
Alloa
Stirling

1 April 1989 to 30 June 1989
Falkirk[1]
Stirling[1]
Haddington[1]

1 July 1989 to 30 September 1989
Stirling
Dunfermline[1]
Falkirk[1]
Dumfries[1]

[1] Indicates that target not met for only part of 3 month period.

Information on the actual number of trials adjourned and the percentage of the total number of trials set down is not held centrally.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Alan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on non-domestic rates in 1990-91.

Mr. Rifkind: In my statement to the House on 26 July about the revenue support grant settlement for 1990-91, I announced that I intended to reduce the rate bill for Scottish business next year by £80 million below what it would otherwise have been. I have now decided to apply this sum to reduce the rate poundage for all local authorities by 6·25 per cent. This will mean that all non-domestic ratepayers throughout Scotland will benefit from this further move to reduce their burden. The table shows the rate poundage which I intend to prescribe for each local authority in an order which I shall lay before Parliament early in the new year. The table also indicates the extent of the reduction in poundage at an individual ratepayer level as a result of our policy.

It is implicit in our policy that, over a period, the 40 per cent. derating which at present applies to manufacturing and freight industry in Scotland should be eliminated. But my intention is that the phasing out of industrial derating should be co-ordinated with the phasing in of a unified business rate north and south of the border. This will give manufacturing and freight industry the assurance that the effect of reducing the level of derating will in any particular year be neutral. For all other business sectors, the reduction will be entirely beneficial. Having regard to my decision to reduce rate poundages by 6·25 per cent., I intend to set the level of industrial derating next year to 35 per cent., a decrease of 5 per cent. on the present level. The position will be reassessed each year until a unified business rate has been achieved and industrial derating has been eliminated entirely.

	Column 1 1990-91 Rate Poundage Pre-UBR Reduction p	*Column 2 1990-91 Rate Poundage Post-UBR Reduction* p	*Column 3 Reduction to Ratepayer* p	*Column 4 Region + District Reduction* p
Borders	38·4	36·0	−2·4	—
Central	44·5	41·7	−2·8	—
Dumfries and Galloway	40·9	38·3	−2·6	—
Fife	49·2	46·1	−3·1	—
Grampian	36·5	34·2	−2·3	—
Highland	44·1	41·3	−2·8	—
Lothian	50·6	47·5	−3·1	—

	Column 1 1990-91 Rate Poundage Pre-UBR Reduction p	Column 2 1990-91 Rate Poundage Post-UBR Reduction p	Column 3 Reduction to Ratepayer p	Column 4 Region + District Reduction p
Strathclyde	49·1	46·0	−3·1	—
Tayside	45·9	43·0	−2·9	—
Orkney	41·9	39·3	−2·6	−2·6
Shetland	39·6	37·1	−2·5	−2·5
Western Isles	61·5	57·6	−3·9	−3·9
Berwickshire	8·0	7·5	−0·5	−2·9
Ettrick and Lauderdale	9·1	8·5	−0·6	−3·0
Roxburgh	10·1	9·4	−0·7	−3·1
Tweeddale	7·7	7·2	−0·5	2·9
Clackmannan	15·9	14·9	−1·0	−3·8
Falkirk	13·0	12·2	−0·8	−3·6
Stirling	19·3	18·1	−1·2	−4·0
Annandale and Eskdale	9·7	9·1	−0·6	−3·2
Nithsdale	9·7	9·1	−0·6	−3·2
Stewartry	8·4	7·9	−0·5	−3·1
Wigtown	7·9	7·4	−0·5	−3·1
Dunfermline	10·8	10·1	−0·7	−3·8
Kirkcaldy	13·4	12·6	−0·8	−3·9
North East Fife	12·0	11·3	−0·7	−3·8
Aberdeen City	11·7	11·0	−0·7	−3·0
Banff and Buchan	10·5	9·8	−0·7	−3·0
Gordon	8·4	7·9	−0·5	−2·8
Kincardine and Deeside	6·9	6·5	−0·4	−2·7
Moray	8·8	8·2	−0·6	−2·9
Badenoch and Strathspey	6·7	6·3	−0·4	−3·2
Caithness	10·5	9·8	−0·7	−3·5
Inverness	8·0	7·5	−0·5	−3·3
Lochaber	12·1	11·4	−0·7	−3·5
Nairn	6·7	6·3	−0·4	−3·2
Ross and Cromarty	10·5	9·8	−0·7	−3·5
Skye and Lochalsh	10·1	9·4	−0·7	−3·5
Sutherland	7·5	7·1	−0·4	−3·2
East Lothian	14·3	13·4	−0·9	−4·0
Edinburgh City	14·0	13·1	−0·9	−4·0
Midlothian	14·3	13·4	−0·9	−4·0
West Lothian	12·6	11·8	−0·8	−3·9
Argyll and Bute	15·9	14·9	−1·0	−4·1
Bearsden and Milngavie	10·9	10·8	−0·6	−3·7
Clydebank	16·3	15·3	−1·0	−4·1
Clydesdale	14·1	13·2	−0·9	−4·0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	13·9	13·0	−0·9	−4·0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	14·3	13·4	−0·9	−4·0
Cunninghame	17·2	16·1	−1·1	−4·2
Dumbarton	15·9	14·9	−1·0	−4·1
East Kilbride	12·0	11·2	−0·8	−3·9
Eastwood	8·4	7·9	−0·5	−3·6
Glasgow City	22·3	20·9	−1·4	−4·5
Hamilton	15·1	14·2	−0·9	−4·0
Inverclyde	13·4	12·6	−0·8	−3·9
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	13·9	13·0	−0·9	−4·0
Kyle and Carrick	14·3	13·4	−0·9	−4·0
Monklands	15·1	14·2	−0·9	−4·0
Motherwell	13·7	12·9	−0·8	−3·9
Renfrew	15·1	14·2	−0·9	−4·0
Strathkelvin	13·4	12·6	−0·8	−3·9
Angus	11·3	10·6	−0·7	−3·6
Dundee City	18·1	16·9	−1·2	−4·1
Perth and Kinross	11·7	11·0	−0·7	−3·6

Notes:

1. Column 1 shows rate poundages which would have been required in 1990-91 were it not for the Government's Unified Business Rate policy.
2. Column 2 shows the actual rate poundages for 1990-91 which the Secretary of State intends to prescribe following the £80 million UBR reduction.
3. Column 3 shows the reduction in poundages at individual payer level.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his proposed community charge transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Rifkind: I have today sent to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities a paper describing the conclusions I have drawn after consultation with it. I intend to lay regulations in the new year which will provide for the introduction of the scheme.

Electricity Boards

Mr. Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the annual reports and accounts for 1988-89 of the Scottish electricity boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have now received the annual reports and accounts of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the South of Scotland electricity board. These have been laid before the House. Notwithstanding the position shown in the accounts at 31 March 1989, I have confirmed to the boards, with the agreement of Treasury that they shall continue to have access to advances which can be made by me under section 24(1) of the Electricity (Scotland) Act 1979 subject to the limit set out in section 29(1) of that Act, as amended, until the transfer date defined in section 67(4) of the Electricity Act 1989.

Nursery Education

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what extra resources he is proposing to devote to the promotion, development and provision of local authority nursery places in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy regarding promoting an increase in local education authority provision of nursery places in Scotland;

(3) what research he is currently undertaking to estimate the demand for local authority nursery places in Scotland;

(4) what targets he has set for the increase in provision of local authority nursery education over the next five years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* It is for education authorities themselves to determine, within the resources available to them, the level of nursery education places they wish to provide for their area, having regard to local circumstances and competing priorities. They are also responsible for estimating demand and setting any targets.

ENVIRONMENT

Social Landlords

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to prevent private companies setting up as social landlords, obtaining a council dowry and then defaulting on their responsibilities.

Mr. Chope: Under the Housing Act 1988, tenants' choice landlords are required to meet stringent criteria if they are to be approved by the Housing Corporation to seek to acquire property under tenants' choice.

Only responsible applicants with a long-term commitment to the provision of rented housing for those who need it will be approved. All applicants will also have to give a series of binding undertakings in a deed under seal to the corporation, regarding the way they operate.

A negative valuation or "dowry" may arise where repairs are necessary to bring transferring property up to the standard required by the public sector landlord's repairing obligations. Disputed valuations are set on statutory principles by the district valuer.

After a valuation is set, an approval landlord wishing to acquire property under tenants' choice is required to make a detailed offer to the tenants on a range of matters including repairs. If the tenants vote to accept the offer and transfer proceeds the offer is contractually binding on the landlord.

Urban Development

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list for each qualifying authority *(a)* the number of inquiries, applications and approvals relating to either urban development grant, or urban regeneration grant in 1987-88 and *(b)* the number of inquiries, applications and approvals relating to city grant in 1988-89;

(2) if he will publish a table which lists those qualifying authorities which did not win *(a)* any approvals for either urban development grant or urban regeneration grant in 1987-88 and *(b)* any city grant approvals in 1988-89.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is shown in the table:

	UDG/URG applications 1987-88	*UDG/URG approvals 1987-88*	*City grant applications 1988-89*	*City grant approvals 1988-89*
Barnsley	—	—	2	—
Birmingham	4	2	6	3
Blackburn	2	2	7	3
Bolton	2	3	3	2
Bradford	1	1	2	—
Brent	1	1	—	—
Bristol	—	—	3	1
Burnley	—	—	—	—
Coventry	—	—	2	1
Derby	—	—	10	2
Doncaster	—	—	—	—
Dudley	2	2	2	1
Gateshead	—	—	2	—
Greenwich	—	—	2	—
Hackney	—	—	1	1
Halton	—	—	1	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	—	—
Haringey	1	—	—	—
Hartlepool	—	—	3	1
Islington	1	—	1	—
Kensington and Chelsea	—	1	—	—

	UDG/URG applications 1987-88	UDG/URG approvals 1987-88	City grant applications 1988-89	City grant approvals 1988-89
Kingston upon Hull	5	3	—	—
Kirklees	—	—	3	1
Knowsley	—	—	1	—
Lambeth	1	—	1	—
Langbaurgh	—	—	—	—
Leeds	3	3	2	1
Leicester	3	1	2	2
Lewisham	1	1	2	1
Liverpool	1	1	1	—
Manchester	—	3	4	—
Middlesbrough	1	—	—	—
Newcastle	2	1	4	3
Newham	1	1	—	—
North Tyneside	1	1	2	2
Nottingham	2	5	13	7
Oldham	—	1	1	1
Plymouth	1	—	1	—
Preston	1	—	1	—
Rochdale	1	1	—	—
Rotherham	1	—	—	—
St. Helens	—	—	1	—
Salford	1	—	3	2
Sandwell	2	3	3	2
Sefton	—	1	1	—
Sheffield	2	2	4	3
South Tyneside	1	3	2	—
Southwark	—	—	3	1
Stockton	—	—	1	—
Sunderland	—	—	3	1
Tower Hamlets	1	—	4	2
Walsall	3	1	—	—
Wandsworth	—	—	1	—
Wigan	2	1	—	—
Wirral	—	1	—	—
Wolverhampton	1	—	1	—
Wrekin	2	—	1	—
Total	54	46	113	44

Notes:
1. Excludes projects in UDC areas.
2. The information requested on inquiries which are not formal applications is not held centrally.
3. Applications received towards the end of a financial year may be decided at the beginning of the following year.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each urban development corporation *(a)* the value of city grant approvals in 1988-89, *(b)* the value of Inner Urban Areas Act grants distributed in 1988-89, *(c)* the value of receipts from land sales in 1988-89 and *(d)* the area of land sold in 1988-89.

Mr. Moynihan: The information available is as follows:

	(a) City Grant approvals £ million	(b) Inner Urban Areas Act Grant approved expenditure £ million	(c) Receipts from land Sales £ million	(d) Area of land sold hectares
Black Country	1·2	0·4	0·3	2·5
Bristol	—	—	—	—
Central Manchester	7·2	—	—	—
Leeds	0·4	—	—	—
London Docklands	—	0·1	133·1	30·4
Merseyside	1·2	0·4	2·3	19·0
Sheffield	—	—	—	—
Teesside	2·2	—	0·1	0·8
Trafford Park	0·1	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear	7·9	0·5	0·6	7·2

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure on *(a)* urban development corporations, *(b)* city grant, *(c)* derelict land grant, *(d)* city action teams, *(e)* Estate Action and *(f)* the urban programme.

Mr. Moynihan: The information is as follows:

£ million

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
(a) Urban Development Corporations[1]	133	234	440	542
(b) City Grant[2]	25	25	35	49
(c) Derelict Land Grant	81	78	67	72
(d) City Action Teams	5	7	6	8
(e) Estate Action	75	140	190	190
(f) Urban Programme[3]	266	261	260	265

[1] External financing limits.
[2] Includes urban development grant and urban regeneration grant.
[3] Includes current and capital expenditure funded by the programmes of various Government Departments and local authority self-financed expenditure.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for every qualifying authority the amount of urban programme aid spent in each year from 1986-87 to 1988-89 on *(a)* new industrial and commercial buildings, *(b)* improving and converting industrial and commercial buildings, *(c)* land improvement, *(d)* housing and *(e)* other buildings which fulfil a social purpose.

Mr. Moynihan: I am arranging for copies of the information requested to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of urban programme aid was allocated to each of the 57 qualifying authorities in 1987-88 and in 1988-89.

Mr. Moynihan: The amount of urban programme aid allocated to each of the 57 qualifying authorities and district health authorities in these areas for 1987-88 and 1988-89 is shown in the table. The figures do not include the amounts topsliced for the Merseyside special allocation, residual traditional urban programme commitments, low-attaining pupils programme and research.

Region and Local authority allocations	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Northern		
Newcastle/Gateshead	17·3	16·8
Hartlepool	1·7	1·8
Langbaurgh	1·6	1·7
Middlesbrough	5·8	5·5
North Tyneside	3·6	3·4
South Tyneside	4·5	4·4
Stockton	1·2	1·4
Sunderland	4·3	4·7
North West		
Manchester/Salford	24·3	22·2
Blackburn	4·0	4·0
Bolton	4·0	3·8
Burnley	1·0	1·8
Oldham	4·0	3·7
Preston	1·3	2·0
Rochdale	4·0	3·6
Wigan	1·5	2·2
Merseyside		
Liverpool	20·0	20·4
Halton	1·5	1·5
Knowsley	4·1	4·0
St. Helen's	1·5	1·7
Sefton	1·6	1·5
Wirral	3·5	3·5
West Midlands		
Birmingham	25·4	24·7
Coventry	4·4	4·8
Dudley	1·3	1·3
Sandwell	5·0	4·9
Walsall	1·5	1·5
Wolverhampton	5·5	5·4
The Wrekin	0·6	0·6
East Midlands		
Derby	1·5	1·4
Leicester	5·4	5·4
Nottingham	5·5	5·7
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Barnsley	1·6	1·5
Bradford	4·5	3·1
Doncaster	1·8	1·8
Hull	5·0	4·9
Kirklees	0·8	0·8
Leeds	4·5	4·8
Rotherham	1·8	1·8
Sheffield	5·6	5·5
London		
Hackney	10·8	9·7
Islington	9·8	9·7
Lambeth	11·7	10·3
Brent	4·0	3·9
Greenwich	1·5	1·9
Hammersmith and Fulham	4·7	4·3
Haringey	2·0	2·3
Kensington and Chelsea	1·3	1·9
Lewisham	1·7	2·0
Newham	1·8	2·3
Southwark	2·0	2·3
Tower Hamlets	4·5	4·5
Wandsworth	4·5	4·5
South West		
Bristol	1·6	1·5
Plymouth	0·5	1·0

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table for each urban development corporation which shows, either in terms of units or in matters of square feet, the volume of planning applications since the inception of the corporations for *(a)* private housing, *(b)* industrial premises, *(c)* commercial premises, *(d)* warehousing and *(e)* retail premises.

Mr. Moynihan: The following information is available:

Total amount of development (completed and under construction) in each UDC (to 31 March 1989)

		Type of Development	
Urban Development Corporations	*Year established*	*Housing (number of units)*	*Non-housing (sq ft—millions)*
Merseyside	1981	572	5·4
London Docklands	1981	16,829	20·1
Trafford Park	1987	0	0·5
Black Country	1987	325	1·7
Teesside	1987	0	2·2
Tyne and Wear	1987	453	0·2
Central Manchester	1988	327	0·3
Leeds	1988	0	0·1
Sheffield	1988	0	0·5
Bristol	1989	0	0

Total number of planning decisions by English UDCs

Urban Development Corporations	Year established	Number of quarters for which date are available	Number of planning decisions up to 30 June 1989					
			Dwellings		Offices, Manufacturing, Storage & Warehousing		Retail	
			Decisions	Granted	Decisions	Granted	Decisions	Granted
Merseyside	1981	20	12	9	34	30	11	8
London Docklands	1981	20	607	587	305	287	140	134
Trafford Park	1987	3	1	1	37	37	2	2
Black Country	1987	7	48	43	206	193	51	44
Teesside	1987	8	1	1	67	59	6	5
Tyne and Wear	1987	7	42	39	97	75	75	60
Central Manchester	1988	3	2	2	10	8	6	6
Leeds	1988	3	1	0	32	27	5	2
Sheffield	1988	3	0	0	26	24	1	0
Bristol	1989	1	1	1	2	2	0	0

Note:
The information given in column 2 relates to the number of quarters since the establishment of each UDC for which data is available. Figures for Merseyside and London Docklands relate only to information available for the most recent 5 years.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide estimates showing for each financial year from 1987-88 to 1990-91 the amount of actual or planned expenditure designed to support the urban programme.

Mr. Moynihan: The figures showing the total amount of expenditure for the urban programme for the years 1987-88 to 1990-91 are as follows. These figures include the amounts topsliced for the Merseyside task force, residual traditional urban programme, low-attaining pupils programme and research.

	£ million
1987-88 Actual	266
1988-89 Actual	261
1989-90 Planned	260
1990-91 Planned	265

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the factors and *(b)* the figures used to determine the percentage increase in the 1990-91 standard spending assessments to take account of the costs arising from the geographical location of Surrey county and Spelthorne borough councils.

Mr. Chope: The standard spending assessments for all authorities in the south-east standard region are adjusted to take account of higher labour costs in the region as identified by standardised earnings for an appropriate range of occupations from the new earnings survey for 1988. The precise adjustments vary from service block to service block according to the proportion of total costs represented by labour costs. Provisional figures are set out in annex F to the draft distribution report which my right hon. Friend placed in the Library on 6 November.

Pollution

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the appeals under section 10 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 currently under consideration by his Department; how many decisions have been issued since 27 July; and what steps he is taking to increase the speed of progress.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Following is a list of the appeals currently under consideration showing the dates they were first lodged. Three decisions have been issued since 27 July. Internal reorganisation of staff will allow greater priority to be given to these appeals in future, and changes have also been made to the various administrative procedures in order to speed up the decision-making process.

	Date
Empire Brickworks, Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, Walsall	1 June 1982
Seal Sands Terminal, Seal Sands, Cleveland	26 June 1984
Empire Brickworks, 51, Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, Walsall	8 September 1986
Empire Brickworks, 231, Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, Walsall	8 September 1986
Empire Brickworks, 323, Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, Walsall	8 September 1986
Empire Brickworks, 324, Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, Walsall	8 September 1986
East Tilbury (1) East Tilbury, Essex	26 March 1987
Aveley Clay Pit 2 and 3, Sandy Lane, Aveley, Essex	10 July 1987
Auckland Road, Leyton, LWRA	21 July 1987
Charleston Road, Hardley, Hampshire	10 August 1987
Gilbey Road, Grimsby, Humberside	7 September 1987
Old Railway Cutting, Chesterfield Road, Bolsover, Derbyshire	7 December 1987
Unit 3 Hartlepool, Sandgate Industrial Estate, Cleveland	7 December 1987
Springwell Hill, Nether Handley, Sheffield	9 December 1987
Norwood Industrial Estate, Rotherham Road, Killamarsh, Sheffield	3 February 1988
East Tilbury (2), East Tilbury, Essex	18 April 1988
Whinfield Farm, Pennington, Cumbria	23 June 1988
Munnery's Copse, Worthing, West Sussex	27 June 1988
Springwell Hill, Nether Handley, Sheffield	1 August 1988
Unit 10 Eddarbridge Industrial Estate, Cheshire	19 August 1988
Redbournbury Plant, St. Albans, Hertfordshire	24 November 1988
Grazebrook Industrial Estate, Stubbers Green Road, Dudley	6 January 1989
Leabrook Road, Wednesbury, Sandwell	10 January 1989
Butterley Hole, Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, Walsall	6 February 1989
Bakers Hole, Swanscombe, Kent	8 March 1989
Martin Earles No. 1, Cuxton, Kent	8 March 1989
Martin Earles Pit, Cuxton, Kent	8 March 1989
140 Moss Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire	13 March 1989
Grazebrook Estate (2), Stubbers Green Road, Dudley	4 May 1989
Mucking Wharf, Mucking, Essex	16 May 1989
Offham Quarry, Teston Road, Offham, Kent	19 June 1989
Stangate Quarry, Borough Green, Kent	19 June 1989
Pluckley Brickworks, Chambers Green, Pluckley, Kent	29 June 1989

	Date
Vineyard Chalkpit, Rainham, Kent	29 June 1989
Stone Pits 5 and 6, Stone, Dartford, Kent	29 June 1989
Stone 1 and Atlas Stone, Stone, Dartford, Kent	29 June 1989
Heathside Farm, Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire	3 July 1989
Chesterfield Road, Barlborough, Derbyshire	29 August 1989
Barnett and Beddows, Stubbers Green Road, Aldridge, Walsall	6 September 1989
Moss Hall Farm, Rixton, Warrington, Cheshire	19 September 1989
Moss Hall Farm 2, Rixton, Warrington, Cheshire	19 September 1989
Rough Park Quarry, Mill Lane, Upholland, Lancashire	9 October 1989
Lumm Farm, Lumb Lane, Littlemoss, Droylesden, Greater Manchester	20 October 1989
Halfhead Farm, Shallowford, Stone, Staffordshire	17 November 1989
Bell Terminal, Grangetown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland	20 November 1989
Jolly Farmer Sand Pit, Guildford Road, Runfold, Surrey	21 November 1989
Farnham Sandpit, Alton Road, Farnham, Surrey	8 December 1989

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action he intends to take following the identification by Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution of local contamination above background levels by polychorinated biphenyls at Ordnance Survey grid reference numbers *(a)* NY 5151, *(b)* NZ 5101, *(c)* NZ 0151, *(d)* SE 0101 and *(e)* TR 3666; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he intends to take following the identification by Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution of local contamination levels of dioxins and furans above the established background levels at Ordnance Survey grid reference numbers *(a)* NY 5101, *(b)* NZ 5151, *(c)* SE 0101, *(d)* SE 0151, *(e)* SU 5101; *(f)* TQ 0151; *(g)* TR 0151; *(h)* SK 0202 and *(i)* NT 0301; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* The report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has shown PCBs, dioxins and furans to be ubiquitous in United Kingdom soils. As expected levels are higher where there is a history of heavy industry and urbanisation. I am, however, informed that the levels of these compounds found at the locations mentioned do not pose a direct risk to human health. Further work will concentrate on sampling around those processes having the potential to release significant amounts of these compounds.

Clause 28 Prosecutions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the details of all prosecutions that have taken place under clause 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 (which prohibits local authorities from intentionally promoting homosexuality) does not create any criminal offence: there can therefore be no prosecutions under it.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to inform people of their rights to protect their confidentiality during the period remaining for implementation of the community charge in England and Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I am not aware that the implementation of the community charge in the manner advised jointly by the Department and the local authority associations poses any threat to confidentiality.

Waste Paper

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the quantity of waste paper removed from the House in an average week; and what proportion of this consists of unsolicited mail or other unused matter.

Mr. Chope: The quantity of paper removed from the Palace averages 2 tonnes per day, with a maximum of 4 tonnes per day. It is not possible to estimate the proportion of this which is unsolicited mail, or other unused matter. The waste paper is sent for recycling.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will arrange for Property Services Agency employees' severance terms to be no less favourable than those granted to workers in ordnance factories and dockyards;

(2) if he will make a statement on his discussions with the United States forces on the future of the Property Services Agency;

(3) when he hopes to announce the results of the study of the formalities of the relationship between the United States Air Force and the Property Services Agency when the Property Services Agency has been privatised.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* There have been several discussions with representatives of United States forces about their future relationship with PSA since my right hon. Friend's statement of 25 May 1988. Further discussions of the implications of privatisation are now in progress as part of the study I referred to in the debate on the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill on 6 December. This study is being led by the Ministry of Defence with full PSA involvement. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement about the continuing role of a privatised PSA in providing services to United States forces in the United Kingdom as soon as conclusions have been reached.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has in relation to regulation 7 of the principal Civil Service pensions scheme concerning Property Services Agency employees.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* On pensions, we shall make it clear to purchasers that we expect them to offer terms which are broadly comparable with those of the principal Civil Service pension scheme. The terms that they offer will be subject to analysis by the Government Actuary. If they are assessed as not being as

good as the Civil Service scheme, some means will be found to ensure that the staff are not disadvantaged in respect of the overall terms and conditions of service.

On redundancy, the purchaser will be required to provide compensation terms which, as far as possible, are identical to those the staff have at present.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the Government Actuary has advised about the Property Services Agency pension terms offer.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* Advice on an offer has not been sought.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each water authority in England the estimated percentage held by *(a)* individual shareholders and *(b)* financial institutions as on the first day of trading in the new companies.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The allocations to applicants in each of the nine English water companies were announced on 11 December. The offer of shares to the general public in each company was oversubscribed to an extent that the clawback arrangements set out in the prospectus were triggered. As a result, 39·25 per cent. of the shares in each company were allocated to institutions and 46·875 per cent. of the shares in each company were allocated to applicants in the retail public offer.

City of London Heliport

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will call in the planning application submitted to the corporation of the City of London for the construction of a heliport adjacent to the Cannon Street railway bridge; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if there will be a public inquiry on the planning application for the proposed City of London heliport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: This application has been made only recently and my right hon. Friend is considering its implications. The corporation of the City of London, as local planning authority, is responsible for deciding planning applications within its area. In determining applications, the corporation is required to take into account all material planning considerations.

MINIS 10

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the outcome of the full consultation and discussion on MINIS 10 within Government promised by the then Minister of State in Standing Committee on 4 May.

Mr. Chris Patten: Copies of MINIS 10 were placed in the Library on 15 November 1989.

British Rail Land, Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now use his powers to order the sale of the British Rail-owned land between Sainsbury's and Gunn and Moores in Nottingham.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that the British Rail Property Board is today discussing its disposal plans for the land. It would be premature for the Secretary of State to become statutorily involved at this juncture.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to reduce the import and export of toxic waste.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Environmental Protection Bill contains provisions to restrict or prohibit the import or export of any type of waste into or out of the United Kingdom, in order to prevent risk of harm to the environment or human health, or to conserve disposal resources.

Satellite Television Dishes

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what statutory enactment an individual is obliged to apply to the local planning authority for permission to erect a satellite dish on a private dwelling house.

Mr. Howard: Class H of part 1 of schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 grants permission to install a single satellite antenna on or within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse provided the antenna's maximum diameter does not exceed 90 cm and it does not project above the highest part of the house's roof. Otherwise, specific planning permission is necessary under section 23(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Coventry Council (Ombudsman's Report)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action has been taken in the cast of Coventry city council and Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Quin and Mrs. Havels née Quin since the answer to the hon. Member for Pembroke of 22 February at columns *696-97.*

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I will write to my hon. Friend.

1 and 2 Bridge Street, London

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who owns Nos. 1 and 2 Bridge street, London, SW1; whether the building is listed; and whether there are any proposals to demolish or improve the building.

Mr. Chope: Nos. 1 and 2 Bridge street, which are Crown property, are listed grade II. They form part of the Bridge street site which is being redeveloped to provide additional parliamentary accommodation. Proposals for the second phase, which includes Nos. 1 and 2 Bridge street, were sent to the Services Committee last month.

Norris Green Estate, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Minister of State, the hon. Member for Wirral West, (Mr. Hunt) will be responding to the letter from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby of 15 September in respect of the Norris Green housing estate in Liverpool.

Mr. Howard: I have written to the hon. Member.

Homelessness

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his Department's estimates of the number of families who will present themselves as homeless in *(a)* London, *(b)* England in each of the years from 1990 to 2000 inclusive.

Mr. Chope: The Department has no such estimates.

Crown Premises

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment approximately how many complaints Her Majesty's Government have received from private landlords about the poor maintenance and rundown appearance of Crown-occupied premises; and what effect he estimates such complaints have had on the willingness of lessors to have the Property Services Agency as a tenant.

Mr. Chope: No information is held centrally about complaints by landlords of poor maintenance. The National Audit Office referred in its report "The Management of the Civil Estate" to the only two cases which came to light following a specific enquiry to PSA regions in 1986 for evidence of cases where landlords had refused to grant leases.

There is no evidence that those two cases have affected the general willingness of lessors to have PSA as a tenant.

Control Properties

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the results of his evaluation of the Property Services Agency's selection of control properties experiment, terminated in the autumn of 1988.

Mr. Chope: The radical option experiment to which I believe the hon. Member refers has provided valuable lessons for Government Departments and the Agency when they assume their new responsibilities for property management from April 1990.

Accommodation (Free Assets)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the outcome of his review of free assets, in relation to the value of accommodation, as described in the National Audit Office report on the Property Services Agency, section 4:28.

Mr. Chope: For 1990-91 it has been decided that opportunity cost rents will be charged on Departmental Estate properties in the same way as on common user estate properties. Property Holdings will act as agents for the Treasury in assessing rents and collecting them.

Property Services Agency Estate Surveyors

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the result of his consideration of improvements in the Property Services Agency estate surveyors information system and in the longer-term estate support system.

Mr. Chope: Changes to the Property Services Agency estate surveyor information system (ESIS) have been considered in the context of the reorganisation of PSA from 1 April 1990 as announced in the statement by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State on 25 May 1988. By that date PSA services will require a more flexible and responsive resource cost management system. A weekly diary capture system is now being developed. This will be in place by 1 April 1990 and the ESIS system will then be abandoned.

Norfolk House, East Kilbride

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why Norfolk house, East Kilbride, was vacated in 1984; when the lease of Norfolk house expires; and what is the annual cost.

Mr. Chope: The occupying Department, Inland Revenue, vacated the premises since they were considered to be unsuitable eitner for adaptation under the computerised office programme or as a training centre. PSA (Scotland) is currently negotiating abandonment of the lease which is scheduled to expire on 24 March 2029. Annual costs vary from year to year but including rental approximate at £200,000.

Police and Fire Brigade Pay

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision has been made in the standard spending assessment of local authorities for next year in respect of pay awards for the police force and the fire brigade.

Mr. Chope: The control totals for each of the standard spending assessment service blocks take account of all the costs of providing a standard level of service. Provisional figures are set out in annex B to the draft distribution report which my right hon. Friend placed in the Library on 6 November.

Water Meter Trials

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain information from the Yorkshire water authority as to why the local people in the Normanton meter trial area were not given the opportunity to consider the draft code of practice for water leakage before it was submitted to the director general as promised in the letter of 29 August from his Department to the hon. Member for Normanton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The draft code will apply to all Yorkshire Water's domestic customers who are metered, not just those customers in the trial area. We did, however, ask Yorkshire Water to give the local liaison committee on the south Normanton trial an opportunity to comment on the draft code before it was submitted for approval to the director general. I understand that Yorkshire Water subsequently passed the committee's comments, including those from the hon. Member, to the director general with the draft code.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available to Parliament from the national compulsory water meter trials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: A copy of the first interim report on the trials, which was published last February, was placed in the Library. A second interim report is expected to be published in the spring.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost to public funds for the compulsory water meter trials in the Normanton constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Government have agreed to contribute up to half the cost of the south Normanton trial. The budget for the trial has yet to be finalised, but we expect the Government's contribution to be in the region of £240,000.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what mechanism is to be applied to monitor the total income, including the contribution from his Department to the compulsory water meter trials in the Normanton constituency, by the Yorkshire water authority during the trial period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The trial tariff has been designed to recover the same amount of income from the trail area as would have been recovered on a rateable value basis. We shall be regularly monitoring the level of income received from customers when charging starts in April 1991. The tariff will be amended if the income recovered from customers is greater than anticipated.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what value will be obtained from the investment of public money on the compulsory water meter trials in the Normanton constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The south Normanton trial is part of a programme of 12 trials in different areas designed to examine all aspects of metering, including the views of customers. The lessons learnt during the trials will help ensure that those water companies that decide to adopt metering as an alternative means of charging once the use of rateable values is no longer permitted, will do so cost effectively and with the least inconvenience to customers.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of water meters being installed in the Isle of Wight trial scheme which, when examined by the trading standards officer for verification, have fallen outside the tolerance area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I understand that one meter has been tested by the local trading standards officer on the Isle of Wight at the request of a customer. The meter was found to be just outside the error limits prescribed in the Measuring Equipment (Cold-water Meters) Regulations 1988 and was subsequently replaced.

City Grants

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to review the priority areas for city grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Secretary of State has no immediate plans to review the priority areas for city grant.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the criteria for deciding priority areas for city grant purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Priority for city grant is given to the 57 local authorities invited to submit inner area programmes for support under the urban progamme.

Urban Grants

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown of *(a)* urban development grant, *(b)* urban renewal grant and *(c)* city grants approvals to the 57 urban programme areas to the end of November, authority by authority, category by category; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Crown Buildings, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for leasing surplus space in the Crown buildings, Cathays park, Cardiff, subsequent to the departure of the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Chope: Any surplus space in the Crown building, Cathays park, subsequent to the departure of the insurance services group of the Export Credits Guarantee Department, will be reallocated to meet the requirements of another Government Department or Departments.

Housing Revenue Account Subsidies

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1990-91.

Mr. Howard: The housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1990-91 have been made today. Every local housing authority in England has been sent a copy of the determinations together with provisional figures on which its subsidy entitlement will be based. The figures for each individual authority are subject to change in the light of new information supplied by the authority itself. Copies of the determinations and of the provisional figures for all authorities will be placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The new housing revenue account subsidy was introduced by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It replaces the existing main housing subsidy, housing benefit subsidy for rent rebates and the element in rate support grant related to authorities' own housing costs. The total Exchequer subsidy for 1990-91 is estimated to be some £3 billion, a similar sum to the combined figure for the different subsidies this year.

Each authority's subsidy will be calculated in accordance with the formula which is prescribed in the determinations. For 1990-91, the formula assumes that there will be a national increase of 10 per cent. in gross rent income. That produces an average guideline increase of £2·08 a week compared with £1·95 last year. However, unlike previous years, the determinations this year provide for different guideline rent increases in different authorities. The rent guidelines are set by reference to the

value of each authority's housing stock, but are subject to a minimum and a maximum guideline increase. We estimate that the maximum guideline increase of £4·50 will apply to 66 authorities, and that 156 authorities will benefit from the minimum guideline increase of 95p which is less than would be required nationally to keep pace with inflation. Over half of all council tenants are on housing benefit and will not have to pay for any increase in rent because this will be fully rebated.

Overall, the effect is that guideline rent increases are lower in parts of the country where the value of housing is lower, and higher where it is relatively high. Within any area, guideline increases are also lower for authorities with high rents at present than they are for authorities where rents are lower. In this way authorities will be encouraged to move towards a more sensible pattern of rents across the country which reflects the value of the housing being provided.

For 1990-91, the subsidy formula provides for an 8 per cent. increase in the provision for management and maintenance expenditure which allows for at least 3 per cent. growth. The allowance will in most cases be related to authorities' past actual expenditure. There are two additional safeguards for authorities whose past expenditure has been low. First, if their past spending was lower than their allowance for management and maintenance spending under the existing housing subsidy system, then we will base their allowance for 1990-91 on the previous allowance. Secondly, we have set a minimum allowance per dwelling which will benefit the 10 per cent. of authorities whose allowances would otherwise (after adjustment for regional cost variations) have been the lowest in the country. To provide for the cost of the minimum allowance we have transferred £30 million from the local authority housing capital expenditure programme for 1990-91. In future years we intend that the provision for management and maintenance should be progressively directed towards those authorities with the greatest needs.

The subsidy formula also takes into account the full cost of loan charges and of rent rebates, subject only to safeguards to prevent double subsidy and to provide an incentive for efficient operation of the rent rebate scheme. The existing system of admissible cost limits for capital works, under which subsidy is paid only on loan charges where the average cost of schemes falls within unit cost limits prescribed by the Government, will be dropped. Rents on leasehold property will also be taken into account in subsidy, but in this case the admissible cost limits will continue to apply for the time being.

The draft determinations were the subject of consultation with local authorities, their associations, and other professional bodies. A large number of representations have been received, in response to which we have clarified and simplified the determinations wherever possible. We intend to publish a new edition of the "Housing Subsidy Manual", with practical guidance on the operation of the new subsidy system, early in the new year.

The combined effect of these proposals is to direct the £33 billion of taxpayers' money which will be paid out in HRA subsidy towards the authorities that most need it.

Drinking Water

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the new drinking water inspectorate.

Mr. Howard: Section 60 of the Water Act 1989 empowers my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales to appoint technical assessors to act on their behalf in relation to the new provisions on drinking water quality and supply. This is the statutory basis for the new drinking water inspectorate which will begin work on 2 January 1990. Their principal task will be to ensure that water undertakers in England and Wales are fulfilling all their statutory requirements for the supply of wholesome drinking water. They will check for failures to comply with the standards set by the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 which come fully into force on 1 January 1990. If a failure occurs the inspectorate will ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Mr. M. G. Healey has been appointed chief inspector. Mr. Healey is head of the drinking water division of the Department of the Environment and is an engineer by training.

Housing Investment Programmes

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make the allocations to local authorities in England for their housing investment programmes in 1990-91.

Mr. Howard: Each housing authority is today being informed of its housing investment programme (HIP) allocation for 1990-91. Copies of the letters to authorities and of the schedule of HIP allocations will be placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The local authority associations have been consulted about the distribution of HIP allocations, including the construction of the generalised needs index (GNI), which has been comprehensively reviewed. My right hon. Friend has also consulted the local authority associations, local authorities and others about the determination of housing revenue account subsidy for 1990-91 and has decided that £30 million should be transferred from the total available for housing credit approvals in 1990-91 to increase the resources available for HRA subsidy.

Local authority credit approvals and specified capital grants will therefore total £1,784 million in 1990-91, not including £112 million for the special homelessness initiative. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 allows my right hon. Friend to take account of local authorities' capital receipts when making allocations, and the housing element of the receipts taken into account in this way is £270 million. Housing investment programme (HIP) allocations for 1990-91 will therefore total £2,054 million.

HIP allocations in 1990-91 totalled £1,110 million and the large increase in the total for allocations in 1990-91 has been made possible by the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. As a result, about two thirds of the total capital resources that local authorities are expected to spend on housing next year can be targeted to reflect differences in local needs, compared with about one third in recent years.

After considering the views of the local authority associations, my right hon. Friend has concluded that a

revised GNI should be introduced for 1990-91, and that the distribution of resources should be made on the following basis:

(i) £164·5 million to be allocated separately as supplementary credit approvals (SCAs), as follows:
  (a) £110 million for the estate action programme, for new and some continuation schemes. (A further £80 million for the remaining estate action continuation schemes is being allocated to authorities on the basis of agreed levels of commitment as part of their main HIP allocations).
  (b) £54·5 million held back for later distribution, of which £10 million is expected to be to cover renewal areas declared during the year, and the remainder primarily to provide against demand under the new renovation grant system for mandatory grants in excess of authorities' available resources.

(ii) My right hon. Friend's view is that the existing system of weighting the GNI scores of the 57 "Action for Cities" target areas is not only obscure, but also ineffective in ensuring that additional resources reach those inner city authorities most in need of them. He has therefore decided that, for 1990-91, £100 million of the total for HIP allocations should be allocated to the 57 "Action for Cities" target areas as distinct inner city special allocations. These resources have been distributed to the DOE regions in proportion to the GNI scores of the 57 authorities. Each region's total for inner city special allocations has been allocated to the 57 authorities following recommendations by the Department's regional housing controllers.

(iii) The remaining £1,709 million of the main HIP allocations, made up of the £1,296 million of housing annual capital guidelines (ACGs) and £413 million of resources for specified capital grants, has been distributed in two stages. First, the distribution to DOE regions has been made in proportion to the sum of the GNI scores of the local authorities in each region. Second, each region's total has been allocated to individual local authorities one half in proportion to each authority's GNI score, and one half following recommendations by the Department's regional housing controllers to reflect local needs.

Urban Programme

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list schemes covering energy conservation under the urban programme for each year since 1986.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* I am arranging for copies of the information requested to be placed in the Library of the House.

Home Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each year since 1978 the number of dwellings insulated under public sector insulation programmes.

Mr. Howard: My Department is responsible for the energy conservation programme and homes insulation scheme. Information on activity in 1986, 1987, 1988 and the first quarter of 1989 for energy conversion, and the first half of 1989 for the homes insulation scheme, appears in table 2.21 of "Housing and Construction Statistics Part 2", No. 38. Figures for earlier years appear in table 7.7 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Work under the energy conservation programme is identified only where it is the only work being carried out to a local authority dwelling. Insulation is often installed when other general renovation work is carried out, but these cases cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the internal audit report of 1986 on the homes insulation scheme.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* No. It would be inappropriate to make generally available such reports, which are however sent to the National Audit Office and used by the Comptroller and Auditor General to inform his examination of the Department's work.

EMPLOYMENT

Social Fund

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much European social fund funding Leeds will lose for training programmes for long-term unemployed adults and unemployed young people in the coming year.

Mr. Eggar: Allocations to particular programmes have yet to be made. To date, support under the European social fund is made for one year at a time. Funding in one year carried no guarantee of support for future years.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the parameters now used to determine the allocation of European social fund money.

Mr. Eggar: Under the new European social fund arrangements the Commission determines the amount to be allocated to the member states and decides on the applications submitted earlier this year. The regulations on priorities for the schemes were agreed by all member states within the Community. In addition, the Commission has issued guidelines on those elements of the fund to support measures for the long-term unemployed and young people, which they have said they will apply in assessing applications for support. These regulations and guidelines have been widely circulated to all interested parties. This week the Commission published its Community support framework for four of the five objectives of the fund. They set out the priorities that the Commission and member states will adopt in assessing applications for support in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy that any overflow of European social fund training grants should be reallocated to local authorities that already have well-established European social fund programmes.

Mr. Eggar: We expect that all allocations by the European Commission of ESF will be fully taken up by the applicants concerned.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of all the major schemes in order of amount supported by the European social fund.

Mr. Eggar: A copy of the latest European social fund decision on the funding of all United Kingdom applicants has been lodged in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table of the European social fund training grants allocation to Leeds from 1979 to 1989, inclusive.

Mr. Eggar: Details of allocations to individual towns and cities can be identified only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish his Department's reply to correspondence from Leeds city council about reduced European social fund allocations to training projects.

Mr. Eggar: It is not my Department's policy to publish correspondence with other organisations and individuals.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the new criteria for the European social fund bid allocations to local authorities.

Mr. Eggar: My Department used the European Commission's own criteria of assistance to the long-term unemployed and to youth to produce percentage figures by region and, within that, by county based on long-term and youth unemployment, to facilitate the compilation of the bids for European social fund support. My Department then advised interested organisations of an overall amount they could bid for taking into account the likely demand from all quarters and the European Commission's requirement that bids should be realistic.

Peterlee and Seaham

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning the future of jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices in Peterlee and Seaham.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service is working progressively to bring jobcentres and benefit offices together under one roof. This will provide a new and improve one-stop service.

I will ensure that the hon. Member is informed as soon as decisions about the future of offices in Peterlee and Seaham have been taken.

Jobcentres

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement regarding the future of jobcentres in the *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle, *(c)* Hyndburn and *(d)* Rossendale and Darwen constituencies.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service is working progressively to bring jobcentres and benefit offices together under one roof. This will provide a new and improved one-stop service.

I will ensure that hon. Members with a constituency interest are informed as soon as decisions about the future of offices in the Burnley, Pendle, Hyndham and Rossendale and Darwen constituencies have been taken.

Training Schemes

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all training schemes and measures to reduce unemployment, including the enterprise scheme; and if he will give details of *(a)* the number of people participating at any one time and *(b)* the separate and overall expenditure in each case.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

1 Training Agency

Programme	*Cost (£ million)*[6]	*Numbers in training October 1989*
Employment Training (ET)	1,251·5	209,000
Business Growth Training (BGT)	42·4	see [1] below
Youth Training Scheme (YTS)	1,039·1	405,000
Community Industry (CI)	28·1	6,000[2]
Work Related Further Education (WRFE)	101·5	see [3] below
TVEI[4] & Compacts	121·2	see [5] below
Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS)	138·5[6]	77,230

[1] The following figures are available for BGT for the period April-October 1989:

Option 1, kits issued	3,700
Option 2, training places	25,700
Option 3, contracts signed	700
Option 4, contracts signed	1,200
Option 5, contracts signed	25

[2] Employees in Scheme until 1 May 1989, when the contract changed from "Employment Measure" to "Training Provision".

[3] In the field of WRFE the TA operates by negotiating with Local Education Authorities. It is not possible to give participation figures comparable with the rest of table.

[4] Technical & Vocational Education Initiative.

[5] In the academic year 1988-89 314,000 students were involved with TVEI. This figure rose to 630,000 in the academic year 1989-90.

[6] Provision in TA Vote from July 1989 only.

There are also other TA initiatives for which the numbers in training are not readily available:

Programme	*Cost (£ million)*
Employment Rehabilitation	9·0
Residual Schemes[1]	20·0
Enterprise Training	3·8
Other Adult Training[2]	11·5
Enterprise in Higher Education & Other HE Projects	8·7
Training & Education Support Programmes	60·8

[1] Old Job Training Scheme, New Job Training Scheme, Wider Opportunities Training Programme, Community Programme, Residual Training for the Disabled, Voluntary Projects Programme.

[2] National Priority Skills Scheme, Local Grants to Employers, Local Collaborative Projects, Industrial Language Training

Note:

Expenditure reflects 1989-90 Estimates provision.

2 Employment Service

Programme	*Cost (£ million)*[1]	*Participants*
Jobshare	0·66	[1]187
Restart Courses	7·85	[2]3,662
Jobstart	5·90	[3]3,793
Jobclub	28·50	[4]23,419

[1] As at 30 November 1989.

[2] Number of people beginning a Restart Course in November 1989.

[3] As at 27 October 1989.

[4] As at 24 November 1989.

In addition, the ES, through its network of offices, helps and encourages unemployed people to take up available jobs and opportunities. In 1988-89 the ES placed approximately 1·5 million unemployed people into jobs.

Note:

Expenditure reflects 1989-90 funds allocated.

Noise at Work Regulations

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to issue a Health and Safety Commission approved code of practice to accompany the 1989 Noise at Work Regulations; and when is the likely date of publication.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission has no plans at present to issue an approved code of practice (ACoP) to accompany these regulations. In its consultation document on proposals to implement directive 86/188/EEC the Commission sought views on whether an ACoP should be produced: the majority of respondents thought that guidance alone would be preferable in this case because it facilitated provision of advice on technical issues in a single series of documents which could readily be amended in the light of technical progress.

The Health and Safety Executive has prepared general guidance for employers, machine makers and suppliers which was published on 16 November. Further guidance will be produced shortly.

Careers Services

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the inspection reports on local authority careers services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The reports on local authority careers services produced by the careers service inspectorate will in future be published. Publication will start with those inspections that began after October 1 1989.

Strikes

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many days work were lost by unofficial strike action in each industry as categorised by his Department in each of the last five years for which official figures are available;

(2) how many official strikes were settled within *(a)* one, *(b)* two, *(c)* three, *(d)* four weeks and *(e)* longer than four weeks, of the official action occurring in the last five years for which official figures are available;

(3) how many unofficial strikes were settled within *(a)* one, *(b)* two, *(c)* three, *(d)* four, and *(e)* five working days of the unofficial action occurring in the last five years for which official figures are available;

(4) how many unofficial strikes were settled within *(a)* two weeks, *(b)* three weeks and *(c)* four weeks, or took longer than four weeks, of the unofficial action occurring in the last five years for which official figures are available;

(5) what was the total number of days lost by strike action, official and unofficial, and by each industry as categorised by his Department in each of the last five years for which official figures are available;

(6) what was the total number of unofficial strikes in each industry categorised by his Department, in each of the last five years for which official figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in how many *(a)* official strikes and *(b)* unofficial strikes the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has been involved in each of the last five years for which official figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available in the form requested. Information on the overall number of disputes in which ACAS has been involved is published in the service's annual reports, copies of which are held in the Library.

Wages Councils

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments were checked by a visit by wages council inspectors in 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1988 a total of 19,573 establishments in Great Britain were checked by visits by wages inspectors.

Closed Shop

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any further representations about the closed shop; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In addition to comments on the proposals contained in chapter 2 of the Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment", my Department continues to receive letters which describe difficulties experienced as a result of the operation of closed shop arrangements. The Government's new Employment Bill will make it unlawful to refuse anyone employment because they are not a union member which, together with the protections provided in the 1988 Employment Act, will make all forms of the closed shop unenforceable.

Self-Employment

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the various categorisations of self-employment.

Mr. Eggar: The borderline between employment and self-employment is not defined in statute, but is a matter determined by the common law. The question whether individuals are employed or self-employed will depend on the terms and conditions under which they are engaged and work. The courts will decide where the status of an individual is in doubt. The Inland Revenue and Department of Social Security have to establish whether an individual is employed or self-employed for purposes of income tax and National Insurance contributions.

Unemployment Benefit (Quarterly Attenders)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the total number of quarterly attenders reporting to unemployment benefit offices in Great Britain and in each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales;

(2) whether quarterly attenders aged over 50 years are included in the published monthly unemployment figures.

Mr. Eggar: The following table shows the number of quarterly attenders for November 1989 in Great Britain and in each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales.

Quarterly Attenders in November 1989

	Number
Great Britain	149,572
South East	25,985
East Anglia	2,756

	Number
South West	8,032
West Midlands	18,627
East Midlands	10,257
Yorkshire and Humberside	18,397
North West	22,257
North	13,770
Scotland	21,674
Wales	7,547

The provision of signing quarterly is mainly for those aged 50 and over, who have been unemployed for one year and have no entitlement to unemployment benefit.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available in the form requested.

Business Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement as to the eligibility of businesses in receipt of business enterprise allowance funding to *(a)* engage as sub-contractors and *(b)* engage sub-contractors.

Mr. Eggar: The aim of the enterprise allowance scheme is to help unemployed people create new small businesses that would otherwise not exist. Most labour-only sub-contracting arrangements are ruled outside the scope and the spirit of the scheme. However scheme support may be approved where applicants can show they will provide specialist expertise or services to a number of other companies not normally retaining these "in-house". Existing EAS participants are free to engage sub-contractors or employ other staff.

Military Conscription

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has identified reserved occupations for exemption from military conscription during a war emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has not identified reserved occupations for exemption from military conscription during a war emergency.

Host Nation Support

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has identified specific categories of skilled workers as part of planning for host nation support within NATO.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has not identified specific categories of skilled workers as part of planning for host nation support within NATO.

Tourism

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) on 12 December, *Official Report*, column 854, regarding the Minister for tourism for Great Britain, if he will ensure that he answers all questions on tourism relevant to Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Nicholls: The Secretary of State for Employment has responsibility for tourism matters in Great Britain as a whole; as such he will continue to answer questions relevant to the whole of Great Britain.

Sewage Sludge Tanks

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the required safety standards set by the Health and Safety Executive for fencing around sewage sludge tanks.

Mr. Nicholls: Sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 require an employer to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of his employees and the health and safety of persons not in his employment who may be affected by his work activity. These duties extend to the risks at sewage and sludge tanks.

The Health and Safety Executive has not published standards for the fencing of sewage and sludge tanks in the water industry but would expect employers, in complying with their duties under the Act, to provide adequate fencing around the tanks.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of workers who leave their job within two years of starting.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Sick Pay

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of people who are not paid by their employer if they are off sick for between one and three days.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Employment Training

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is meant by low incomes in relation to people who have joined employment training schemes, for *(a)* lone parents and *(b)* couples; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department does not use any definition of low income in relation to people in employment training. Eligibility for employment training does not depend on the level of income and the training allowance paid to trainees is based on their existing entitlement to benefits.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision is made for people taking employment training who have child care problems, particularly where no creche facilities exist; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There are a number of ways in which people on employment training (ET) can be helped with childcare. Training providers are encouraged to set up creche facilities at or near the place of training and lone parents can get help towards the cost of this or other appropriate provision. In addition the inbuilt flexibilities of ET mean that training can often be arranged to take account of individual domestic circumstances.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision is made to help people taking Government employment training in computer courses to undertake training at home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Where appropriate trainees may, with the agreement of the training manager, undertake training in computer skills at home. Where computer equipment is needed for people with disabilities, there is help available through the special aids to employment scheme.

Within employment training there is also provision for higher level information technology skills courses specifically for women returners. In some cases where training is home based, office equipment and computers can be made available on loan.

European Social Fund

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on allocations to the United Kingdom by the European social fund for measures for the long-term unemployed and young people in Great Britain for the period 1990 to 1992.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about allocations to the United Kingdom by the European social fund for measures for the long-term unemployed and young people in Great Britain for the period 1990 to 1992.

Mr. Eggar: Having obtained the agreement of the British Government, on 20 December 1989 the Commission of the European Communities made its decision on European social fund allocations to the United Kingdom for training and employment of long-term unemployed people and of young people under objectives 3 and 4 of the Community's structural funds. The decision is contained in the Community support framework, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

The priorities of the Community support framework will guide the allocation of 1,025 million ecu (approximately £782 million) made available by the Commission under these objectives of the fund for the three years 1990 to 1992. This is the highest allocation to any member state and represents 24·8 per cent. of the budget which the Commission has distributed.

The Commission has yet to take decisions on allocations to particular programmes.

Action for Jobs Campaign

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what was the total expenditure attributed to the Action for Jobs campaign in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Eggar: The total expenditure attributed to the Action for Jobs campaign in 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 is as follows:

1985-86	£40,000
1986-87	£13·9 million
1987-88	£8 million

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether it is his intention to place the responsibility for education capacity in the hands of the local training and enterprise council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Compacts will come under the training and enterprise councils (TECs) as they come into being, provided always that the educational partners in each compact agree to this. It is of the utmost importance that TECs should take all opportunities to work effectively with all relevant parts of the local education system to raise skill levels and educational achievements in their local community.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Services Committee

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what support he intends to give to the regional north-western legal services committees and proposed similar committees in north-east England and south Wales.

The Attorney-General: The legal aid board funds the north west legal services committee.

It will be considering, in the light of progress on its franchising proposals, future support for regional legal services committees.

Jeremiah Miller

Mr. Alton: To ask the Attorney-General what requests the Crown prosecution service has received for documents concerning Jeremiah Miller, a prisoner at Her Majesty's prison Walton; what documents he has released; if he has withheld any information; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service has received requests for the disclosure of documents relating to police activity during the course of the investigation of an offence of attempted robbery which occurred at Upton, Wirral on 24 July 1986. Jeremiah Miller was subsequently convicted of offences arising out of that incident.

Requests have been received both from Jeremiah Miller and from solicitors acting on his behalf; in addition, a request by Jeremiah Miller has been channelled to the CPS through the chief constable of Merseyside.

I am satisfied that the Crown prosecution service has responded fully and properly to those requests.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General whether there are any current prosecutions of accountants for the creation of a false market in shares.

The Attorney-General: I have taken the hon. Member's question to refer to the statutory offence under section 47(2) of the Financial Services Act 1986, and any other proceedings where the prosecution case amounts to an allegation of market manipulation.

There are no such cases involving an accountant as defendant currently being prosecuted by the Crown prosecution service or the serious fraud office. For the purposes of this answer I have treated the word "accountant" as referring to persons employed as or acting in that capacity, as distinct from an individual who simply happens to hold a formal accountancy qualification.

Jaderow Case Ruling

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the implications for United Kingdom law of the Jaderow case ruling delivered by the European Court of Justice on 13 December.

The Attorney-General: The judgment in the Jaderow case was given in answer to a request for a preliminary ruling of the Court of Justice under article 177 of the treaty. It is now for the referring court, the High Court of Justice, to decide on the lawfulness of the fish licensing conditions at issue in that case in the light of the ruling of the Court of Justice. The case will be reinstated before the High Court in due course and argument will be heard on the impact of the preliminary ruling. To the end, the judgement is being considered carefully by Her Majesty's Government. Until the High Court delivers its judgment, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Trial Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Pembroke on 18 December, if he will arrange for statistics concerning the period between offence and trial to be collected in future.

The Attorney-General: No. The Crown prosecution service collects statistics for its own management information and performance indicator purposes. It is not necessary for those purposes to collect statistics by reference to the date of offence.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average period in *(a)* criminal cases and *(b)* civil cases between arrest or service of papers and hearing.

The Attorney-General: The latest figures recorded in the Home Office statistical bulletin for 29 November show that the average time taken between the date of charge or summons and the date of first hearing is 36 days.

Statistics relating to the period of time between arrest and hearing, in criminal cases, and service of papers and hearing, in civil cases, are not collected.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what is the longest period in recent years between arrest and trail; and if he will give details of the case.

The Attorney-General: The information which is sought is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Morledge Case

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General whether any police officers are to be prosecuted for perjury arising from the collapse of the Morledge case.

The Attorney-General: It is for the chief constable of the Nottinghamshire constabulary to determine whether there should be a disciplinary or criminal investigation. If there is a criminal investigation the provisions of part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 will determine whether a report should be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The question of prosecution cannot arise unless and until such a report is submitted.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Willow Watermark Disease

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest position on the combating of willow watermark disease.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 15 November 1989 at column *336*.

There has been a significant and welcome reduction in the incidence of the disease, largely as a result of control measures carried out under the Watermark Disease (Local Authorities) Order 1986 and its predecessors.

Shellfish Regulations

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider setting up a body run by his Department to administer and monitor the proposed molluscan shellfish regulations.

Mr. Gummer: The regulation of molluscan shellfisheries —including deposit controls, the granting of several orders and the approval of proposed byelaws of the Sea Fisheries Committees—are already matters for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Proposals are expected soon from the European Commission dealing with intra-Community trade in live bivalve molluscs and safeguards to public health. We shall examine the resource needs for administration and monitoring in the light of the proposals made but at present see no need to create a separate, single and new body for this purpose.

Rationing Schemes

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ensure that guidance on war time rationing schemes for councils, resulting from a recent consultation exercise with local authority associations will contain specific provision for *(a)* ethnic minorities, *(b)* people with disabilities, *(c)* the homeless, *(d)* the illiterate and *(e)* those who decide to self-evacuate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministry takes its civil defence responsibilities seriously and will ensure that arrangements are as accessible as possible to the whole community. No doubt the hon. Member will encourage his local authority to take a full and constructive part in current consultations with local authority associations.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has considered the possibility of using poll tax registers as a basis for the distribution of ration documents in a war emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The community charge legislation contains no provision for local authorities to use information collected for the purposes of the community charge for other purposes.

Food Stockpiling

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Department is offering to the public about the stockpiling of food in the event of a war emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: As a result of the defence policy pursued by the Government within our membership of NATO, the likelihood of a war emergency is remote. However, the public would be advised appropriately should such a situation arise.

Salmon

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the United Kingdom salmon catch statistics, distinguishing between the different methods of fishing in Scotland and England, for the most recent convenient years.

Mr. Gummer: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: I met representatives of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on 30 August, when we discussed a number of issues of mutual concern.

Investment

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to reduce the cost of borrowing for agricultural investment.

Mr. Maclean: I recognise that high interest rates are unwelcome to the agricultural industry; but farming and agricultural investment, in common with other businesses, would be damaged more by a resurgence of inflation than by a period of higher interest rates.

Horse Sales

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to present the proposed code of conduct for horse sales and markets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: A new statutory order to protect the welfare of horses at markets, sales and fairs and a related code of practice are in the course of preparation. We hope to complete the new legislation and code of practice in the first half of 1990.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Maclean: During the course of carrying out its publicity activities, my Department does incur expenditure on design but does not contribute to the arts. Creative design is produced as an integral part of any given publicity campaign, consequently information in the form asked for is not readily available.

Pesticides

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy for toxicity testing of pesticides to be based on exposures to multiple compounds.

Mr. Maclean: It is for the advisory committee on pesticides to determine what tests are required before approving pesticides.

Herbs and Spices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is conducting research into methods of sterilising herbs and spices other than irradiation and ethylene oxide; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The industry is conducting research actively into the sterilisation of herbs and spices.

At present the only effective ways of ensuring that herbs and spices are free from microbiological contamination are treatment with ethylene oxide or irradiation. The problem in developing alternative treatments is the need to ensure that they are suitable for all, rather than just some, herbs and spices. Some promising new methods are currently being investigated, but it is too early to say whether any of these will be successful.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell), of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *689*, what evidence he has that the removal of salmonella infected poultry flocks is helping to reduce the level of salmonella infection in humans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The earlier reply referred to the risk of salmonella infection in humans. This risk is being reduced by the Government's measures, particularly through the compulsory slaughter of laying flocks known to be infected with invasive salmonella. Information collected by the public health laboratory service indicates that the number of salmonella food poisoning outbreaks associated with eggs rose from 23 in the first nine months of 1988 to 30 in the same period in 1989. This was a much lower rate of increase than that recorded in the previous two years.

Alcohol

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the measures he has taken to reduce alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom diet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In response to the report by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy on "Diet and Cardiovascular Disease" we extended the Community requirement to indicate alcoholic strength on prepacked alcoholic drinks to dispensed drinks such as those sold in bars or restaurants. This is to help those consumers wishing to assess or reduce their alcohol intake to do so. We are also intending to introduce controls over the use of the description "low alcohol" to drinks not exceeding 1·2 per cent. alcohol by volume to ensure that consumers are

not misled in this area. Our Food Labelling Regulations already control the use of the terms "alcohol-free", "dealcoholised" and "non-alcoholic". All these are measures to give people the ability to choose. The responsibility for the sensible use of alcohol remains clearly one for every individual.

Food Additives

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all food additives which currently have approval for use in food, giving in each case, the year of approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: All currently approved food additives are listed in the back of our free booklet "Food Additives—The Balanced Approach", available from Food Sense, London SE99 7TT. Since publication of the list, one new sweetener, Lactitol, has been added and as a result of an EC directive four emulsifiers—polyoxyethylene (8) stearate (430), polyoxyethylene (40) stearate (431), lactylated fatty acid esters of glycol and propane-1, 2-diol (478), and dioctyl sodium sulphosuccinate (—) have been deleted, and two added tartaric acid esters of mono and diglycerides of fatty acids (E472(d)), and mixed acetic and tartaric acid esters of mono and diglycerides of fatty acids (E472(f)).

I will send the hon. Member a copy of the booklet.

The dates of current approval are the dates of the relevant regulations, a list of which I will also send to the hon. Member. The information requested on the individual approval dates could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the food additives for which he has withdrawn approval giving in each case the year when the additive was withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Cyclamic acid, a sweetener, and its sodium and calcium salts were withdrawn in 1969. The Colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973 have been amended several times as follows:

in 1975 Orange RN was withdrawn; in 1976 Fast Yellow AB, Orchil or Orcein, Solanthrene Blue RS or Anthragen Blue or Indanthrene Blue Black 7984 and Burnt Umber were withdrawn; in 1978 in order to implement an EC directive, Orange G, chocolate brown FB, the channel black form of carbon black were withdrawn; and in 1987 yellow 2G was withdrawn.

In order to implement an EC directive the following emulsifiers and stablisers were withdrawn in 1989:

Ploxyoxyethylene (8) stearate, polyoxyethylene (40) stearate, lactylated fatty acid esters of glycol and propane-1 2-diol, and dioctyl sodium sulphosuccinate.

We have recently announced an intention to prohibit the use of mineral hydrocarbons in food, and potassium bromate as a flour improver. We have also accepted the advice of the Food Advisory Committee that the colours, crocin, santalin, solvent-extracted annatto, canthaxanthin and capsanthin/capsorubin should be removed from the permitted list, although in the case of the last three, Community action will be required.

Saturated Fat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the measures he has taken to reduce saturated fat consumption in the United Kingdom diet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In response to the report by the Committee on Medical aspects of Food Policy in "Diet and Cardiovascular Disease", which recommended reductions in overall fat intake and intake of saturated fat, we made adjustments to the beef and sheep variable premium schemes to exclude the fatter animals from eligibility. In 1987 my Department introduced guidelines on nutrition labelling. These have encouraged manufacturers to give nutrition information on food labels including total fat and saturates declarations, thus enabling consumers to compare products more easily and to help them reduce their fat intake. We are currently pressing for a satisfactory Communitywide system for consumers in negotiations on proposed Community directives on nutrition labelling. As announced in July we shall be introducing regulations to control nutrition claims such as "low fat", "low in saturates" to ensure that consumers are not misled. Together with the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority, my officials are preparing a simple set of dietary guidelines to be published in the new year which will further help to educate consumers about the need for an overall balanced diet.

Sugar

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the measures he has taken to reduce sugar consumption in the United Kingdom diet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In 1987 my Department introduced guidelines on nutrition labelling. These have encouraged manufacturers to give nutrition information on food labels, including total sugar declarations, thus enabling consumers to compare products more easily and to help them choose a balanced diet. We are currently pressing for a satisfactory Communitywide system for consumers in negotiations on proposed Community directives on nutrition labelling. As announced in July, we shall be introducing regulations to control nutrition claims such as "reduced sugar", "no added sugars" to ensure that consumers are not misled. We are also actively considering those recommendations which fall to my Department's responsibility in the recently published report by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy on "Dietary Sugars and Human Disease".

Sodium Chloride

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the measures he has taken to reduce the sodium chloride consumption in the United Kingdom diet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Although certain people require low sodium diets for medical reasons, I am not aware of any firm evidence of the need to reduce sodium chloride consumption in the United Kingdom diet. In 1987 my Department introduced guidelines on nutrition labelling. These have encouraged manufacturers to give nutrition information on food labels, including sodium declarations, thus enabling consumers to compare products more easily and to help those who wish to reduce their sodium intake to do so.

I am currently pressing for a satisfactory Communitywide system for consumers in negotiations on proposed

Community directives on nutrition labelling. As announced in July we shall be introducing regulations to control nutrition claims such as "low salt", "low sodium", to ensure that consumers are not misled.

Commission proposals relating specifically to sodium have not yet been issued, but I am seeking to ensure effective Communitywide regulation on all these matters, although a number of countries have been strongly opposed to those proposals issued so far.

Fishing Rights

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the extension of inshore sea fishery district and exclusive fishing rights from three to six miles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My colleagues and I are currently giving careful consideration to a proposal put to us by the Association of Sea Fisheries Committees for an extension of SFC jurisdiction from three to six miles which would enable SFCs to propose byelaws for regulating certain stocks in the wider zone. We will make a decision as soon as we can. There would be detailed consultations with the fishing industry and constituent county and metropolitan district councils of SFCs if we decide to proceed.

Bass Nursery Areas

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the sea fishery committees about his proposal to introduce bass nursery areas in Langstone harbour, Portsmouth harbour, Southampton Water, Poole harbour and the Fleet at Portland.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministry has had a number of discussions with the Association of Sea Fisheries Commmittees and with individual Sea Fisheries Comittees about the introduction of nursery areas in these and other waters to help protect juvenile bass stocks. We hope to be able to make an announcement soon.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 8 January 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Taken-over Cases

26. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list those cases taken over by the Director of Public Prosecutions since 1987.

The Attorney-General: Statistics concerning private prosecutions are not collected. The CPS has identified 28 private prosecutions conducted by private individuals or bodies which have been taken over by the Crown prosecution service since 1987. I will write to the hon. Gentleman listing the cases.

John Black RN

Mr. Latham: To ask the Attorney-General whether he is now in a position to give a date when the High Court will hear his application for a fresh inquest into the death of the late Petty Officer John Black, RN, in Sabinillas, Spain, in December 1983.

The Attorney-General: No. The case is in the Crown list, but no hearing date has yet been fixed by the court.

Courts and Legal Services Bill *[Lords]*

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General what is the estimated cost of implementing the Courts and Legal Services Bill *[Lords]*.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 7 December 1989 at column *316*, and to the explanatory and financial memorandum prefacing the Bill.

TRANSPORT

Cyclists

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct British Rail to consider ways in which cyclists can more easily use rail services.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail has regular contact with the cycling organisations and is aware of their needs. I understand that BR's policy is to welcome cyclists and to convey bicycles whenever possible, for an appropriate charge, provided that this will not unduly inconvenience other passengers, or displace other revenue-earning traffic such as parcels.

Motoring Organisations

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which motoring organisations he or his predecessor met over the last year; and on which dates.

Mr. Atkins: During 1989 Transport Ministers met representatives of motoring organisations as follows:

The Automobile Association:
24 January
14 June
20 June
19 July
31 October
29 November

The Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs:
6 September

The Institute of Advanced Motorists:
14 December

The Royal Automobile Club:
26 June
6 September
7 November

Prestwick Airport

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many flights have been diverted to Prestwick since 1 November.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Civil Aviation Authority has not yet published figures for this period. Preliminary information from Prestwick Airport Limited indicates that, from 1 November to 31 December 1989, the airport handled 144 air transport movements diverted from other airports.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which building surveyors, land agents or chartered surveyors were used by his Department or by the British Airports Authority, or by his or their advisers, to value land at Prestwick airport, including land not required for airport operations, when assessing the assets of the British Airports Authority for privatisation.

Mr. McLoughlin: Page 58 of the prospectus offering shares in BAA for sale records that Debenham Tewson and Chinnocks Limited, international property advisers, valued the land at the BAA airports.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement following the Anglo-French intergovernmental commission announcement that passengers will not leave their cars and coaches when travelling through the Channel tunnel with particular regard to safety aspects in the tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: No. The intergovernmental commission was established by the Channel fixed link treaty to supervise, in the name and on behalf of the two Governments, all matters concerning the construction and operation of the fixed link. On safety matters, it is advised by the independent binational safety authority, also established by the treaty. Parliament has accepted that the safety authority is the right body to oversee tunnel safety standards. I believe that the safety authority will shortly be publishing a report which sets out the information on which its unanimous recommendation to the commission is based.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the make-up and terms of reference for his Department's working group on the assessment of the impact of railway noise with regard to the Channel tunnel link.

Mr. Portillo: The aim will be to establish for new railway lines a noise standard at a level which equitably relates to the standard set by regulation for new highways. I hope to make an announcement shortly about the establishment of a departmental committee to carry out this task.

LRT (Safety)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is yet in a position to announce safety and quality of service objectives for London Regional Transport.

Mr. Parkinson *[pursuant to his reply, 20 December 1989, c. 280]:* Following is a fuller text of my letter to the chairman of London Regional Transport.

"My predecessor wrote to you on your appointment about the challenges facing London Regional Transport. He asked you to prepare a strategy for the coming years, which could be used as a basis for setting formal objectives for you and your Board.

Your response takes the form of the "Chairman's Planning Statement," which you are about to publish. In the light of that statement, I am writing to you about the safety and quality of service objectives I wish you to pursue. Before 1 April 1990 I shall settle with you the financial objectives for LRT covering the next three financial years.

Safety

LRT and its subsidiaries are responsible for the safe operation of the services they provide. The Fennell Report on the King's Cross fire underlined the need to give the highest priority to safety and to address safety matters explicitly in all LRT's activities. You have undertaken with vigour the task of implementing the Fennell Report's recommendations. You have already fully implemented 73 of the 127 recommendations addressed to LRT or London Underground, and have in hand action on the remaining 54.

You have also now established a clear framework for collecting statistics on safety performance, setting safety objectives and monitoring and auditing safety performance at every level of the organisation. This should ensure the progressive improvement in the safety of all the services you provide or secure. I welcome the steps you have taken. I hereby endorse the safety objectives set out in Annex A to this letter.

Quality of Service on the Underground

Demand for Underground services has grown by more than 70 per cent. since 1982. This has put the Underground under strain and we are all agreed that the quality of service for passengers is not as good as it should be.

Much of passengers' dissatisfaction stems from overcrowding. The only way to deal adequately with the growth in demand is to invest in increasing the capacity of the system. This is why approval has been given for a massive investment programme, including the £900 million Major Upgrading Programme and the extension of the Jubilee Line to service East London and Docklands. Urgent work is in progress on the options for another major new line to relieve congestion. In the shorter term, we must ensure that the most is made of the existing system. I am therefore setting objectives for improvement in such areas as peak capacity, reliability and the availability of lifts and escalators. I shall look to London Underground to meet these as soon as possible and, in any case, no later than 31 March 1992. These objectives are set out in full at Annex B to the Letter.

Docklands Light Railway

The Docklands Light Railway has been in operation for just over two years. It is now being extended to the City and to Beckton. Measures are in hand to increase its capacity still further. It is vital that the DLR provides a reliable and high-quality service, as the system is upgraded and capacity increased. I am therefore setting targets for the DLR covering aspects of service similar to those in the objectives set for the Underground. These are set out in Annex C. Again, the targets should be met as soon as possible, and no later than 31 March 1992.

LRT Bus Services

Despite increasing difficulties with traffic congestion, there has been a noticeable improvement in the percentage of scheduled bus mileage actually operated, and average waiting time has been stabilised over the past couple of years. You have increased the number of routes let by competitive tender. You have also restructured London Buses Ltd. into smaller, more accountable, subsidiaries. These measures have played a valuable part in securing better quality and value for money. I now think that the time has come to build on that success by setting LRT quality of service targets for all its bus services, including those operated by London Buses and other operators on contract. The objectives are set out in Annex D.

LRT Travel Enquiry Service

It is important that passengers should have ready access to up-to-date information on all LRT's passenger services. I am therefore setting LRT's Travel Enquiry Service the objective of ensuring that 75 per cent. of telephone callers receiving the ringing tone should be answered within 30 seconds and no more than 10 per cent. of callers should receive the engaged tone.

You will report to my Department and to the London Regional Passengers' Committee at quarterly intervals, the performance achieved against the quality of service objectives.

As you know, it is also my intention to set LRT, in good time before 1 April, financial objectives for the next three financial years. These will be designed to ensure that these safety and quality of service objectives are met as efficiently and economically as possible, so that customers and taxpayers, receive proper value for money. Our officials are already in touch about this."

Copies of the annexes to this letter have been placed in the House Libraries.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Elected Executive

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in favour of electing an executive separately from Parliament.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Written Constitution

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the subject of a written constitution.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government receive representations from time to time advocating a written constitution. These could be enumerated only at disproportionate cost.

Second Chamber

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking the establishment of a democratically elected second chamber.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government receive representations from time to time advocating abolition or reform of the House of Lords. They could be enumerated only at disproportionate cost.

Prisons (Transfers)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were awaiting transfer to Thorp Arch from Durham at the end of the months August through to November.

Mr. Mellor: At the end of the four months for which information has been requested, the numbers of prisoners held at Her Majesty's prison Durham awaiting transfer to Her Majesty's prison Thorp Arch were as follows:

	Number
August 1989	38
September 1989	43
October 1989	48
November 1989	54

Shamim Ayaz

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Shamim Ayaz, Ref. H 162359; Imm/15031, is to be issued with a passport to join his father in the United Kingdom; when the post in Islamabad was instructed by him to issue a visa to Shamim Ayaz; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mr. Shamim Ayaz's application for entry clearance to settle in the United Kingdom as the dependent son of Mr. Muzaffar Hussain has been referred by the entry clearance officer in Islamabad to the immigration department of the Home Office for consideration under paragraph 56 of the immigration rules and the concession announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) on 14 June 1989 at column *463*. The papers arrived on 1 December and a decision will be taken as soon as possible.

Political Refugees

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify the criteria under which political refugees are now admitted to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications for asylum on arrival at United Kingdom ports are considered under the criteria of the 1951 United Nations convention and 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees. Article 1 of the convention defines a refugee as inter alia someone who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country".
If the person has arrived from a safe third country he or she may be returned to that country to pursue an application there. A refugee who has already found protection in another country may be admitted to the United Kingdom if this is a more appropriate country of refuge.

Prisons (Capacity)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the under or over-capacity of Thorp Arch and Durham prisons at the end of the months August to November.

Mr. Mellor: The details requested are set out in the table.

	Durham	*Thorp*
Certified Normal Accommodation	[1]729	[2]156
Population[3] on:		
25 August	1,002	144
29 September	1,006	150
27 October	976	149
24 November	1,019	146

[1] There was no change to the certified normal accommodation at Durham Prison during the period in question.
[2] Available accommodation at Thorp Arch has effectively been reduced to 150 since August to allow for a rolling programme of refurbishment, involving the installation of integral sanitation.
[3] The population details provided refer to the last Friday in each of the four months.

Brownhills and Heywood High Schools

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the application by Staffordshire county council for section 11 money in respect of Brownhills and Heywood high schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Additional information submitted by the authority on 8 December is being considered. We hope to be in a position to take a decision on the application shortly.

Alcohol Consumption

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to change the law to promote and encourage non and low-alcohol consumption by young people.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We very much welcome the introduction, by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir Peter Emery) of the Licensing (Low Alcohol Drinks) Bill, which seeks to amend the definition of intoxicating liquor in the Licensing Act 1964 and of alcoholic liquor in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976.

Robberies

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will supply statistics of robberies, and attempted robberies involving the confrontation of counter staff in the betting office, banking and building society industries over the past three years.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in the form requested. The total numbers of notifiable offences of robbery are published annually, and most recently in table 2.10 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1988" (Cm. 847). Information on the location of notifiable offences of robbery in which firearms were reported to have been used is given in table 3.8 of the same publication. A copy of this publication is available in the Library. Offences of attempted robbery are included in the robbery category and are not separately identified in the figures collected centrally.

Hong Kong

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors there have been to the United Kingdom from Hong Kong, arriving in each of the last 36 months for which he has figures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available information is given in the table for British dependent territories citizens from Hong Kong. Reliable figures of admissions of stateless persons from Hong Kong are not available.

Hong Kong British Dependent Territory Citizens admitted to the United Kingdom as ordinary or business visitors, November 1986 to October 1989

Number of persons

Month	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	[1] *1989*
January	—	1,890	1,280	1,510
February	—	2,230	3,360	3,870
March	—	1,570	1,650	2,280
April	—	2,010	2,060	1,950
May	—	2,640	2,280	2,600
June	—	3,560	3,380	4,490
July	—	5,370	4,990	5,440
August	—	5,280	4,540	5,760
September	—	3,210	3,520	3,960
October	—	2,850	2,890	3,100
November	1,260	1,760	1,610	n.y.a.
December	1,750	1,980	1,840	n.y.a.
Annual total	27,100	34,400	33,400	n.y.a.

[1] Provisional.
n.y.a. = Not yet available.

Downing Street Railings

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the expected savings to the Metropolitan police following the erection of railings in Downing street.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Ambulance Duties

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of police man hours employed in ambulance duties per police authority, to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information is that up to 31 December police forces had provided approximately the number of man hours shown in the table in assisting the ambulance service in their areas.

Approximate number of man hours

	Hours
Bedfordshire	17,700
Derbyshire	6,900
Dorset	9,500
Hampshire	5,100
Hertfordshire	31,600
Lincolnshire	2,600
South Yorkshire	27,300
Staffordshire	1,750
Surrey	850
Warwickshire	460
West Mercia	6,100
West Midlands	35,500
West Yorkshire	20,700

I understand that in the Metropolitan police district about 460 officers are usually employed in each 24-hour period assisting the ambulance service.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost per police man hour of deploying the police on ambulance duties *(a)* outside London and *(b)* in London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The charge that is made by the Metropolitan police to the regional health authority for police officers who assist the London ambulance service is £16·20 per hour of normal duty time worked. Information about the charges made outside London is not available centrally; the level of charge is determined by the relevant police authority.

Visas (Indian Sub-continent)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are waiting for interview in queues 1,2,3 and 4 at each British post on the Indian sub-continent, and if he will give comparable figures for 1988, 1987 and 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Estimated numbers of applicants in the Indian sub-continent awaiting their first interview for entry to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Post[2]	*Category*[3]			
	Queue 1	*Queue 2*	*Queue 3*	*Queue 4*
Dhaka				
End September				
1986	640	1,900	130	2,700
1987	400	1,800	140	2,600
1988	230	1,600	150	2,100
1989	120	650	120	1,400
New Delhi[4]				
End September				
1986	70	210	460	180
1987	40	320	600	90
1988	—	300	400	110
1989	—	260	330	90
Bombay				
End September				
1986	120	450	480	130
1987	560	460	40	140
1988	30	350	480	50
1989	—	420	530	90
Madras[5]				
End September				
1987	[1]—	10	[1]—	[6]—
1988	—	—	—	—
1989	—	20	10	[6]—
Islamabad				
End September				
1986	880	610	2,100	740
1987	790	970	2,300	850
1988	1,200	1,600	2,400	1,000
1989	250	2,300	1,700	940
Karachi				
End September				
1986	20	60	100	[1]—
1987	10	80	190	10
1988	10	180	210	[4]—
1989	[1]—	30	20	[1]—
Total Indian sub-continent				
End September				
1986	1,700	3,200	3,300	3,800
1987	1,800	3,600	3,300	3,600
1988	1,500	4,100	3,600	3,300
1989	370	3,600	2,700	2,500

[1] 5 or fewer
[2] There were no applicants awaiting for interview in Calcutta.
[3] Queue 1: Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years old, and special compassionate cases (first-time applicants for settlement).

Queue 2: Spouses, and children under 18 years old (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 3: Fiance(e)s and other applicants (first-time applicants for settlement).
Queue 4: Re-applicants for settlement.

[4] Data exclude persons seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom.

[5] Madras did not re-open for entry clearance work until October 1986.

[6] Separate data are not available; re-applicants are included in the data for first-time applicants.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have applied over the past year for visas to visit the United Kingdom from British posts on the Indian sub-continent; how many were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused; and what was the average waiting time for (i) interview and (ii) secured interview.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* In the 12 months ending 30 September 1989, 176,500 persons in the Indian sub-continent applied for a visa to visit the United Kingdom; during the same period 151,800 such applications were granted, including those granted on appeal, and 19,400 were refused initially. Visit applications were considered within 24 hours.

Those applicants who then required a detailed interview were usually seen within the 24-hour period except in Madras and Islamabad where the waiting time for applicants interviewed at the end of October 1989 was two to three and eight days respectively. The average waiting time over the latest 12 months is not available centrally because of incomplete information.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount of civil defence grant aid for *(a)* staff costs, *(b)* building work and *(c)* other costs in the financial years from 1983-84 to 1988-89 and projected for 1989-90, received by each London borough.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* The information requested in respect of financial years 1985-86 onwards is shown in the table. Comparable figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Civil defence grant aid received by London boroughs 1985-86

Borough	Staff £	Building £	Other £
Barking and Dagenham	1,892	—	3,349
Barnet	—	—	3,300
Bexley	—	3,692	2,765
Brent	—	—	1,822
Bromley	3,694	—	4,838
Camden	—	—	1,956
City of London	—	—	12,321
Croydon	—	—	2,014
Ealing	1,061	—	—
Enfield	—	—	57
Greenwich	286	—	1,718
Hackney	—	—	1,530
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	2,361
Haringey	—	—	2,301
Harrow	—	—	1,409
Havering	1,562	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	5,651
Hounslow	1,158	—	1,461
Islington	—	—	1,404
Kensington and Chelsea	680	—	2,218
Kingston	—	—	2,337
Lambeth	—	—	7,105
Lewisham	—	—	3,818
Merton	2,501	75,000	2,442
Newham	—	—	1,323
Redbridge	618	—	2,003
Richmond	—	—	—
Southwark	—	—	5,092
Sutton	—	—	3,433
Tower Hamlets	1,295	—	3,119
Waltham Forest	—	10,003	1,985
Wandsworth	—	—	5,911
Westminster	—	—	2,282

Civil Defence grant aid received by London boroughs 1986-87

Borough	Staff £	Building £	Other £
Barking and Dagenham	2,061	—	3,364
Barnet	—	—	2,230
Bexley	—	—	4,143
Brent	—	—	1,894
Bromley	3,402	—	4,249
Camden	—	—	2,393
City of London	—	146,656	14,453
Croydon	—	—	2,076
Ealing	224	—	198
Enfield	—	—	45
Greenwich	—	—	1,737
Hackney	—	—	1,900
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	3,330
Haringey	—	—	2,370
Harrow	—	—	5,724
Havering	1,530	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	5,565
Hounslow	1,218	—	1,351
Islington	—	—	1,579
Kensington and Chelsea	648	—	2,405
Kingston	—	—	2,675
Lambeth	—	—	6,922
Lewisham	—	—	2,492
Merton	3,552	—	3,015
Newham	—	—	1,173
Redbridge	644	—	2,027
Richmond	29,279	—	4,418
Southwark	—	—	4,193
Sutton	—	—	3,616
Tower Hamlets	1,363	—	3,473
Waltham Forest	94,582	—	1,964
Wandsworth	—	—	5,886
Westminster	—	—	2,362

Civil defence grant aid received by London boroughs 1987-88

Borough	Staff (£)	Building (£)	Other (£)
Barking and Dagenham	2,179	—	4,186
Barnet	—	—	2,897
Bexley	—	—	6,200
Brent	—	—	1,870
Bromley	3,611	—	4,474
Camden	—	—	2,545
City of London	—	—	21,447
Croydon	—	—	2,334
Ealing	—	—	—
Enfield	—	—	—
Greenwich	—	—	1,763
Hackney	—	—	2,044
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	5,842
Haringey	—	—	2,394
Harrow	—	—	11,338
Havering	1,568	—	450
Hillingdon	—	—	5,715
Hounslow	1,248	—	3,341
Islington	—	—	1,796
Kensington and Chelsea	593	—	2,510
Kingston	—	—	3,326

Borough	Staff (£)	Building (£)	Other (£)
Lambeth	—	—	6,429
Lewisham	—	—	2,623
Merton	3,633	—	4,298
Newham	—	—	1,599
Redbridge	—	—	—
Richmond	—	—	2,977
Southwark	—	—	4,325
Sutton	—	—	3,671
Tower Hamlets	1,396	—	3,854
Waltham Forest	—	8,831	3,227
Wandsworth	—	—	6,035
Westminster	—	—	2,095

Civil defence grant aid received by London boroughs 1988-89

Borough	Staff £	Building £	Other £
Barking and Dagenham	2,416	—	3,277
Barnet	—	—	2,078
Bexley	—	—	2,938
Brent	—	—	2,167
Bromley	2,365	—	4,312
Camden	—	—	2,902
City of London	—	3,744	5,682
Croydon	—	—	2,334
Ealing	—	—	—
Enfield	—	—	—
Greenwich	—	—	—
Hackney	—	—	1,778
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	4,840
Haringey	—	—	2,663
Harrow	—	—	8,986
Havering	1,632	—	4,862
Hillingdon	—	—	4,111
Hounslow	1,299	—	1,553
Islington	—	—	1,858
Kensington and Chelsea	950	—	2,390
Kingston	—	—	11,177
Lambeth	—	—	7,359
Lewisham	—	—	3,833
Merton	—	—	—
Newham	—	—	1,531
Redbridge	—	—	—
Richmond	—	—	1,648
Southwark	—	—	5,288
Sutton	—	—	3,855
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	—	—	1,948
Wandsworth	—	—	6,888
Westminster	—	—	2,415

Civil Defence Grant Aid received by London Boroughs 1989-90 (Estimated)

Borough	Staff £	Building £	Other £
Barking and Dagenham	2,280	—	3,240
Barnet	—	—	3,070
Bexley	—	—	—
Brent	—	—	—
Bromley	4,350	—	4,710
Camden	—	—	3,000
City of London	—	9,500	5,800
Croydon	—	—	2,240
Ealing	—	—	—
Enfield	—	—	—
Greenwich	—	—	1,660
Hackney	—	—	2,240
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	4,669
Haringey	—	—	3,318
Harrow	—	—	8,560
Havering	—	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	5,265
Hounslow	1,730	—	2,200
Islington	—	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea	—	4,900	—
Kingston	—	—	12,500
Lambeth	—	—	6,734
Lewisham	—	—	—
Merton	—	—	—
Newham	—	—	2,810
Redbridge	920	—	300
Richmond	—	—	1,670
Southwark	—	—	4,650
Sutton	—	—	3,500
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	—	—	—
Wandsworth	—	—	6,074
Westminster	—	—	—

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many outside accountancy firms are employed by his Department; whether such employment is subject to any guidelines; and whether he takes steps before employing an accountancy firm to discover whether that firm has been censured by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors in their inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Waddington *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* The Home Office is currently employing four accountancy firms. Contracts are awarded which provide value for money from competent firms, after consultations as necessary and where appropriate, in the light of advice given by Her Majesty's Treasury.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Waddington *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* A number of items of my Department's expenditure—for example, the provision and maintenance of prisons and programmes for prisoners, and the production of various publications—contain elements that could be classified as expenditure on arts and—or design, but in general it is not practicable to separate and cost those elements.

All prison education departments provide courses in art and craft work, but, because these courses are part of the total education provision, it is not possible to identify separately expenditure on them. Expenditure on the annual Koestler Trust exhibition of prisoners' art and craft is estimated to have been £20,000 in 1988-89.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy at what point plutonium created in civil reactors under safeguards becomes no longer subject to safeguards when distributed in plutonium-contaminated wastes at Sellafield.

Mr. Baldry: Detailed discussions are continuing with the international safeguards authorities on the safeguards to be applied to waste containing civil nuclear material.

Euratom Annual Safeguards Report

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received a copy of the 1988-89 Euratom annual safeguards report from the European Commission.

Mr. Baldry: The Secretary of State has received no such report.

Neighbourhood Energy Action

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy from what percentage of projects in England and Wales Neighbourhood Energy Action has received statistical returns.

Mr. Wakeham: In the latest two quarters for which information is available (April to June and July to September 1989) the response rates of projects in England and Wales providing statistical returns to Neighbourhood Energy Action were both over 99 per cent.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will itemise the progress made by the Energy Efficiency Office in developing quality indicators for Neighbourhood Energy Action projects.

Mr. Wakeham: All community insulation projects operating under employment training are contracted to undertake a "standard job" to a specification provided by Neighbourhood Energy Action. In addition, that organisation with the support of the Energy Efficiency Office, is continuing to develop certified training for the benefit of both project staff and trainees.

Gas-fired Power Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the schemes for gas-fired power stations which are known to his Department giving in each case details of the progress of applications for consent to build and operate them and the names of the organisations concerned.

Mr. Wakeham: Not all gas-fired projects known to my Department are in the public domain, and I must respect the wish for commercial confidentiality where it exists. The projects that have been made public, and the consents that I have so far given are:

Company	*Project*	*Consents received*
Lakeland Power	Roosecote	Gas burn consent
Thames Power	Barking	Gas burn consent
Hawker Siddeley	Corby	Gas burn consent
	Peterborough	Gas burn consent
Lasmo/Ranger	South Denes	Gas burn consent
British Sugar	Brigg	——
Shell	Shellhaven	——
ICI/Enron	Wilton	——
Sheffield Heat & Power	Sheffield	——
CEGB	Killingholme (A)	Gas burn consent
	Little Barford	Gas burn consent
	Killingholme (PowerGen)	Gas burn consent
	Rye House	Gas burn consent

The stations planned by the CEGB would require capital investment approval in addition to consents from me under section 2 of the Electric Lighting Act 1909. I shall reach decisions in due course. I cannot comment on the position on other consents or authorisations which may be required for these stations from other authorities.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment his Department has made of the likely impact on employment in the mining industry of the proposed gas-fired power station at Killingholme.

Mr. Wakeham: It will be for the British Coal Corporation to assess the implications for its manpower requirements of changes in fuel purchasing arrangements within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what effect the European Community directive prohibiting the use of national gas for power generation is likely to have on gas-fired power station proposals in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wakeham: The use of gas for power generation is not prohibited by EEC directive 75/404; rather, its use has to meet certain criteria. The Government assess gas-powered generation project proposals against the criteria in the directive, such as the thermal efficiency and environmental impact of the plant.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate his Department has made of the likely impact of gas-fired power stations on the consumption of coal in power stations.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department makes no such estimates; decisions on fossil fuel choice are matters for the industry. Mechanistic scenarios, which are not to be construed as estimates, illustrating the technical options which may be available to curtail emissions of the greenhouse gases from the United Kingdom are however contained in my Department's paper "An evaluation of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions and measures to ameliorate them", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Section 2 of chapter 5 deals with alternative fossil-fuelled power generation.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his Department's estimate of the likely increase in gas-fired generating capacity in the United Kingdom in each year to 1995;

(2) what is his Department's estimate of the likely percentage of electricity to be generated by gas-fired power stations in each year to 1995.

Mr. Wakeham: This depends on the growth of demand and on decisions to be taken by the electricity industry.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, when he expects to announce his decision on the application to build a gas-fired power station at Killingholme.

Mr. Wakeham: The CEGB has submitted two applications for my consent under section 2 of the Electric Lighting Act 1909 to construct combined cycle gas turbine power stations at Killingholme. My officials are currently discussing a number of points relevant to my consideration of the applications with the CEGB, the relevant local planning authorities and other Government Departments. I will announce my decisions on the two applications when I am ready to do so.

Energy Efficiency

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what financial resources will be made available to the Director General of Electricity Supply to promote energy efficiency and electricity conservation measures.

Mr. Baldry: The Office of Electricity Regulation will be financed by vote with its costs covered through licence fees. It will be for the director general to assess the resources he needs and to manage those resources in the most appropriate way to meet his statutory duties.

Close links are being established between his office and the Energy Efficiency Office to ensure that they both complement and reinforce one another's work in the important area of energy efficiency.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will amend the draft licence for electricity suppliers to allow cost-pass-through for energy conservation measures.

Mr. Wakeham: I am reviewing the conditions in all the electricity licences with a view to publishing revised versions of the licences shortly.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Oxford, East, *Official Report*, 18 December, columns *36-40*, if he will publish the numbers of students on which his calculations are based for each year from 1990 to 2027.

Mr. Jackson: The table gives estimates of the numbers of students eligible for loans from 1990-91 to 2000-01 inclusive. The basis is the United Kingdom. The figures in annex E of the White Paper rest on a series of assumptions, one being that numbers remain constant after the end of the century. This assumption also applies to the revised estimates of costs and savings.

United Kingdom numbers eligible for loans

Year	*(000s)*
1990	569·2
1991	582·2
1992	584·6
1993	580·6
1994	576·4
1995	574·3
1996	581·6
1997	600·0
1998	625·7
1999	645·1
2000	655·5

Disabled Students

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to revise the guidelines to local education authorities concerning administration of the disabled students allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: As I indicated in the reply that I gave to my right hon. Friend on 19 December 1989 at columns *219-20*, guidance is normally issued to local education authorities following the revision of the mandatory awards regulations. My right hon. Friend will consider later this year what if any new guidance is needed on the disabled students' allowance, after he has reviewed the contents of the regulations in the light of representations received.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether students who become disabled during their course will continue to receive loans.

Mr. Jackson: An eligible student who becomes disabled will remain eligible for loans.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Epping Forest of 29 November, *Official Report*, columns *261-2*, if he will break down the information in *(a)* and *(b)* on closures and significant changes of character of secondary schools by the categories (i) to (v) which he has applied in the case of enlarged schools under *(c)*.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is given in the table. Figures in respect of school closures are for the total number of schools approved for closure in a given year; the equivalent figures in my answer of 29 November were net of new schools established as a result of amalgamations. Disaggregated figures by gender before 1988 are not available.

Calendar Year	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*[1]1989*
Number of maintained secondary schools approved for closure	106	117	107	92	94
(i) girls' schools	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	7	9
(ii) boys' schools	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	9	7
(iii) mixed schools	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	76	78
(iv) voluntary schools	18	33	23	18	7
(v) county schools	88	84	84	74	87
Number of maintained secondary schools for which proposals were approved for significant change of character	31	75	18	35	37
(i) girls' schools	1	—	—	2	3
(ii) boys' schools	1	1	3	1	2
(iii) mixed schools	29	74	15	32	32

Calendar Year	1985	1986	1987	1988	[1]1989
(iv) voluntary schools	2	3	2	5	5
(v) county schools	29	72	16	30	32

[1] To 31 October 1989.

Single-Sex Schools

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by gender of pupils and name single-sex schools which have been closed since 1985.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The names of the single sex maintained and non-maintained schools that have closed in 1985 and onwards are given in the table. The table includes maintained schools that have been closed following the approval of statutory proposals; in some cases for the purpose of amalgamation.

The table is not fully up to date as some replies from local education authorities are still awaited confirming closures in 1989.

Independent schools are shown in the education authority in which they are situated.

Local education authority	School name
Girls Schools Closed since 1985	
Barnet	Southaw Girls
Bexley	Sidcup Girls School
Bromley	Ravensbourne School for Girls
	Rock Hill School for Girls
	Beckenham Convent School
Croydon	Lady Edridge Girls High
	Selhurst Girls High School
	Purley Girls High School
Ealing	St. Annes Convent School
Harrow	White Gate Senior School for Girls
Newham	London School of Islamics
Waltham Forest	Connaught High School for Girls
	Leyton Manor High School for Girls
	Warwick High School for Girls
	Leyton Senior High Schools for Girls
	Walthamstow Senior High School for Girls
Birmingham	Erdington School
	Longmeadow School
Coventry	Cardinal Wiseman Roman Catholic Secondary School for Girls
Wolverhampton	Ely House Girls School
Knowsley	Knowsley St. Gregorys Roman Catholic Girls Comprehensive
Liverpool	St. Teresas Roman Catholic Junior Girls
	Stanley Park Girls County Comprehensive
	Aigburth Vale Girls County Comprehensive
	Childwall Valley Girls County Comprehensive
	Liverpool Institute Girls High School
	Queen Marys Girls County Comprehensive
	Allerton Priory
St. Helens	Mount Carmel Roman Catholic High School
	Notre Dame Roman Catholic High
Sefton	St. Augustines Roman Catholic High
Wirral	Bebington Secondary School for Girls
	Oxley School
	The Marian Roman Catholic High
	Avalon High School
	Hoylake Coaching Centre
Manchester	The Hollies Roman Catholic High School for Girls
	St. Josephs Roman Catholic High School for Girls
Stockport	Priestnall School
Trafford	Urmston Grammar for Girls
	Stretford Grammar for Girls
Sheffield	Islamia Girls High School
Bradford	Tinakori Towers School
Calderdale	The Princess Mary School
	Brighouse Girls Grammar School
Kirklees	Hyrstlands Community Home
	Waverley School
	Batley Muslim Girls High School
Leeds	Springfield Park Community Home
	West Park Girls High
	Notre Dame High School
Newcastle upon Tyne	The Silverhill School
Inner London	Wandsworth Ensham
	Wandsworth Garratt Green
	Greenwich Park
	Wandsworth Mayfield
	St. Veronicas Roman Catholic Secondary
	Battersea Notre Dame High School
	Wandsworth Convent of the Holy Family
	Sternhold College
	Hugh Jones Tutor
	Elvaston House School
	Northcote Lodge
Berkshire	Reading Westwood Comprehensive
	Reading Alfred Sutton Girls Comprehensive
Buckinghamshire	Chesham the Lowndes Secondary School for Girls
	Amersham Brudenell Secondary for Girls
Cambridgeshire	Wisbech Queens Girls Comprehensive
Cumbria	Askham Church of England School
	Carleton Hill School
Devon	Plymouth Stoke Damerec High School for Girls
	Plymouth Public High School for Girls
	Plymouth Salisbury Road Girls Secondary School
	Withycombe House School

Local education authority	*School name*
Dorset	Ashley Cross County Modern for Girls
	Oakmead County Secondary for Girls
	Queensmount School
	St. Marys Gate School
East Sussex	Charters Towers School
	St. Michaels Convent Girls School
Essex	Westborough High School for Girls
	Belfairs High School Girls
	Eastwood High School for Girls
	Gainsborough Lodge School
Gloucestershire	Colwell School for Girls
	Cheltenham Pates Grammar School for Girls
Hampshire	Winchester Danemark Comprehensive
	Manor Girls Comprehensive
	Queens Mead School
Hereford and Worcester	Hallow Park School
Hertfordshire	Stevenage Girls School
	St. Angelas Roman Catholic Girls
	Christs Hospital School
	Poles Convent FCJ
	Rosary Priory High School
	Rosary Priory Preparatory School
	Chorley Wood College for the Blind
	Hertfordshire College of Higher Education
Humberside	Fifth Avenue Junior High Girls
	St. Mary High
	Rise Hall School
Kent	Margate Lausanne Secondary School for Girls
	Malling House School
	Nonington College
Lancashire	Clitheroe Grammar for Girls
	Lindenhurst College
Leicestershire	Morcott Hall School
	Windsor Classical Dance Centre
Norfolk	Kings Lynn St. James Junior Girls
	Londsdale School
	St. Georges School
North Yorkshire	Mill Mount Girls Grammar
	Queen Annes Girls Grammar
	Burton Stone Secondary Modern
	St. Margaret Clitherow Roman Catholic Secondary Modern
Northamptonshire	Croft Lodge School
	Irchester Arkwright School
Somerset	Kingsbury School
Staffordshire	St. Josephs Convent School
Surrey	Sunbury St. Teresas Roman Catholic
Warwickshire	Rugby Dunsmore School for Girls
West Sussex	Convent of the Family School
	Summerlea School
	Springfield Park School
	Hatchlands School
	Summerfold School

Local education authority	*School name*
Boys Schools Closed since 1985	
Barnet	Holmewood Preparatory School
	Haynes School
Bexley	Parklands School
Brent	St. Benedicts Community Home
Bromley	Ravensbourne School for Boys
	Kentwood School for Boys
Croydon	Norbury Manor Boys High
	Selhust Boys High School
	Purley Boys High School
Enfield	St. Ignatius College
	St. Ignatius College Lower School
Haringey	The Somerset School
Harrow	Harrow High School
Hillingdon	Park Place School
Kingston-upon-Thames	Arundel House School
Redbridge	London School of Islamics
Sutton	Cheam CE Junior Boys
	Glastonbury High School for Boys
	Wilsons School
Waltham Forest	George Mitchell High School for Boys
	Norlington High School for Boys
	Warwick High School for Boys
	Leyton Senior High
	Sir George Monoux Senior High for Boys
Birmingham	Alderlea School
	Selly Oak School
Coventry	Cardinal Wiseman Roman Catholic Secondary School for Boys
Walsall	Druids Heath Community Home
	The Queslett School
Wolverhampton	Nordley Special School
Knowsley	Knowsley St. Kevins Roman Catholic Boys Comprehensive
Liverpool	Anfield County Comprehensive
	Alsop Boys County Comprehensive
	Collegiate Boys County Comprehensive
	Liverpool Institute Boys High School
	Hillfoot Hey Boys County Comprehensive
St. Helens	Campion Roman Catholic High School
	West Park Roman Catholic High School
Sefton	Bishops Court School
Wirral	Bebington Secondary School for Boys
	The Henry Meoles School
	Bishop Challoner Roman Catholic High
	The Leas School
Manchester	Rosehill Observation and Assessment Centre
	St. Marks Roman Catholic High School for Boys
	St. Pius Roman Catholic High School for Boys

Local education authority	School name
	De La Salle College of Education
Salford	The Bezalel High School
Stockport	Stockport School
Trafford	Stretford Grammar for Boys
	Urmston Grammar for Boys
Wigan	Worthington Burtholme Hostel
Sheffield	Limb Lane School (Family Shirecliffe House)
Calderdale	The Heath School
	Hipperholme Grammar School
	Rastrick Grammar School
Leeds	Moor Grange Boys High
	St. Michaels Roman Catholic College
	Harewood Bridge House School
Newcastle upon Tyne	Condercum House School
	Eastview School
	Castledene School
	Kenton Lodge School
Sunderland	Washington Hall School
	Milton Hall School
Inner London	Lambeth Henry Thornton
	Wandsworth School
	Wandsworth Spencer Park
	Wandsworth Sir Walter St. Johns School
	Wandsworth Clapham College
	Hammersmith London Oratory Roman Catholic
	Wandsworth John Griffiths Roman Catholic Secondary
	St. Josephs Academy Pre-Prep School
	St. Vedast Independent School for Boys
	Life Christian School
	St. Aloysius Junior Shool
	Edward Rudolf Memorial Special School
	Heathermount School
	Shephall Manor School
	Nathaniel Heckford School
	Winceby House School
	London School of Nautical Cookery
Berkshire	Reading Stoneham Comprehensive
	Reading Alfred Sutton Boys Comprehensive
	Reading Collegiate School
Buckinghamshire	Amersham The Raans Secondary School for Boys
	Cestreham Secondary Boys School
	Beckets Senior School
	Beckets Preparatory School
	Divine Mercy College
Cambridgeshire	Wisbech Queens Boy Comprehensive
Cheshire	Torpenhow School
Derbyshire	Fernilee Infant
	Frank Merifield School

Local education authority	School name
Devon	Forde Park Community Home
	Plymouth Sutton High School for Boys
	Plymouth Public High School for Boys
	Plymouth Widey High School for Boys
	Plymouth Prince Rock Boys Secondary School
	Brunel School
	Montpelier School
	Heathercombe Brake School
	Dawlish College
	Heanton School
	Russell College (Family Dennington College)
	Ward House School
	Lupton House School
	St. Pauls College
	Swallow Cliff School
	Morice School
Dorset	Seldown County Secondary Boys
	Oakmead County Secondary School for Boys
	Stinsford School
Durham	Redworth Hall Residential School
East Sussex	Central Boys Club
	Strickland House School
	Great Sanders School
	Rotherfield Hall
Essex	Eastwood High School for Boys
	Fairfax High School for Boys
	Belfairs High School for Boys
	Copford College
Gloucestershire	Cheltenham Grammar School for Boys
	Whitefriars School
	Badgeworth Court School
	Dowdeswell Court School
	Washbournes Place School
	Advicenna College
Hampshire	Winchester Montgomery of Alamein Boys Comprehensive
	Heron Wood Boys Comprehensive
	Drayton Manor School
	Oakmore School
	Mile End House School
	Ark Family Units
	Kinloss School
Hereford and Worcester	Cathedral Preparatory School
	Cotsbrook School
	Bodenham Manor School
Hertfordshire	Bushey Grange Park
	St. Michaels Roman Catholic Boys
Humberside	Castle Howard Community Home
	Hull Grammar School
	Endike Junior High Boys
	Riley High Boys
	Marist College Boys School
Kent	Margate St. Johns Church of England Secondary School for Boys
	Winchester House School
	Foxbush School
	St. Vincent School
Lancashire	Upholland College
Lincolnshire	Holbeach Eastfields Hostel
Norfolk	Kings Lynn St. James Junior Boys
	Duncan Hall School

Local education authority	*School name*
North Yorkshire	Nunthorpe Boys Grammar St. Georges Roman Catholic Secondary Modern Ingmanthorpe Hall School
Nottinghamshire	St. Hughs College
Oxfordshire	Smith Hospital School
Salop	Apley Park School Castle Hill School
Somerset	King Alfred School Barwick House School Midelney Place School
Staffordshire	Needwood School for the Partially Hearing
Suffolk	Nowton Court School The Development Centre
Surrey	Sunbury Cardinal Godfrey Roman Catholic Allen House School
Warwickshire	Rugby Dunsmore School for Boys
West Sussex	Fernden School Goring Hall School St. Johns College Pennfold School Dalesdown School
Wiltshire	St. Prôbus School

Local Management Schemes

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table to show such information as he has to hand from the schemes for local management of schools submitted for his approval by local education authorities under the headings *(a)* the value of the general schools budget, *(b)* the value of the mandatory exceptions, *(c)* the value of the aggregate schools budget, *(d)* *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)* and *(e)* *(c)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mrs. Rumbold: A table giving such information as is available will be published very shortly.

Teacher Shortages

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children have not been receiving full in-school education since the start of the 1989 autumn term in *(a)* Vauxhall constituency, *(b)* Lambeth, *(c)* the Inner London area, *(d)* the Greater London area and *(e)* nationally.

Mrs. Rumbold: The particular data requested are not all available to the Department. At the beginning of the 1989 autumn term, some 200 primary pupils in the area of the Inner London education authority, including about 100 in Lambeth, were sent home from school because of the shortage of teaching staff. The authority was able to recruit more teachers during the term and all these pupils returned to school. Other pupils, on a rotation basis, have been sent home for short spells. The authority is continuing to monitor the situation, and is keeping the Department informed.

The Department does not have equivalent information in respect of the other London boroughs or other parts of the country.

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action his Department will be taking to tackle teacher shortages, particularly in inner-city areas.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 14 November 1989 at column *235*. In addition, the teaching as a career unit will be assisting in a Londonwide recruitment campaign in collaboration with the ILEA and the London boroughs. My right hon. Friend has also asked the interim advisory committee to look at measures to improve supply in areas where vacancy rates are highest—particularly in Inner London.

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of graduates entered a career in teaching in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Statistics of graduates entering teaching and of the total number of graduates can not readily be compiled on a common basis, so a precise calculation of the first as a percentage of the second is not possible. The table provides the best approximation that can be made from the available data.

(thousands)

	[1](1)	[2](2)	*Ratio of (1) to (2)*
1978	11·9	—	—
1979	15·1	—	—
1980	15·0	79·8	0·19
1981	12·8	82·9	0·15
1982	11·3	86·9	0·13
1983	11·8	91·7	0·13
1984	11·6	97·4	0·12
1985	10·2	99·3	0·10
1986	10·4	102·1	0·10
1987	10·7	104·0	0·10
1988	—	106·2	—
1989	—	107·5	—

[1] Graduates newly entering full-time service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England and Wales in the 12 months ending 31 March of the year shown.

[2] First degree United Kingdom domiciled graduates from institutions in England and Wales in the previous academic year (including the Open University). (Figures include an element of estimation).

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the total numbers of teachers leaving the profession each year for the last 10 years, indicating whether the reason was *(a)* retirement and *(b)* entering a new profession.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The number of teachers leaving full-time service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available is as follows:

Year ending 31 March

All figures in thousands

	Number
1978	29·8
1979	32·7
1980	34·5
1981	33·5
1982	30·8
1983	29·4

	Number
1984	29·6
1985	31·1
1986	31·2
1987	29·0

Information on the nature of these departures is available only for the last two years, and even then does not provide a complete breakdown of destinations. The available data are:

	Year ending 31 March	
	1986	*1987*
	per cent.	*per cent.*
Percentage of teachers leaving full-time service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England who:		
transferred to other service, full or part-time, in the maintained sector in England or Wales[1]	15	17
transferred to teaching outside the maintained sector[1]	4	4
retired or died	34	30
others	47	49

[1] The Department's "Database of Teacher Records" does not provide complete coverage of the non-maintained sector nor of part-time service within the maintained sector, so these figures may be slightly understated (with the "others" correspondingly overstated).

The "others" category in this table includes teachers leaving for alternative non-teaching employment, but also those withdrawing for family reasons. The sex and age distribution of these cases (more than half are women aged 25-39) suggests that the latter group are a substantial part of the whole.

National Curriculum

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether it is his policy that the 10 subjects of the national curriculum should take up approximately 70 per cent. of the school timetable and that the remaining 30 per cent. should be left for schools to use at their own discretion.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 4(3) of the Education Reform Act makes it clear that it is for schools themselves to determine how much time should be devoted to the subjects of the national curriculum. I would expect that in key stages 1 to 3 schools will devote the great majority of curriculum time to the national curriculum subjects and to religious education, as they have done in the past. In key stage 4, I would expect that schools will offer some optional subjects outside the national curriculum.

Student Loans Company

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how may people are likely to be employed by the Government to run the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Jackson: Some 130 people are likely to be employed by the Student Loans Company by December 1990. There will be some increase in numbers thereafter as the collections department staff are employed and take-up is known.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate profit levels for the Student Loans Company in each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: The Student Loans Company will operate at cost. Any income will be offset against the administration costs which will be met by the Government.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the cost to the Government of running the Student Loans Company for *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992, *(d)* 1993, *(e)* 1994 and *(f)* 1995.

Mr. Jackson: The annual administrative costs of the Student Loans Company will be in the order of £10 million to £20 million.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated cost of transferring the Student Loans Company into the hands of the Government.

Mr. Jackson: The Government have purchased the shares of the Student Loans Company Limited at a total cost of £10. The banks agreed to make a contribution of £500,000 towards the preparatory costs of the student loans scheme.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Government intend to appoint a chairman of the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Jackson: An official of the Department of Education and Science has been appointed chairman of the Student Loans Company.

EMPLOYMENT

Police (Earnings)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, why earnings etc. figures have been left blank for the police in the new earnings survey.

Mr. Nicholls: Footnotes to the relevant tables in the new earnings survey report explain why some figures for certain occupations, including police inspectors and above, have been omitted.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the fall in unemployment since June 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Since June 1987 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom has fallen by 1,207,500 to 1,649,700 in November 1989 and is now at its lowest level for over nine years.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rise in the number of people in employment in the last quarter; and what were the comparable figures for other countries in the European Community.

Mr. Nicholls: In the second quarter of 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the civilian work

force in employment in the United Kingdom rose by 82,000 (0·3 per cent.) to 26,033,000. Quarterly data are published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in respect of some European countries and data for recent quarters are shown in the following table:

European comparisons of civilian employment
Seasonally adjusted

Thousands

	Q4 1988	*Q1 1989*	*Q2 1989*	*Changes Q1 1989 to Q2 1989*	
				Thousands	*Percentage*
United Kingdom	25,787	25,951	26,033	82	0·3
Germany	26,842	27,011	27,075	64	0·2
Italy	20,700	20,695	20,674	−21	−0·1
Spain	11,895	12,053	12,208	155	1·3
Portugal	4,322	4,363	n.a.	41	0·9
France[1]	21,264	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

[1] Figures for France are unadjusted and are published only for the fourth quarter of each year.
Source: "Quarterly Labour Force Statistics 3/1989" (OECD) except United Kingdom (ED).

Property Services Agency

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any conveniently available figures for the *(a)* value, and *(b)* size of Department of Employment property being removed by the Property Services Agency; and how much priority one Department of Employment property is not being renovated, owing to shortage of funds.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Employment occupies approximately 604,000 sq m of the civil estate, but figures are not conveniently available for the value of these occupations.

Responsibility for maintenance of the civil estate, under the property repayment system (PRS) arrangements, is shared between PSA and Departments. On 24 May 1989, Sir Gordon Manzie, the chief executive of the PSA, informed the Environment Committee that, at current funding levels, it should be possible to clear the backlog of priority maintenance work on the civil estate as a whole by 1995-96. There is, however, no readily available information relating the backlog to individual Department occupations.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants have completed the UB671 since its inception; and how many have been disallowed benefit as a result, for each quarter and by each standard region.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available.

Jobstart Scheme

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have participated in the 50-plus jobstart scheme in each of the pilot areas; what was the average hourly pay earned by participants, excluding the £20 a week allowance, what was the average amount of hours worked per week by participants; and how many participants remained in employment after the allowance had ceased.

Mr. Eggar: Between the start of the 50-plus Jobstart pilots on 26 June and 15 December 1989 a total of 61 people were accepted on the programme. The breakdown of the number of people on the programme and their average hours and wages by area is as follows:

Area	*Participants*	*Average hourly wage £*	*Average hours*
Dudley and Sandwell	14	2·00	20·0
Leeds	27	2·20	18·7
London South	1	2·00	20·0
Lothian and Borders	19	2·27	17·4

Unemployment Benefits (Adjudication)

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time between a claimant's referral for adjudication and an adjudication officer's decision on grounds of actively seeking work, by standard regions in Great Britain.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time between a claimant's referral for adjudication and an adjudication officer's decision on grounds of refusal of employment by standard Great Britain regions.

Mr. Eggar: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the speed with which adjudication officers make decisions—that is, the time between their receiving a referral and reaching a decision —is monitored in a 5 per cent. sample of cases. The sample shows that for the three-month period ending 30 September 1989, the percentage of refusal of employment questions decided within four weeks of referral to an adjudication officer, for each employment service region, was as follows:

Refusal of employment

	per cent.
Northern	100
Yorkshire and Humberside	73
East Midlands	65
Eastern	94
Southern	73
Western	75
West Midlands	92
South West	72
Wales	100
North West	81
Scotland	71

Footwear and Textile Industries

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what numbers of jobs there have been in *(a)* footwear and *(b)* textile industries for each year since 1979; and how many have been lost in each industry in 1989, by month.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is supplied in the table.

Employees in the footwear and textile industries (SIC 80)

Great Britain *(thousands)*

	Footwear SIC group 451	*1989 monthly change*	*Textiles SIC class 43*	*1989 monthly change*
June 1979	68·8	—	371·4	—
June 1980	65·3	—	324·8	—
June 1981	58·8	—	273·0	—
June 1982	53·5	—	256·2	—
June 1983	51·4	—	238·8	—
June 1984	52·8	—	233·5	—
June 1985	51·1	—	234·5	—
June 1986	51·9	—	238·2	—
June 1987	50·8	—	229·0	—
June 1988	49·5	—	231·0	—
December 1988	48·9	—	225·9	—
January 1989	48·7	−0·2	223·3	−2·6
February 1989	48·2	−0·5	219·5	−3·8
March 1989	47·7	−0·5	218·6	−0·9
April 1989	47·2	−0·5	217·6	−1·0
May 1989	46·8	−0·4	216·5	−1·0
June 1989	46·6	−0·2	217·8	1·3
July 1989	46·4	−0·2	215·5	−2·3
August 1989	45·7	−0·7	215·7	0·2
September 1989	45·3	−0·4	218·1	2·5
October 1989	45·2	−0·1	217·0	−1·1

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of trainees in employment training for the most recent date for which information is available in Great Britain and in each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The information is not available in the precise form requested. Information is available only for the eight Training Agency regions in England and for Scotland and Wales. The latest available figures of employment training filled places are given in the table.

Employment training
Number in-training at 8 December 1989

Region	*Numbers*
South East	14,300
London	21,400
South West	12,300
West Midlands	23,100
East Midlands and Eastern	16,900
Yorkshire and Humberside	25,600
North West	29,400
Northern	24,500
Wales	16,500
Scotland	26,400
Great Britain	[1]211,000

[1] Including a small number of trainees at Residential Training Colleges and other training providers not identified separately in the regional totals.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Energy Projects

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will initiate a review of all statements since 1979 made to the House by Ministers having responsibility for military and civil nuclear energy projects and programmes, to assess whether they require revision in the light of official information made public under the 30-year rule on 1 January 1990.

The Prime Minister: No.

Eastern Europe

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to meet the Heads of Government of *(a)* Bulgaria, *(b)* East Germany, and *(c)* Czechoslovakia, to discuss the creation of free markets in those countries.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to meet the Heads of Government of Bulgaria, East Germany or Czechoslovakia. I have no doubt that when I do meet them, economic reform will be high on the agenda.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has made to President Gorbachev regarding the political situation in eastern Europe.

The Prime Minister: We and other western Governments have kept in close contact with the Soviet authorities over developments in eastern Europe. This was one of the topics at my meeting with Mr. Shevardnadze on 19 December.

Science and the Environment

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library a copy of her speech on science and environment, given as the 50th anniversary lecture of the parliamentary and scientific committee on 6 December 1989.

The Prime Minister: A copy is available in the Libary of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Market Research

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many market research and sample surveys were carried out by or for his Department in the last 12 months; what was the cost of each; what was the total cost; how many were carried out in-house; how many were carried out for his Department by outside organisations; and what percentage of the total expenditure was paid to outside organisations.

Mr. Cope: A total of 38 sample surveys were carried out in the target period of which eight were continuous or annual surveys, for example, the family expenditure survey and the labour force survey. The remainder were ad-hoc surveys of varying size and complexity.

Total expenditure was £954,000 with the costs of individual surveys ranging from £400 to £192,000. Twenty-two surveys were conducted in-house (cost £832,000) and 16 were carried out for the Department by outside organisations (cost £122,000). Payment to outside organisations accounted for 13 per cent. of total expenditure.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is as follows:

	Over 60	*Over 65*	*Over 70*
1980	3	6	—
1981	2	1	—
1982	8	7	—
1983	4	4	—
1984	3	1	—
1985	9	2	—
1986	8	6	—
1987	3	3	—
1988	11	7	—
1989	2	5	1
Totals	53	42	1

The figures include reappointments.

Fishery Conservancy Board

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many statutory pollution samples have been taken by the Northern Ireland Fishery Conservancy Board in the past 12 months; what was the cost of taking each sample; how many such samples proved positive; how many such samples resulted in prosecution in court; and how many such prosecutions were successful.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During 1988, the latest period for which complete statistics are available, 198 statutory samples were taken by the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland. Information on the cost of taking each sample is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

All the statutory samples proved to be polluting. Of these samples, 98 resulted in prosecution in court with 92 leading to convictions; four cases are still pending.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the Northern Ireland Fishery Conservancy Board is funded: what is the total number of bailiffs employed by the Northern Ireland Fishery Conservancy Board; what is the number of permanent bailiffs employed; what is the average probationary period served by a bailiff before he becomes permanent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland is responsible for the conservation and protection of salmon and inland fisheries of Northern Ireland other than the fisheries of the Londonderry area of the Foyle Fisheries Commission. The board derives licence revenue from commercial fishermen and anglers to offset the cost of carrying out those functions. In addition the board carries out and receives agency fees for water pollution control work on behalf of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland and providing bailiffs for public fisheries on behalf of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland. The total number of bailiffs presently employed by the board is 48: of these, 14 are permanent bailiffs.

While the turnover of permanant staff is small, the probationary period for a new permanent bailiff is six months after which the appointment is confirmed, subject, of course, to a satisfactory report. This period may be extended or the appointment terminated in the event of an unsatisfactory report.

Strangford Lough

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will replace the CNCC with a democratically constituted council; and if he will make a statement about public participation in the management of area of special scientific interest Strangford lough part 3.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC) was recently established under the provisions of article 3 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, and its constitution was very carefully considered. The membership of the council represents a wide range of interests and experience throughout Northern Ireland. It provides sound and balanced views on conservation matters. There are no plans to amend the legislation.

The management of the lands within the Strangford lough (part 3) area of special scientific interest (ASSI) depends on co-operation between individual owners and occupiers and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. It is not an appropriate matter for public participation.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to involve the loughside community in the management of the Strangford lough foreshores; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The management of the Strangford lough area of special scientific interest (ASSI), which mainly comprises the Strangford lough foreshores, is a matter between the individual owners and occupiers and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. At the time the declaration of Strangford lough (part 3) ASSI was confirmed I stated that a locally based and organised voluntary group representative of the wide variety of interests concerned could be very useful to the Department in preparing its proposals for the marine nature reserve in Strangford lough. I also indicated that I hoped that local people would take forward this suggestion which I had welcomed.

Agricultural Advisory Service

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amount of money has been received for advice given following the introduction of charges by the Agricultural Advisory Service; how many persons have been given advice; and what were the comparable figures for the equivalent period prior to the introduction of charges.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following the introduction of charging by the advisory services of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland in October 1988 a total of £224,000 has been received up to November 1989.

Advice, some of which continues to be free, is given in a variety of ways both to individuals through farm visits, office consultations and by telephone and to groups through events, meetings, advisory letters, press articles, media broadcasts and publications notably "Agriculture in Northern Ireland". During any given period a farmer may get advice in more than one way. Currently our records which are compiled for each financial year are as follows:—

	1987-88	*1988-89*
Farms Visited	16,827	14,442
Attendance at meetings/events	34,006	29,744
Advisory letters	20,268	38,500
Press articles	416	403
Media broadcasts	21	36
"Agriculture in Northern Ireland"	12,125	12,958

Harbours

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of harbour dues for *(a)* boats, *(b)* yachts and *(c)* other sea-going vessels at the harbours of Portrush, Ballycastle, Bangor, Ardglass and Portstewart.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The harbours at Portrush, Portstewart, Ballycastle and Bangor are owned and operated by the Coleraine, Moyle and North Down councils respectively and the information sought is not available in my Department.

The Ardglass harbour is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority. Charges at Ardglass are as follows:—

Fishing Vessels
Over 15 tons gross—£50 per annum
Under 15 tons—£25 per annum

Cargo and other commercial vessles
EC Vessels—15p per tonne per visit
Outside EC—21p per tonne per visit
If vessels stay over 1 week an extra 11p per tonne is charged for each week thereafter.

All other craft
30p per metre for each week or part thereof except for vessels in a reserved area (for yachts and pleasure crafts) 15p per metre each week or part thereof.

ENVIRONMENT

European Environmental Monitoring

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what European Community funds are being, or will be, directed to the establishment of the European Environment Agency in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) what European Community funds are being, or will be, directed to the establishment of the European monitoring and information system in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Trippier: The establishment of the European Environment Agency and the European monitoring and information system are integral parts of a single proposal. As such it is inappropriate and impossible to distinguish separate expenditure elements. The cost of establishing and maintaining the agency and the underlying network in the first year of operations is estimated at 5·5 million ecu, equivalent to about £3·8 million. Budget estimates for later years are not available.

CORINE Programme

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what European Community funds have so far been directed to the establishment of the CORINE programme; and what is the predicted annual funding of the programme in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Trippier: Up to 1989, 4 million ecu (£2·8 million) have been directed to the CORINE programme. For 1989, expenditure is estimated at 3 million ecu (£2·1 million) and for 1990 expenditure earmarked at 4·5 million ecu (£3·1 million). After 1990, it is envisaged that CORINE-related work will pass to the proposed European Environment Agency.

European Environment Statistics Office

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what European Community funds will be directed to the European environment statistics office in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Trippier: A separate European environment statistics office does not exist. A four-year programme to develop regular official statistics of the environment is currently being proposed within the statistical office of the European Communities. The proposed budget for the period amounts to 13·3 million ecu, approximately £9·3 million, with £0·7 million earmarked for 1990, £1·9 million for 1991, £2·8 million for 1992 and £3·9 million for 1993.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost to the Economic Community each year since its inception of the European environment statistics office.

Mr. Trippier: A separate European environment statistics office does not exist. The statistical office of the European Communities collects, co-ordinates and disseminates statistics to assist in the formulation and monitoring of a wide range of Community policies. The office is mainly concerned with economic and social statistics; its programme of work on environmental statistics has only recently begun with appropriations being met from the general budget of the European Communities.

European Environment Agency

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his reply of 30 November to the hon. Member for Billericay, *Official Report*, column *368*, if he will undertake a survey of businesses to determine their view of the usefulness of the European Environment Agency.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The objectives of the proposed European Environment Agency are to assemble, co-ordinate and analyse environmental information to inform and support Community environment policy. There is no intention to place further burdens on industry by surveying their views on the proposal.

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* his letter of 6 December to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green concerning the seventh report of the Environment Committee of Session 1988-89, relating to the proposed European Environment Agency.

Mr. Chris Patten: The text of my letter was as follows:

"Your Committee took evidence from my officials on 8th November and produced an admirably clear report in time for the debate in the House on 12th November; we appreciate this.

For the record I can say that Government policy is very much in line with the Committee's recommendations.

In particular:

Paragraph 1: The Committee's agreement with the DOE view on duties of the Agency is noted.

Paragraph 11: The Government agrees that "in the first instance the Agency should be set up as a Community body".

Paragraph 12: The Draft Regulation requires separate agreements to be established with third countries covering all aspects of participation; but the need to include voting rights and the financial contribution issue is noted.

Paragraph 14: The need to recognise the value of the information holding of NGO's is important and the Committee is right to stress the advantages of collaboration between the Agency and the NGO's in this area.

Paragraph 15: I shall be keeping the staffing implications of the proposal under review as far as my Department is concerned.

Paragraph 16: The Committee's support for the Government bid for the Agency to be located in the United Kingdom is welcome.

Please convey my thanks to your Committee for their speedy and helpful examination of this issue. Your findings were helpful in the discussions in the Environment Council on 28th November and you might like to know that the location of the Agency is now the only significant outstanding issue as far as Environment Ministers are concerned. You may have seen that the Government has now offered Cambridge as a suitable location; no decision has yet been taken however at Community level."

Housing Needs Index

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his review of the housing needs index and on the effect on the apportioning of capital funds to housing associations in the north-west of England of this review.

Mr. Chope: My hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Housing and Planning announced on Wednesday 20 December 1989, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn), his decisions on the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1990-91. The number of new housing association dwelling units to be approved in the north-west region is planned to increase in each of the next three years, though the proportionate increase will be less than in some other regions.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library as soon as possible a full list of non-domestic revaluations arising out of the Local Government (Finance) Act 1988.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall make available in the Library as soon as possible microfiche copies of the draft local non-domestic rating lists for England and Wales which have been sent to local authorities by the valuation office.

Derelict Land

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the joint rolling programme submission by North Staffordshire local authorities for derelict land programme assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department will announce decisions on the regional distribution of derelict land grant resources for 1990-91 shortly. At the same time, we will announce the rolling programme which the Department is prepared to support.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his departmental library holds copies of the International Atomic Energy Agency waste management research abstracts on radioactive waste programmes in progress.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Copies are held by the Department.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his departmental library receives a copy of the bimonthly information bulletin on radioactive wastes and fuel reprocessing, produced by Harwell Information Services.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes.

Nirex (Safety Research)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the 1988-89 report on the United Kingdom Nirex safety assessment research programme.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the report is expected to be published by the end of January 1990. Distribution of the report is a matter for United Kingdom Nirex.

Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make cavity wall insulation and double glazing mandatory requirements in building regulations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The thermal insulation standards in the Building Regulations 1985 have recently been upgraded, and we estimate that these amendments will achieve a saving of around 20 per cent. in energy requirements for space and water heating in new houses and other buildings. Cavity wall insulation and double glazing are methods of meeting these requirements, but there are also other ways of doing so. We consider that architects and builders should be allowed the maximum flexibility to choose for themselves whch is the most appropriate way of meeting the higher standards, which are due to come into force on 1 April.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update his Department's 1985 estimates of the amount needed to be spent on the insulation of local authority houses in England and generally on heating, insulation and works to remedy condensation.

Mr. Chope: The Department's most recent estimate of the amount needed to be spent on the insulation of local authority houses in England is £880 million, and on heating, insulation and works to remedy condensation £3,100 million. These figures are based on analysis of the 1986 English house condition survey. They are at 1984 prices and therefore comparable with the Department's estimates reported in 1985.

Departmental Finance

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when MINIS 10 was completed; when it was placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement in its findings.

Mr. Chris Patten: I reviewed the outcome of MINIS 10 on 3 October 1989 and subsequently authorised publication. Copies of MINIS 10 were sent to the Library on 15 November 1989.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each year since 1978 the spending on loft and wall insulation measures in local authority housing stock, consistent with the figure of £146 million stated in paragraph 3.40 of the National Audit Office's "National Energy Efficiency".

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The figure given in paragraph 3.40 of the National Audit Office's report was based on analysis of the 1986 English house condition survey. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Microwave Ovens (Palace of Westminster)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the location and make of each microwave oven within the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* A total of 14 microwave ovens in use on the parliamentary estate have been provided by my Department. They are located in either the Refreshment Department or mess facilities and comprise seven Merrychefs, five National Panasonics, one Moulinex and one Sharp.

Craven Cottage

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what criteria he based his decision to set the date of the inquiry concerning Craven Cottage at 30 January 1990;

(2) on what date Hammersmith council was notified that Mr. Palmer had been appointed to preside at the inquiry concerning Craven Cottage;

(3) on what date Mr. Martin replaced Mr. Palmer on the inquiry concerning Craven Cottage; and why Hammersmith council was not given an opportunity to make representations on this matter;

(4) when the date of the public inquiry on 30 January 1990 into the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's compulsory purchase order of Craven Cottage was set; and when his Department received the council's compulsory purchase order;

(5) whether he received any representations from any person concerning the appointment of Mr. Palmer to the inquiry concerning Craven Cottage.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* The compulsory purchase order was received on 30 May 1989 and the date of the public inquiry on 30 January 1990 was set on 25 September, after consultation with the parties on alternative dates in the usual way. The Department has no record of when Hammersmith council was told the name of the inspector. Mr. Stephen Marks was substituted for Mr. Palmer on 10 November after representations were received from the agents for the owners. It is not departmental practice to invite the parties to an inquiry to comment upon the choice of inspector.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The Government's support for the arts, as the term is commonly used, is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts. I have joint responsibility with my right hon. Friend for the grant in aid to the national heritage memorial fund, and for the acceptance of land, property and works of art in lieu of tax. In the last financial year (1988-89) expenditure was split equally £3 million (£1·5 million each) and £2 million (£1 million each) respectively.

More generally my Department contributed to expenditure on the arts in 1988-89 where inner city regeneration is concerned, for example through grant in aid to urban development corporations—the London Docklands development corporation spending £75,000 in 1988-89.

Among all its activities, PSA included, the Department aims to encourage good design especially through the public bodies it sponsors. Specifically, it has incurred expenditure of £365,000 through its sponsorship of the Royal Fine Art Commission, and contributed £12,000 as its share of the costs of the housing design awards, the other contributors being the Royal Institute of British Architects and the National House Building Council.

Radioactivity

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information on radioactivity released has been withheld in 1989 under section 8(5)(b) of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Mr. Trippier: It is not Government policy to reveal the existence of any authorisation to dispose of radioactive waste restricted under the terms of section 8(5)(b) of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Rutland Water

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will call for a report from the National Rivers Authority into the progress of the investigation since 27 November into the death of dogs and sheep connected with the Rutland Water, and whether he will instruct the authority to complete its report in sufficient time to enable remedial action to be taken before summer 1990.

Mr. Trippier: I am satisfied with the progress which the NRA is making in compiling its report into the causes of last year's toxic algae problem which will take account of the findings arising from the studies being conducted into animal deaths at Rutland Water. These are primarily matters for the NRA which I understand will address the question of remedial action in its report which it aims to complete this summer.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, following the meeting between the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 27 November, he has obtained copies of *(a)* the findings by Professor Codd of Dundee university regarding the toxicity of algae at Rutland Water and *(b)* the findings of the veterinary service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, regarding post mortems on dead dogs and sheep; when this information will be made available to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Results of the work carried out by Professor Codd to establish the toxicity of the algae at Rutland Water have been placed on the NRA public registers. The studies being conducted by the veterinary service of MAFF and Professor Codd on the animal deaths at Rutland Water are continuing and final results are not yet available.

Water Privatisation

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total cost to public funds of advertising for the privatisation of water;

(2) what was the total cost to public funds of the flotation of the water industry in fees to City advisers;

(3) what was the total cost to the Government of the flotation of the water industry.

Mr. Trippier: It is too soon for these cost totals to be known. The full costs of the flotation of the water industry will be reported to Parliament in due course in the normal way.

WALES

Local Government Finance

24. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assumptions he has made with regard to those domestic rates being paid by second home owners in Wales, in preference to personal community charge; and upon what basis such non-domestic rate income will be distributed between district councils in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have made no such assumptions. Domestic rates will not be payable by second-home owners from April 1990, whether in preference to personal community charge or otherwise. Standard community charges will be payable on domestic properties that do not constitute any person's sole or main residence; the income from these charges will accrue to the local authorities in the areas where the properties are situated—it will not be distributed between district councils in Wales.

Income from non-domestic properties will be pooled and redistributed between district and county councils as an amount per head of population in each receiving authority's area.

Farm Woodlands Scheme

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the operation of the farm woodlands scheme in Wales; and what is the current uptake.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department has received 38 applications for planting on 286 hectares of land. Twenty-two applications in respect of 188 hectares have already been approved, three applications for 12 hectares have either been withdrawn or rejected and those remaining are being processed.

Eggs

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake a review of the overall effectiveness of recent legislation affecting the egg-producing industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is too early at this stage to gauge the effectiveness of the various measures to control salmonella, since the legislation has been introduced only recently. It will be reviewed in due course.

Works of Art

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list *(a)* German expressionist, *(b)* 20th century Welsh, *(c)* Piccassos, *(d)* Dutch 17th century, *(e)* Italian renaissance and *(f)* French impressionist works of art in Wales, owned by the state; how much money each cost the state; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the works of art produced in *(a)* 1945 to 1964, *(b)* 1965 to 1977, *(c)* 1978-87 and *(d)* 1988 to 1989 owned by the state; if he will indicate which of those were produced either partly or wholly by public funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have no direct responsibility for any works of art within the categories listed. Information on items held by non-departmental public bodies is not held centrally. Items from the Government art collection are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts.

HEALTH

Medical Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken to act on the recommendations of the 1986 Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development report on medical equipment.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's response to the report, summarising action then being taken or planned on the report's recommendations, was published in February 1987. A wide programme of improvements has been implemented and further developments in the fields of research, evaluation and equipment management are being vigorously pursued. Inter alia the research and development coordinating committee of the Department of Health, Department of Trade and Industry, Medical Research Council and the Science and Engineering Council, which meets quarterly, has made considerable progress in identifying and eliminating gaps and overlaps in the research and development medical equipment field to ensure that available resources are used as effectively as possible.

Nurses

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what instruction he has as to how many *(a)* trained and *(b)* untrained nursing staff were employed in (i) the private sector and (ii) the public sector, for each of the years 1978 to 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the tables.

Table 1
NHS nursing and midwifery staff in post (excluding agency) at 30 September each year, England
Whole-time Equivalents[1]

Years	Qualified[2]	Unqualified[3]	Total
1978	188,260	159,240	347,500
1979	192,010	162,410	354,420
1980	197,900	167,950	365,860
1981	212,100	175,910	388,010
1982	219,300	174,740	394,040
1983	223,620	171,070	394,680
1984	227,730	166,010	393,740
1985	234,130	162,900	397,030
1986	236,770	160,470	397,240
1987	239,360	158,550	397,910
1988	241,920	155,920	397,840

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) wholetime equivalent.
[2] Includes qualified nurses and midwives, health visitors and district nurses.
[3] Includes learners and unqualified nursing staff.
Note: The figures have not been adjusted for the reduction in the working week from 40 to 37·5 hours introduced in 1980-81.
Source: DH (SM13) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower

Table 2
Nursing staff (whole time equivalents), Independent sector hospitals, Nursing homes and Clinics, England

Year[1]	Nursing staff		Total
	[2]Trained	[3]Untrained	
1982	12,208	10,416	22,623
1983	13,754	11,918	25,672
1984	15,446	13,986	29,432
1985	18,354	17,730	36,084
1986	21,683	23,266	44,949
1988	25,836	30,611	56,447

[1] The figures for 1988 relate to the number in post (wholetime equivalents) at 31 March, the previous years figures relate to the numbers in post at 31 December
[2] Registered nurses and midwives, enrolled nurses
[3] Nursing auxiliaries/assistants and other non-registered/enrolled nursing staff
Source: SBH212 return 1982-1986
KO36 return 1988

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year since 1959 the number of nurses employed by the National Health Service, with each year also expressed as a percentage change of the previous year.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

National Health Service nursing and midwifery staff in post (including agency) at 30 September each year
Whole-time equivalent[1]

Years	England and Wales[2]	Percentage change from previous year[3]	England	Percentage change from previous year[3]
1959	196,000	n/a	—	—
1960	197,900	1·0	—	—
1961	198,900	0·5	—	—
1962	205,300	3·2	—	—
1963	207,700	1·2	—	—
1964	212,400	2·2	—	—
1965	222,400	4·7	—	—
1966	231,500	4·1	—	—
1967	239,300	3·4	—	—
1968	241,300	0·8	—	—
1969	245,900	1·9	—	—
1970	252,800	2·8	—	—
1971	263,500	4·2	285,400	n/a
1972	—	—	303,200	6·2
1973	—	—	308,500	1·8
1974	—	—	314,100	1·8
1975	—	—	336,600	7·2
1976	—	—	341,700	1·5
1977	—	—	343,200	0·4
1978	—	—	351,000	2·3
1979	—	—	358,400	2·1
1980	—	—	370,100	3·2
1981	—	—	391,800	5·9

Years	England and Wales[2]	Percentage change from previous year[3]	England	Percentage change from previous year[3]
1982	—	—	397,100	1·4
1983	—	—	397,100	*
1984	—	—	397,500	0·1
1985	—	—	401,200	0·9
1986	—	—	402,700	0·4
1987	—	—	404,000	0·3
1988	—	—	403,900	*

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual Census of National Health Service Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] The manpower figures are independently rounded to the nearest hundred (100) wholetime equivalents. Percentage changes calculated on unrounded figures. * indicates less than 0·1 per cent.

[2] England and Wales figures are for hospital based staff only whereas England figures related to total nursing and midwifery staff. In addition, because of changes and improvements in the collection and processing of the data between 1959 and 1988 the information is not strictly comparable. Figures for England only are not available prior to 1971.

[3] Includes qualified nurses and midwives, learners and unqualified nursing staff.

[4] The figures have not been adjusted for changes in the working week introduced over the period shown.

Milk Discount Tokens

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage he intends to introduce on milk discount tokens: what discussions he has had with self-employed milk-round persons: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government currently pay the full retail price for liquid milk they buy for the welfare milk scheme at an annual cost of approximately £80 million. In view of the size and value of the Department's purchase detailed commercial negotiations have taken place with the dairy trade. Following these negotiations we intend to implement a new pricing structure that will represent a reduction of approximately 10 per cent. of the current average price paid to welfare milk suppliers.

This decision has been arrived at after an extensive period of negotiation, consultation and consideration. There will be provision to enable this reduction to be shared between all sectors of the trade on a voluntary basis.

People entitled to liquid welfare milk will continue to receive seven pints of milk per week entirely free of any charge.

Hypertension

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what increase in the number of reported cases of hypertension there has been arising directly from the growing incidence of health scares.

Mr. Freeman: We have no statistics on any such increase.

Campylobacter

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 19 December 1989 concerning campylobacter, cryptosporiduim and leptospira; whether the number of incidents of campylobacter infection represents outbreaks or individual cases.

Mr. Freeman: The figures given represent numbers of cases, not outbreaks.

Cancer Screening

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the shortfall in cancer screening services available to women in high risk groups in Staffordshire; and what steps are being taken to provide a full service.

Mr. Freeman: The provision of cancer screening services in Staffordshire is a matter for the three Staffordshire district health authorities and for Staffordshire family practitioner committee.

However, I understand that computerised call and recall programmes have been or are being introduced for cervical and breast cancer screening in line with national guidance.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the monthly breakdown figures for courses of dental treatment completed since charges for dental examinations came into operation;

(2) what are the monthly breakdown figures for courses of dental treatment, on the most convenient regional basis, since charges for dental examination came into operation.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 12 December 1989 at column *628*.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the monthly breakdown figures of courses of treatment of *(a)* those under 18 years of age, *(b)* those who are over 18 years but are fully exempt from dental charges, *(c)* those over 18 years who are partially exempt from dental charges and *(d)* those who are over 18 years but are fully liable for dental charges, in the period since dental charges for examinations came into operation.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 12 December 1989 at column *627*.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any additional dental educational programmes in mind to promote awareness of the proposed capitation arrangements for children and continuing care contracts for adults, under the current dental contract being negotiated.

Mr. Freeman: If, as the Government hope, the proposals for a new dental contract are accepted by the profession and implemented in October 1990, there will be an important role for postgraduate education in promoting awareness of the matters mentioned by the hon. Member. Postgraduate dental Deans and others concerned with the supply of education to dentists are aware of this potential need, and are taking it into account in their planning.

Dental Caries

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what current statistical inquiries are in train, to gain a more accurate picture of dental caries among children in particular localities, especially in inner city areas.

Mr. Freeman: It is the responsibility of district health authorities to monitor the dental health of all age groups in the population of their areas and to plan jointly with family practitioner committees the provision of local dental services. Information about local inquiries currently in train is not held centrally.

The Department commissioned national surveys of children's dental health in 1973 and 1983, and it is expected that a further survey will be conducted in 1993.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions there are in the contract currently being negotiated with the dental profession to adjust capitation payments to the differing workloads which will arise from varying rates of dental caries in particular localities.

Mr. Freeman: Under the proposals for a new contract for general dental practitioners, the initial fee paid to a dentist for treating a child entering capitation will be greater if the child has large numbers of decayed teeth. This will greatly benefit dentists in localities with high incidence of dental caries. There are no proposals to adjust capitation payments to take account of regional variations in work loads.

Dental Forms

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when a new and correctly drafted supply of orthodontic dental forms FP17(O) will be generally available to the dental profession; and what steps have been taken to inform dental practitioners of the current situation with regard to consequential matters.

Mr. Freeman: Family practitioner committees were notified of a delay in the printing of the revised form FP17(O), and were asked to inform individual general dental practitioners. The Dental Practice Board and FPCs have dealt with questions arising from the delay. We expect the new form to be available towards the end of January 1990.

Intensive Care Cots

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by district and by region the number of paediatric intensive care cots and the percentage change since 1980.

Mr. Freeman: Information on paediatric as opposed to neonatal intensive care cots is not collected centrally.

General Practitioners

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will monitor the reasons in all the cases where patients have been taken off their general practitioner's list at their general practitioner's initiative; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will specify for each family practitioner committee how many people in each of the last three years were removed from their general practitioner's list on the initiative of the general practitioner; and what percentage of them were over 65 years.

Mr. Freeman: Information on the removal of patients from general medical practitioners' lists is not routinely collected and none is held centrally.

Respite Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will say how many beds are made available for the purposes of respite care, for each regional health authority in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally. The Government consider respite nursing care services to be an integral part of NHS provision for those groups of patients who require it. However, the actual level of service to be provided by a health authority is a matter for that authority to decide for itself.

Health Authorities

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number and percentage of *(a)* women and *(b)* men members on each (i) district health authority and (ii) regional health authority.

Mr. Freeman: Details of the membership of district health authorities are not held centrally. The figures for regional health authorities are given in the table:

Number and percentage of men and women members of regional health authorities

Region	*Male*	*Percentage*	*Female*	*Percentage*
Northern	9	60	6	40
Yorkshire	10	62	6	38
Trent	11	61	7	39
East Anglian	11	73	4	27
North West Thames	10	56	8	44
North East Thames	10	71	4	29
South East Thames	9	56	7	44
South West Thames	12	75	4	25
Wessex	11	69	5	31
Oxford	10	67	5	33
South Western	11	65	6	35
West Midlands	12	75	4	25
Mersey	9	60	6	40
North Western	9	64	5	36
Total	144	65	77	35

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number and percentage of women chairs of *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* regional health authorities.

Mr. Freeman: Thirty-two women (18 per cent.) are chairmen of district health authorities, and one woman (7 per cent.) is chairman of a regional health authority.

Hospital Accommodation

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which hospitals routinely make accommodation available for the parents of children detained overnight in hospital.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available centrally. Statistical return KHO4 includes, at district health authority level, the numbers of parents accommodated and the numbers of bed days used by parents in respect of babies up to the age of 28 days detained in hospital, but the information for the first year of this new return, in 1988-89, is incomplete.

AIDS

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are known to be suffering from AIDS, and how many to be HIV positive, as a result of receiving a transfusion of whole blood before screening was introduced in October 1985; how many such infected people have already died; and whether the Government's compensation scheme for haemophiliacs will be extended to cover such people.

Mr. Freeman: The position at the end of September 1989, as reported to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, is that in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, there have been 15 cases of AIDS in people known to have been transfused in the United Kingdom, of whom 13 are known to be dead. Fourteen of the 15 are known to have been transfused before October1985, the remaining person was transfused in 1985 but the month is unknown. Of 17 known HIV seropositives transfused in the United Kingdom, 13 were transfused before October 1985, and 4 at a date as yet unknown. There are also 45 known seropositives whose country of transfusion is still under investigation.

The Government grants to provide financial assistance for haemophiliacs with HIV infection are ex-gratia payments and not compensation. These payments recognise the wholly exceptional combination of circumstances affecting those haemophiliacs.

We have no plans to extend the remit of the MacFarlane Trust to include those who are now HIV positive as a result of "whole" blood transfusions.

Spinal Units

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what extra monies have been allocated to supra-regional spinal units consequent upon his announcement of 14 December 1989 of a cash increase for the National Health Service in 1990-91.

Mr. Freeman: Spinal injury services will receive a total revenue allocation of £15·4 million in 1990-91, compared with an allocation of £14·4 million in 1989-90.

I am arranging for copies of the detailed announcement on supra-regional services, which I made on 3 January on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, to be placed in the Library.

Nursing Officers

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of nursing officer posts are held by *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* In the NHS in England at 30 September 1988, 18 per cent. of the posts of Sister I and above (ie Nursing Officer posts) were held by men and 82 per cent. women.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

NATO

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for the Western Isles, of 11 December, *Official Report*, column *497*, what other military functions, apart from training, versions and variants of NATO combat aircraft have been modified to perform.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO combat aircraft have been modified to perform a variety of functions. In the case of the United Kingdom, roles of various RAF squadrons are set out in annex C of the statements on the defence Estimates of 1989 (CM 675/1).

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for the Western Isles, of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *762*, when the United Kingdom will provide information on the types of each of the main categories of weapon equipment holdings to the conventional forces in Europe negotiations; and if he will make this information available to Parliament.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proposals that NATO has tabled in the CFE negotiations in Vienna envisage an exchange of information on national holdings between parties on signature of a treaty. The information provided by the United Kingdom will be made available to the House.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any of the aircraft in storage that are included in the current NATO total of 6,700 combat aircraft are in addition to those mentioned in footnote 4, page 27 of Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any of the combat-capable training aircraft included in the current NATO total of 6,700 combat aircraft are in addition to those mentioned in footnote 5 of page 27 of Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list

the specific types of combat aircraft that have been included in the overall total of 6,700 NATO combat aircraft that are in addition to those itemised in page 27 of Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts.

Mr. Waldegrave: As explained in footnotes 4 and 5 on page 27 of Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts, the figures for NATO combat aircraft do not include combat-capable trainers and aircraft in storage. Those aircraft, together with versions and variants of types listed in footnote 1 which have another military function between them, raise the NATO total to 6,600. The definition of such aircraft was given in my reply to the hon. Member for Western Isles on 11 December.

Hong Kong

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy that statements taken by Hong Kong immigration officers from boat people are read back to or read by the appellant and that the appellant is allowed to amend the statements and sign them.

Mr. Maude: Any statements taken by Hong Kong immigration officers which require clarification are read back to the interviewees to ensure accuracy. The UNHCR and its designated agency have access to the questionnaire completed for all boat people at the start of the screening procedure so that they can assist the asylum seeker to make any further representations at the review stage.

Mr. Tony Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the further difficult decisions concerning Hong Kong referred to in his statement of 20 December, column 363.

Mr. Maude: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in his statement on 20 December, our continuing responsibility for Hong Kong over the next eight years will involve us in a variety of complex and difficult decisions. Those decisions span the whole range of Hong Kong issues related to the effective administration of the territory and the implementation of the joint declaration. One such decision involves steps to be taken to develop democracy further in Hong Kong.

Takrouna Monument

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to protect and preserve the monument at Takrouna, Tunisia, which commemorates the relief of that strongpoint by the Eighth Army and the Free French Forces in April 1943.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no responsibility for this monument, which is threatened by mining operations. But our embassy in Tunis is monitoring the situation and is ready to find an appropriate alternative site if necessary for the commemorative plaque.

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any humanitarian assistance has been offered to authorities in Panama following the invasion of that country by United States forces.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with European Economic Community governments since the United States of America invasion of Panama; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: EC Foreign Ministers discussed Panama in Paris on 22 December.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reasons were given by the President of the United States of America for the invasion of Panama when he sought endorsement for his actions from Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: President Bush has stated that the United States military intervention in Panama had four objectives: to safeguard the lives of American citizens, to help restore democracy, to protect the integrity of the Panama canal treaties, and to bring General Noriega to justice.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps were taken by Her Majesty's Government to establish the legality of the United States invasion of Panama before endorsement of such action was given.

Mr. Sainsbury: The American action was undertaken with the agreement of the leaders who clearly won the elections held last May. We had no hesitation in welcoming the establishment of democratic government in Panama and giving full support to the action that led to this. General Noriega's arbitrary rule was maintained by force. There can be no suggestion that he represented legality.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a British Minister last visited Panama.

Mr. Sainsbury: My noble Friend Baroness Young, the then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, visited Panama in November 1983.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Economic Community countries, other than the United Kingdom, have expressed official support for the United States invasion of Panama; which of them have recognised the regime of Mr. Guillermo Endara; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Several EC member states made statements on 20 December. Italy, Germany and the Netherlands expressed understanding of the United States action. EC Foreign Ministers issued a joint statement on 22 December. It is the practice of the United Kingdom and other EC countries to recognise states rather than Governments, so the question of formal recognition does not arise. Heads of mission of the five EC member states with resident representation in Panama—United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain—called on Sr. Linares, the Foreign Minister of President Endara's new Government, on 4 January.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the United

Kingdom exercised a veto in the United Nations Security Council on the motion condemning the United States invasion of Panama; and if he will list each occasion in the past three years when Her Majesty's Government's representative at the United Nations has exercised a veto.

Mr. Sainsbury: Together with the United States and France, we exercised our veto on the draft resolution on the situation in Panama because it was seriously unbalanced. Canada also voted against. Finland abstained.

The United Kingdom has exercised a veto in the United Nations Security Council on four other occasions since January 1987:

Date	
20 February 1987	South Africa
9 April 1987	Question of Namibia
8 March 1988	Sanctions against South Africa
11 January 1989	Shooting down of Libyan jet

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the Arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* Such detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost, but we are aware that our principal expenditure on the arts is almost exclusively channelled through the British Council, which in 1988-89 spent £13·3 million of the diplomatic wing's direct grant of £58·1 million on the promotion overseas of British artistic achievements.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Estate Agents

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total cost to his Department of the Likierman report; and if he will give a breakdown of the major areas of cost.

Mr. Redwood: We provided the secretariat for the steering group and the auditors study team in the review of professional liability under the overall chairmanship of Professor Andrew Likierman. The total cost of this was £26,500, of which £24,000 was spent on staff costs including accommodation and the remaining £2,500 on consultancy and other miscellaneous costs.

Companies Act Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what actions are taken by his Department against accountancy firms criticised in his inspector's reports on inquiries under the Companies Act.

Mr. Forth: Such action as may be appropriate in the circumstances which may include disclosure of information with a view to the institution of, or otherwise for the purposes of, any disciplinary proceedings relating to the exercise by an auditor or an accountant of his professional duties.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many times accountancy firms have been criticised for the audits in investigations conducted by his Department under the Companies Act; how many firms these criticisms apply to; and what action is taken by his Department when such criticisms are made.

Mr. Forth: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. My Department takes such action as is appropriate when accountancy firms are criticised in investigations. This may include disclosure of information with a view to the institution of, or otherwise for the purpose of, any disciplinary proceedings relating to the exercise by an auditor or an accountant of his professional duties.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many inquiries conducted under the Companies Act he has ordered since January 1979; how many have reported; how many of these reports have been published; how many of those not published have been communicated in any way to professional bodies; and how many of *(a)* the published reports and *(b)* the unpublished reports have resulted in (i) court action, (ii) any professional discipline on which he has information and (iii) action by his Department.

Mr. Forth: Inspections into the affairs and/or membership of 57 companies, some of which are linked, have begun since January 1979. A final report has been submitted in relation to 35 of those companies. An interim report has been submitted in relation to five other companies. Fourteen reports, including three interim reports, have been published relating to 17 different companies. One unpublished report has been disclosed to a professional body. Criminal proceedings have followed or commenced during investigations in relation to nine companies, in respect of which three reports relating to four companies have been published. Winding-up and disqualification proceedings have been commenced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State during an investigation in which an interim report was submitted. That report is unpublished.

Disciplinary proceedings by a professional body have followed investigations in relation to four companies in respect of which two reports relating to three companies have been published.

Other action was taken by my Department in one investigation in respect of which the report was published and resulted in the recovery of £475,000 for creditors and shareholders.

Export Credits

Mr. Jim Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was, for developing countries *(a)* the total of outstanding export credits in 1982, *(b)* the total repaid each year between 1982 and 1988, *(c)* the total outstanding for each country in 1988, *(d)* the total arrears of each country in 1988, *(e)* the terms under which the credits were advanced and *(f)* the annual rates of interest charged each year from 1982 to 1988.

Mr. Forth: The total outstanding export credits to developing countries was £14·9 billion as at 31 March 1982. This figure was published in ECGD's trading results for the financial year 1981-82. Figures for repayments each year are not available but the total outstanding as at 31 March 1988 amounted to £10·4 billion. It has been the policy of successive governments not to provide details of ECGD's exposure-experience on individual markets.

The definition ECGD uses for arrears on credit insurance business relates to the amount of claims paid which remain outstanding for recovery, and as at the end of 1988, this figure stood at £2·1 billion for developing countries.

The terms for export credit advanced to developing countries are governed by the OECD arrangement on guidelines for officially supported export credits. This arrangement also lays down the minimum interest rates permitted. The rates in force vary depending on the length of the credit involved and the grading of the country to which credit is extended. The rates are revised twice yearly.

Public Appointments

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many persons above the age of *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 and *(c)* 70 years he has appointed to public bodies in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Forth: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Medical Equipment (ACARD Report)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to implement the recommendations of the 1986 Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development report on medical equipment, so far as they affect his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department is represented on the R and D co-ordinating group on medical equipment chaired by the Department of Health; and a market

branch in my Department deals with the medical equipment sector. The Department seeks to ensure that information received about market opportunities, including that obtained from posts overseas, is disseminated widely to United Kingdom industry.

Export Intelligence

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the contract awarded to Export Opportunities Ltd. for the marketing of export intelligence was subject to competitive tender; and what the number of subscribers to the export intelligence service now is.

Mr. Forth: Yes. Export intelligence is available on an automated matching basis from Export Opportunities Ltd., and by on-line inquiry from Trade Network International Ltd. and from FT Information Online Ltd. The three companies are in competition with each other and the number of customers each has is commercially confidential.

Sanitary Tampons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was discussed at his Department's most recent meeting with tampon manufacturers; and whether he will advise those manufacturers that a warning about toxic shock syndrome should be clearly visible on the outside of tampon boxes.

Mr. Forth: My officials are in correspondence with the tampon industry about more prominent labelling about the use of the product. But I have no present intention of asking manufacturers to mention toxic shock syndrome on the outside of the packet.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the companies within his responsibilities in which the Government have sold their financial stake since June 1979; and which were the accountancy firms which either advised or reported on the prospectus in each case.

Mr. Redwood: The holdings sold by my Department, together with the appropriate advisers, were British Aerospace (Peat Marwick Mitchell); Rolls-Royce (Coopers and Lybrand); British Steel (Coopers and Lybrand); British Telecom (Coopers and Lybrand); Cable and Wireless (Deloitte Haskins and Sells); Jaguar (J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co. Ltd.) and Rover Group (Baring Brothers, and Slaughter and May).

Other disposals comprised various subsidiaries of companies in public ownership; and the sale of 9·5 per cent. shareholding in Short Brothers in which the Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development had primary responsibility. A number of holdings in other companies have been returned to the private sector by the National Enterprise Board.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any appointments have been made to the accounting standards task force of employees of firms against whom action has been taken by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: One member of the accounting standards task group is employed by such a firm.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether at any time since June 1979 any accountancy firm found to be lacking in professional conduct, efficiency and competence by the joint disciplinary scheme has supplied inspectors for any of his Department's investigations.

Mr. Redwood: Yes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to amend the Companies Acts to ensure that where reporting accountants have been criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors within the last five years, published prospectuses shall give this information.

Mr. Redwood: No. The purpose of prospectuses is to enable potential investors to assess the merits of the investment they are being offered.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the reports published of Department of Trade and Industry investigations into accountancy firms since June 1979, showing the date of publication, date of completion of the report and the date on which the inspectors were appointed in each case.

Mr. Redwood: Reports published by my right hon. Friend are those of inspectors appointed to investigate a company's affairs under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985, its membership under section 442, and share dealings under section 446. These sections do not relate to investigations of accountancy firms.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies went into receivership within two months, four months, six months, nine months and 12 months of receiving an unqualified audit opinion in the period 1 January 1987 to 1 January 1989.

Mr. Redwood: The chief executive of Companies House tells me that the information requested is not available.

Land Valuation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will be requiring all large companies, as defined in the Companies Acts, to incorporate valuation of land and buildings in their annual accounts.

Mr. Redwood: I assume that the hon. Member is proposing a new requirement on large companies to revalue land and buildings annually in their accounts. The present law already requires fixed assets such as land and buildings to be included in the balance sheet, and directors are required to draw to the attention of shareholders any substantial difference between the market value of land and buildings and the amount included in the balance sheet where the difference is, in the directors' opinion, of sufficient significance. However, the question of accounting for fixed assets, including the need to keep valuations up to date, is due to be considered shortly by the Accounting Standards Committee with a view to the production of an exposure draft early in the new year.

Computer Misuse

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions there were for computer misuse in the years 1985 to 1989; and how many were successful.

Mr. Forth: The Law Commission, when publishing its recent report on this subject, pointed out that computer misuse was a relatively new phenomenon and that the criminal law as presently framed did not provide adequate protection against all forms of misuse. As a consequence there have been few prosecutions, but the exact figure is not readily available, as Government statistics do not separately identify those cases containing this element.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of the verifiable cases of computer misuse in the years 1985 to 1989 in the following three categories *(a)* unauthorised access, *(b)* computer fraud and *(c)* damage.

Mr. Forth: Although there are no centrally collated figures, my Department has identified around 270 verified cases of computer misuse between 1985 and 1989. Of these, approximately 42 per cent. relate to unauthorised access, 37 per cent. to computer fraud and 20 per cent. to damage. I understand that a large number of cases go unreported, and that this figure probably represents only a proportion of the true total.

Footwear

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy on negotiations in the EEC in relation to footwear imports from Taiwan and South Korea; and if he will press for immediate strict limitation of such imports to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are prepared to support safeguard action where the conditions for such action are met and the restrictions can be fully and economically justified. In our view the European Commission's report on the impact on Community producers of imports of footwear from South Korea and Taiwan does not provide sufficient justification for such action. We have informed the Commission therefore that consistently with our general approach on trade policy issues the United Kingdom Government are opposed to safeguard action on imports of footwear from South Korea and Taiwan. We have, however, suggested to the Commission that if it were to propose some form of surveillance licensing we would give this sympathetic consideration.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the number of jobs in the United Kingdom footwear industry which are dependent on the maintaining of the voluntary restraint agreement with Poland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible to estimate the number of jobs in the United Kingdom footwear industry which are dependent on the maintaining of the voluntary restraint arrangement.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the number of jobs displaced in the United Kingdom footwear industry by imports from *(a)* Taiwan and *(b)* South Korea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible to assess the number of jobs displaced in the United Kingdom footwear industry by imports from Taiwan and South Korea.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure that the voluntary restraint agreement limiting leather footwear imports from Poland remains in force for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Redwood: Ministers have considered the industry's arguments for renewing the voluntary restraint arrangement (VRA) on Polish leather footwear very carefully, but have concluded that it would not be appropriate to press the EC Commission to renew the VRA on our behalf.

There are three considerations which support this conclusion. First, it would be inconsistent with the Government's political commitment to assist the Poles in their progress to economic, political and social reform if we were to restrict footwear imports. Secondly, with effect from 1 January 1990 all Community restrictions on Polish footwear are to be lifted and thirdly, even if the VRA were to be renewed its effects could be totally undermined by imports of footwear on free circulation via other member states.

I have told the industry, however, that we will monitor the situation and reconsider the case for the renewal of the VRA towards the end of this year in the light of experience and in the context of the Community's consideration of its general attitude to Poland. If, in the meantime, imports of leather footwear from Poland should damage the United Kingdom industry significantly I will consider the possibility of applying either for safeguard action or for anti-dumping remedies.

EC Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring up to date the figures for intra and extra-EEC trade of EEC countries given in the reply of 3 July 1985, *Official Report*, columns *190-92*.

Mr. Redwood: The information is in the table. Because of the accession to the EC of Spain and Portugal, figures for 1984, the last year included in the previous answer, are given again to indicate the effect on intra and extra-EC trade.

European Community exports of manufactures[1]

billion ECU

	Federal Republic of Germany	*France*	*Italy*	*Netherlands*	*Belgium/ Luxembourg*	*United Kingdom*	*Ireland*	*Denmark*	*Greece*	*Spain*	*Portugal*
(1) Intra-EC trade											
1984	89·2	42·1	37·6	26·8	32·7	28·8	5·5	4·2	1·8	10·4	3·2
1985	99·8	47·8	42·1	29·8	36·2	32·9	6·1	4·8	1·7	11·6	3·6
1986	107·8	49·0	44·5	31·6	38·2	33·3	6·0	5·1	2·0	12·2	4·0
1987	116·3	53·1	49·7	33·4	40·5	36·1	6·6	5·6	2·2	13·6	4·6
1988	129·0	66·8	55·3	37·7	45·3	43·1	7·8	6·0	1·8	16·5	5·2
(2) Extra-EC trade											
1984	96·3	44·3	41·5	12·5	13·8	41·3	2·2	7·1	1·4	11·0	1·8
1985	108·8	47·2	45·1	13·0	15·2	45·5	2·7	7·8	1·4	11·2	2·0
1986	110·1	44·1	40·3	12·2	14·3	39·1	2·3	7·5	1·2	8·0	1·8
1987	109·2	39·6	39·1	12·2	14·1	39·7	2·3	7·4	1·0	9·5	1·8
1988	113·8	47·1	41·4	13·7	16·3	43·9	2·6	7·5	1·0	10·6	1·9

[1] Standard International Trade Classification, Sections 5 to 8.
Source: Eurostat.

Company Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1), further to the reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, 27 November, *Official Report*, column *93*, what is the relationship of the company inspections referred to there to the investigations mentioned in the Department of Trade and Industry's annual publication, "Companies in 1988-89" and earlier editions, as being approved since 1979;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, 27 November, column *93*, if he will list the 56 inspections under the Companies Acts since 1979, showing the date on which each inspection commenced, the names of the inspectors, the current status of each inspection and the anticipated date of publication of outstanding inspections.

Mr. Redwood: The table lists the details requested by the hon. Member of the 56 inspections mentioned in my previous reply. I am unable to say when reports will be published in relation to those inspections which remain outstanding.

Date of Appointment	*Company name Inspectors' names*	*Whether inspection is continuing or completed*	*Type of inquiry*
1979			
1. 19 September 1979	METALMAN ENGINEERING LTD. M. A. Braganza	Completed	s165(a)(i) CA 1948
2. 19 September 1979	BRYMORE (STEELS) LTD. M. A. Braganza	Completed	s165(a)(i) CA 1948
3. 18 December 1979	SAINT PIRAN LTD. G. M. Godfrey QC A. J. Hardcastle FCA	Completed	s165(a)(i) and s172 CA 1948
1980			
4. 12 February 1980	CONSOLIDATED GOLD FIELDS LTD. M. C. A. Osborne B. J. Welch	Completed	s172 CA 1948
5. 25 July 1980	DUNLOP HOLDINGS LTD. F. H. Pulling C. W. M. Ingram	Completed	s172 CA 1948
6. 4 September 1980	EUROSEAS SECURITIES LTD. M. A. F. Lyndon Stanford QC B. A. Kemp FCA	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
1981			
7. 24 August 1981	RIAFIELD LTD. D. J. Jupp	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
8. 11 November 1981	CORPORATE MANAGEMENT PLANNING LTD. P. J. Hanford A. H. S. Robertshaw	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
1982			
9. 8 March 1982	EUROFLAME HOLDINGS PLC R. F. G. Day R. L. Saunders	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
10. 25 March 1982	PHARMACEUTEX (IV) FLUID LTD.	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
11.	DRIVEHOUSE LTD.		

Date of Appointment	Company name Inspectors' names	Whether inspection is continuing or completed	Type of inquiry
12.	FURDROVE LTD. F. H. Pulling N. A. Pink A. H. S. Robertshaw		
13. 10 May 1982	CUBAR CONSTRUCTION LTD. J. Mann D. Gorick R. Burton	Completed	s165(a)(i) CA 1948
14. 24 September 1982	ALEXANDER HOWDEN GROUP PLC R. A. Gatehouse QC I. G. Watt FCA	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
15. 8 November 1982	MINET HOLDINGS PLC	Continuing	s165(b) CA 1948
16.	WMD UNDERWRITING AGENCIES LTD. S. C. Boyd QC P. W. G. DuBuisson FCA		
17. 19 November 1982	SIGNAL LIFE ASSURANCE CO. LTD. J. Mann B. J. Welch	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
1983			
18. 25 February 1983	HARTLEY BAIRD PLC J. R. Sendall	Completed	s172 CA 1948
19. 11 March 1983	GRAYLAW HOLDINGS LTD.	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
20.	LINK SERVICE STATIONS LTD.	Completed	
21.	BRITISH ANZANI PLC Miss E. Appleby QC P. W. Foss FCA	Completed	
22. 6 April 1983	THE GREENBANK TRUST PLC G. M. Abercrombie A. H. S. Robertshaw	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
23. 7 June 1983	WESTMINSTER PROPERTY GROUP PLC F. H. Pulling B. J. Welch	Completed	s172 CA 1948
24. 23 August 1983	HOUSE OF FRASER PLC J. Griffiths QC	Completed	s172 CA 1948
25. 4 October 1983	BANK STREET SECURITIES LTD.	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
26.	PENNINE COMMERCIAL HOLDINGS PLC Miss E. Appleby QC Mr. P. W. Foss FCA	Continuing	
1984			
27. 16 February 1984	MEDWAY SECONDARY METALS LTD. Miss E. Appleby QC Mr. P. W. Foss QC	Completed	s165(b) CA 1948
28. 3 September 1984	EMRAY PLC now EQUITY & GENERAL PLC I. G. Salter P. H. Bovey	Completed	s172 CA 1948
1985			
29. 9 May 1985	HARTLEY BAIRD PLC J. R. Sendall	Completed	s172 CA 1948
30. 27 August 1985	MILBURY PLC H. B. H. Carlisle QC M. G. Lickliss FCA	Completed	s432 CA 1985
31. 27 September 1985	ALDERSHOT FOOTBALL CLUB LTD. N. Bohm (Solicitor) A. Ridler FCA	Completed	s442 CA 1985
32. 26 November 1985	WESTMINSTER PROPERTY GROUP LTD. H. B. H. Carlisle QC M. G. Lickliss FCA	Completed	s442 CA 1985
1986			
33. 7 February 1986	SUMRIE CLOTHES PLC now SUMMER INTERNATIONAL PLC Sir Michael Kerry QC K. S. Carmichael FCA	Completed	s442 and s446 CA 1985

Date of Appointment	Company name Inspectors' names	Whether inspection is continuing or completed	Type of inquiry
34. 28 November 1986	GUINNESS PLC D. T. Donaldson QC I. G. Watt FCA	Continuing	s432 and s442 CA 1985
35. 10 December 1986	CONSOLIDATED GOLD FIELDS PLC R. G. A. Youard (Solicitor) D. Anton FCA	Completed	s442 CA 1985
1987			
36. 10 February 1987	BREMNER PLC M. McIver (Solicitor) D. J. McLeod FCA	Completed	s442 CA 1985
37. 9 April 1987	HOUSE OF FRASER HOLDINGS PLC H. Brooke QC H. G. C. Aldous FCA	Completed	s432(2) CA 1985
38. 29 November 1987	THE ANIMAL DEFENCE SOCIETY LTD. J. F. Eden (Solicitor) C. H. L. Chudley FCA	Continuing	s432(1) CA 1985
1988			
39. 10 June 1988 4 July 1988	JAMES FERGUSON HOLDINGS PLC	Continuing	s432(2) and s442 CA 1985
40. 4 July 1988	BARLOW CLOWES GILT MANAGERS LTD. L. D. Ziman (Solicitor) W. M. Hoffman FCA	Continuing	S432(2) CA 1985
41. 22 July 1988	JAMES NEILL HOLDINGS PLC	Continuing	s442 CA 1985
42.	FRANCIS INDUSTRIES LTD.		
43.	F. H. LLOYD HOLDINGS PLC D. A. Evans QC B. Worth FCA		
44. 16 August 1988	ROTAPRINT PLC Miss M. H. Arden QC G. N. Lane FCA	Continuing	s432(2) and s442 CA 1985
45. 24 August 1988	ALDERMANBURY TRUST PLC G. W. Staple (Solicitor) T. Tress FCA	Continuing	s432(2) CA 1985
46. 20 October 1988	CONSOLIDATED GOLD FIELDS PLC P. L. Heslop QC R. P. G. Lewis FCA	Continuing	S442 CA 1985
47. 19 December 1988	COUNTY NATWEST LTD.	Completed	s432(2) CA 1985
48.	COUNTY NATWEST SECURITIES LTD. M. Crystal QC D. L. Spence FCA		
1989			
49. 9 March 1989	SOUND DIFFUSION PLC E. J. Lawson QC D. Anton FCA	Continuing	s432(2) CA 1985
50. 12 April 1989	THE MERSEY DOCKS AND HARBOUR COMPANY	Continuing	s442 CA 1985
51.	METAL CLOSURES GROUP LTD.		
52.	WINCHMORE PLC D. A. Evans QC B. Worth FCA		
53. 26 May 1989	BLUE ARROW PLC Miss H. Heilbron QC M. D. Boohan FCA	Continuing	s432(2) CA 1985
54. 23 June 1989	THE BESTWOOD PLC	Continuing	s432(2) and s442 CA 1985
55.	ATLANTA FUND MANAGERS LTD. G. S. Moss QC J. R. Venning FCA		s432 CA 1985
56. 30 June 1989	THE MILFORD DOCKS COMPANY R. Owen QC P. Powell FCA	Continuing	s432(2) CA 1985

My answer to the hon. Member of 27 November 1989 gave the total number of companies for which inspectors have been appointed since June 1979.

The relevant table dealing with Companies Act investigations in the annual reports presented to both Houses in accordance with section 729 of the Companies Act 1985 gives the number of appointments of inspectors under sections 431, 432, 442 and 446 of the Companies Act 1985 or their predecessor sections as well as details of the exercise of other Companies Act investigatory powers. When inspectors have been appointed under the authority of two sections, it has been the practice since 1986 to include details of both appointments in the table.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to refer the proposed merger of Kingfisher with Dixon Group plc to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if in his consideration he will take into account the local monopoly considerations as recently developed by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: The proposed acquisition by Kingfisher plc of Dixons is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading who has a duty to advise the Secretary of State on whether or not it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the proposed acquisition in anticipation of the director general's advice.

Tourism

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he now proposes to take to promote increased tourism from countries in eastern Europe and East Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

My Department sponsors the British Tourist Authority (BTA) which has responsibility for the promotion of tourism to the United Kingdom. The BTA is aware of the potential of the eastern European tourism market and will take this into account in developing its marketing plans.

Grants

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each region the take-up of *(a)* investment grants and *(b)* innovation grants; and what was the total amount spent in each year since their introduction.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The requested information, with regard to take-up and expenditure in 1988-89 and 1989-90 (to end November) for the regional enterprise grant scheme is as follows:

	1988-89		*1989-90*[1]	
	Offers accepted (£'000)	*Payments made (£'000)*	*Offers accepted (£'000)*	*Payments made (£'000)*
Regional investment grants				
East Midlands	285	10	160	117
North East	1,277	234	2,006	917
North West	1,368	299	1,742	762
South West	386	61	546	185
Yorkshire and Humberside	842	108	1,538	629
Regional innovation grants				
East Midlands	100	nil	153	50
North East	859	32	916	311
North West	760	118	620	99
South West	204	13	195	41
Yorkshire and Humberside	590	44	631	120

[1] To end November 1989.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish figures for the numbers employed in *(a)* shipbuilding and *(b)* steel in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The relevant figures are estimated as follows:

	Shipbuilding[1]	*Steel*[2]
1979	64,500	162,000
1980	58,000	134,000
1981	59,000	96,000
1982	59,000	81,900
1983	52,500	67,300
1984	47,000	62,300
1985	43,000	60,700
1986	40,000	56,900
1987	36,500	55,100
1988	35,000	55,200
1989	30,500	[3]54,500

Source:
[1] DTI.
[2] Eurostat 'Labour Force (including apprentices): ECSC Products'.
[3] Average for 10 months to October 1989.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the amounts paid by the intervention fund for shipbuilding in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* Payments made from the shipbuilding intervention fund since 1979 are as follows:

Year	*£*
1978-79	10,839,000
1979-80	31,912,378
1980-81	41,890,399
1981-82	49,126,517
1982-83	47,925,370
1983-84	36,231,429
1984-85	20,069,280
1985-86	25,927,629
1986-87	17,450,596
1987-88	13,644,119
1988-89	38,653,894
1989 to date	25,426,976

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the share of world shipbuilding orders won by Britain in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The percentage share of world new orders for merchant ships (in compensated gross tonnes) placed with United Kingdom yards since 1979 is as follows:

	Percentage
1979	2·3
1980	2·8
1981	2·6
1982	2·6
1983	1·6
1984	1·8
1985	2·7
1986	2·1
1987	2·0
1988	0·7

Source: OECD; Lloyds/EC contract sources.

Full information on world orders for naval vessels is not available.

Schools (Technology)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what increase has taken place in 1988-89 and 1989-90 in support for *(a)* the use of computer-aided design and *(b)* the use of advanced technology in schools and further education colleges.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The Department of Trade and Industry has recently spent the following amounts in order to encourage the use of advanced technology (including computer-aided design CAD) in schools and further education colleges.

£ million

	Schools	*Further education*
1987-88	8·5	3·5
1988-89	5·5	1·6
1989-90	[1]2·9	[1]0·2

[1] Forecast outturn for full year.

The 1987 further education figure includes £2·2 million spent on a scheme limited to CAD. Apart from this, it is not possible separately to identify amounts spent on CAD within either schools or further education.

Advertising

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the total cost of advertising by his Department in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what is his planned expenditure for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* Expenditure on advertising from the Department's central publicity budget was as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	8·4
1988-89	18·8
[1]1989-90	10

[1] Estimate.

Media allocations for future years have not yet been decided.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the remit of his review of regional selective assistance; and when he expects it to report.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The internal guidelines for regional selective assistance are kept under continual review in order to keep them up to date and to consider any changes which might improve the scheme's effectiveness and value for money.

English Industrial Estates

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the remit of his review of English Industrial Estates Corporation, and when he expects it to report.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The remit of the review was set out in my reply to the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 31 October. I expect to receive the consultants' report early in the new year.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the size of managed work space of English Industrial Estates Corporation in 1987, 1988 and 1989 *(a)* in total and *(b)* in inner cities.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* English Estates' managed workspace programme was announced in March 1988. Capital expenditure was £0·5 million in 1988-89 and is expected to be £0·6 million in 1989-90. All of this expenditure was in inner city areas. In addition, English Estates provides small workshops as part of its assisted areas programme and on behalf of the Rural Development Commission.

Post Office

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the remit of his study of the Post Office; and when he expects it to report.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The Post Office Board naturally keeps under review a range of options for ensuring that their services meet as closely as possible the needs of both present and future customers. I am in regular touch with the board about these matters. There is, therefore, no date for reporting.

Consultancy Initiative

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of firms have taken up the consultancy initiative in each region.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* It is estimated that as of 1 December 1989 the percentage of firms is as follows:

Percentage of firms applying for the consultancy initiatives

DTI region	*Percentage*
North East	5·3
North West	4·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·5
West Midlands	3·6
East Midlands	2·8
South West	3·1

DTI region	Percentage
East	2·4
South East	2·5
Scotland	3·0
Wales	3·8
Total	3·1

Dixons (Takeover)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received concerning proposals for the Kingfisher group to take over the Dixons/Currys group.

Mr. Redwood: I have received some 20 representations about the proposed acquisition by Kingfisher plc of Dixons.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ask the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to consider the proposed takeover of Dixons by Woolworth.

Mr. Redwood: The proposed acquisition by Kingfisher plc of Dixons is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading who has a duty to advise the Secretary of State on whether or not it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the proposed acquisition in anticipation of the director general's advice.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive the Coopers and Lybrand report on chlorofluorocarbons; to whom he will make it available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* My Department has commissioned two reports on CFCs from Coopers and Lybrand. The first, which examines the effect of environmental and health and safety controls on the markets for chlorinated solvents, has been submitted to the Department and will be published shortly. The second study, which complements the first, will examine the size of and distribution of current CFC and halon use within the United Kingdom and assess the technical and economic options for the recovery, recycling and eventual destruction of these substances. This study is due to be submitted in early 1990 and is expected to contain much information of interest to both Government and industry. Our intention therefore is that this information should also be made widely available, although it is too early to say precisely in what form it will be published.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received any representations about the West German Government's intentions to ban the refrigerant gas HFA 22 with effect from January 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The parties to the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer are presently discussing ways in which it should be strengthened at the second meeting of the parties in London next summer. The protocol is implemented within the European Community by regulation EC3322/88, which has as its legal base article 1305 of the treaty of Rome requiring unanimity of voting. For this reason, and because there would otherwise be serious implications for the internal market, this is a matter on which all 12 member states must work together. Her Majesty's Government's view remains that HFA 22 has an important part to play especially in helping the refrigeration industry to reduce its dependence on the more damaging chlorofluorocarbons, at least in the short to medium term.

Abbey National plc

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations have been received by his Department from shareholders of Abbey National plc who have not yet received shareholding certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 8 December 1989]:* Since the beginning of August the Department has received over 100 letters from shareholders who at the time of writing had not received their share certificates. There have been seven such letters in the last month.

Whisky

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much the European Community import duty is on a one-litre bottle of whisky, containing 40 per cent. alcohol imported from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* Japan.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* No EC customs duty is payable on goods produced in the United Kingdom when imported into another member state. The duty levied on a litre bottle of whisky containing 40 per cent. alcohol imported into any member state from either the United States of America or Japan is 14 pence.

GATT

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will specify the final European Community proposals on agriculture in the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

Along with other major participants in GATT, the European Community has now tabled outline proposals for long term reform of agricultural supported policies. The Community proposals are designed to meet the agreed objective of substantial and progressive reduction in support, over a period of time. The Community proposes a programme of reductions, measured against a 1986 starting level, on the basis of an aggregate measure of total support. Some changes in the operation of export subsidies and in the mechanisms of import protection are also envisaged. Ideas are put forward for the treatment of developing countries and for moves towards the harmonization of measures relating to animal and plant health.

In Council discussions, I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs supported the Commission view that submission by the Community of a paper of this kind would make a helpful and constructive contribution to the Uruguay round negotiations as a whole.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the United States proposal within the Uruguay round in the general agreement on tariffs and trade for quantification in standard form of all aspects of agricultural support systems.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply.

A range of proposals have been tabled by the United States, EC and others in the negotiation. Several make reference to the possible use of an aggregate measure of support which can quantify the impact of a wide range of policies. The United Kingdom believes that an aggregate measure provides a useful negotiating tool which by placing countries on a common footing would facilitate an agreement to reduce support and protection worldwide.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what priority Her Majesty's Government attach to achieving a compromise between the respective positions taken by the United States of America and the European Community during the general agreement on tariffs and trade Uruguay round negotiations on agriculture; and what is his policy towards the Cairns group proposals for bridging the gap between the European Community and the United States of America.

Mr. Curry I have been asked to reply.

The Government strongly support the objectives of the agricultural negotiations within the current GATT Round. We are working closely with our Community partners and with other countries, including the United States, to achieve a successful outcome. The proposals of the Cairns group are an important and constructive contribution to the negotiations. All parties recognise that compromise will be needed to achieve success.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on levels of investment in manufacturing industry in the last decade.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

The most recent full year for which information is available is 1988. Manufacturing investment at 1985 prices including leased assets, is estimated to have been £11·3 billion in 1988, compared to £10·7 billion in 1978. The 1988 figure is the highest recorded and amounts to an average growth rate of 8¼ per cent. a year from the 1983 level. Under the last Labour Government, manufacturing investment grew by less than 2½ per cent. a year averaged over the whole period of office.

Manufacturing Industries

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which regions in England have seen a reduction in constant value terms in manufacturing industries from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

Current prices estimates for regions of manufacturing gross domestic product are published annually and provisional figures for 1988 may be found in "Economic Trends" No. 433, November 1989, pages 92 and 93: a copy is available in the Library. Constant price estimates, however, are not made because there are no regional price indices.

Trade Gap

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total trade gap for the current year.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The latest available information was published on 29 December 1989 in table 1 of the monthly press notice on the current account of the balance of payments, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Balance of Payments (Oil)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish a table showing in current and 1985 prices the balance of payments surplus with the European Community in *(a)* crude oil and in other petroleum products and *(b)* other goods in 1970, 1979, 1985, 1988 and the current year to date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

Estimates for trade with the EC on a balance of payments basis are available only at current prices. Information about trade in crude oil and other petroleum products is not readily available for the EC; the following table shows trade in all fuels as the closest available substitute.

Balance of trade with European Community countries[1]

Balance of payments basis	*£ billion, current prices*		
	Fuels[2]	*Other Goods*	*Total Trade*
1970	−0·1	+0·2	+0·1
1979	+1·2	−3·9	−2·7
1985	+9·2	−11·6	−2·5
1988	+2·5	−16·0	−13·5
1989[3]	+1·5	−13·4	−11·9

[1] Present membership in all years
[2] SITC (Rev 3) Section 3
[3] Not seasonally adjusted

SCOTLAND

Electricity Disconnections

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many electricity disconnections the South of Scotland electricity board undertook in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988, expressed as a percentage of the total of domestic users.

Mr. Lang: The number of domestic customers disconnected by the South of Scotland Electricity Board, and the percentages these formed of the total number of domestic customers in the last four financial years, is set out in the table.

Disconnections Financial Years—1 April to 31 March

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Number of Domestic Customers disconnected during year	7,874	10,622	11,546	9,627
Number of Domestic Customers as at 31 March	1,421,734	1,422,139	1,445,151	1,510,496
Percentage of Domestic Customers disconnected	0·55	0·75	0·80	0·64

River Pollution

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he plans to strengthen existing sanctions available to river purification boards and local authority water and sewage departments when they detect breaches in the voluntary codes for toxic disposals into rivers;

(2) if he will take further steps to give additional powers to river purification boards to prevent commercial toxic pollution reaching rivers;

(3) what proposals he has to change existing powers available to river purification boards to enter commercial premises and require specific action by owners to limit damage being done to rivers by toxic waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Anyone discharging trade effluent to sewers or to controlled waters without such consent as may be required by the local authority or without consent from the river purification authority is liable to prosecution. The powers available to river purification authorities to control the pollution of rivers, estuaries and coastal waters were recently improved and strengthened by the Water Act 1989. We are considering the making of regulations, including standards for the storage of chemicals on premises, which will further strengthen defences against such pollution.

It is our intention to include measures in this Session's Environmental Protection Bill which will impose tighter controls over the most dangerous substances and certain processes and make new pollution control arrangements for multiple waste streams.

Speech-impaired Children

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children with speech and language disorders have been placed in specialist residential schools in England from each region and island area in Scotland; and what assistance is available to Scottish parents in locating and selecting such schools for their children.

Mr. Lang: Information about the number of children with speech and language disorders placed in special residential schools in England is not held centrally. Parents wishing to send their children to such schools should seek assistance and advice from the regional and islands psychological services.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance has been given by his Department to ensure that speech and language disorders can be properly identified in examinations conducted for the purpose of a record of needs under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended by the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Lang: Guidance and advice to education authorities assessing children for the purpose of opening and keeping a record of needs under section 60 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 is given in Scottish Education Department circulars No. 1083 and 1087, copies of which will be sent to the hon. Member. The circulars do not give advice on particular learning difficulties such as speech and language disorders, since circumstances and special educational needs will vary with each individual child.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the number of pre-school and school-aged children who are affected by speech and language disorders in each region and islands area in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Local Authorities (Chief Executives)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the salaries paid to chief executives of each local authority in Scotland; and if he will give details of the income of the elected council leaders in those authorities for the 1988-89 financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Councillors' Allowances

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the differences in income to councillors as a result of the changes in allowances applicable from 1 April 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The overall resources available for councillors' allowances in Scotland will be no less than at present. Details of how the resources are to be distributed have yet to be finalised after consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. We have proposed that the amount available to individual authorities should be determined by the type of authority, the workload of that authority, the number of constituents and the number of councillors. Within that basic framework, we are also willing to consider sympathetically any reasonable proposals for banding by population which the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities can devise, provided these command a broad measure of support from authorities.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the changes contained in the Housing and Local Government Bill regarding allowances paid to councillors.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 28 November at column *112*.

COSLA

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities; and whether he discussed the effects of the Coal Industry Bill on the environment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 27 November to discuss his revenue support grant proposals for next year and other local government finance matters. The Coal Industry Bill was not raised at the meeting.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of instances of drug and alcohol abuse reported to the children's panel.

Mr. Lang: This information is not separately available. Drug and alcohol abuse are not by themselves grounds under section 32 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 for referral to a children's hearing to consider compulsory measures of care. They may often be a feature of greater behavioural problems which attract such grounds as "beyond parental control" or "lack of parental care".

Colliery Tips

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans his Department has for clearing up and ensuring the reclamation and landscaping of former colliery tips.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Development Agency is the Government's principal agency for environmental improvement in Scotland. As such, it deals with a wide range of environmental problems including those resulting from former colliery tips. The agency has an ongoing programme for the reclamation and landscaping of disused bings where there are no private sector interests.

Colliery Closures

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the collieries closed since May 1979 in Scotland; and if he will give details of the numbers of jobs lost at each colliery.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish collieries that have closed since May 1979 are named in the table. In each case the numbers of jobs recorded refer to men on the colliery books at the end of the previous financial year. I understand that there have been no compulsory redundancies associated with these closures.

Year and colliery	*Men on colliery books*
1980-81	
Lady Victoria	638
Roger	86
1981-82	
Bedley	697
Kinneil	547
Polmaise	271
1983-84	
Cardowan	1,092
Highhouse	301
Sorn	202
1986-87	
Comrie	534
Polkemmet	35
1987-88	
Seafield/Frances	647
1988-89	
Barony	403
Solsgirth	805
1989-90	
Bilston Glen (including Monktonhall)	731

Plate Mill

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he discussed the sale by Japan of the second-hand plate mill to British Steel when he visited Japan during the summer recess.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Highway Information Management System

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will request all Scottish regions to standardise on the highway information management system, the computerised system developed by Devon county council, which has been chosen as the preferred system by five of nine Scottish regions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The Scottish Development Department has endorsed the recommendation of the Scottish County Surveyors' Society highway database and management information system working party following a comprehensive trial of two of the available routine maintenance management systems, one of which was developed by Devon county council. The choice of the alternative system for use on trunk roads has been made following the recommendation of the Scottish County Surveyors' Society.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to his answer of 28 November to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), *Official Report* columns *188-89*, what was the number of responses which welcomed the merger of the Nature Conservatory Council and the Countryside Commission for Scotland; and what was the number which disapproved of the proposal.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* Of the 159 respondents expressing a view, 98 supported the proposals in principle and 61 were opposed to the merger. A list of those expressing support was provided in answer to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). The list of those opposed is as follows.

Aitchison, Dr. C. I.
Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
Baker, Dr. R.
Banff and Buchan District Council
Bat Group of Britain
Botanical Society of Edinburgh
British Association for Nature Conservation Scottish Branch
British Mountaineering Council
British Trust for Ornithology
Brown, A.

Campbell, N.
Central Scotland Raptor Study Group
Cobham Resources Consultants
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District Council
Dumbarton District Council
Friends of the Earth (Scotland)
Geological Association, The
Gordon District Council Director of Planning
Grant, Dr. M. C.
Hardie, P. A.
Holdgate, M. W.
Houghton, Dr. A.
Johnston, J. Laughton
Kilmarnock and Loudoun District Council
Kincardine and Deeside District Council
Loch Lomond Park Authority
Moray District Council
Nethersole-Thompson, Mrs. M.
NCC Trade Union Side
Packard, Professor A.
Brian K. Parnell and Associates
Parsons, Professor I.
Poore, D.
Potter, D.
Raby-Jolley, I. G.
Ramblers Association, The
Ramsay, A. D. K.
Ratcliffe, Dr. D. A.
Reid, C.
Robb, H.
Roger, J. Grant
Rowbottom, M. G.
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The
Scottish Ornithological Club, The
Scottish Railway, Path and Cycle Route Project
Scottish Rights of Way Society
Scottish Scenic Trust
Scottish Wildland Group
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Scottish Wildlife Trust—Lanark Group
Smiley, Dr. W. K.
Smith, Dr. R.
Smith, A. J.
Stirling-Aird, P.
Stirling District Council
Thomson, Dr. D.
Thorpe, J.
Watlin, Dr. R.
Watson, D.
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Youngman, R. E.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animals and Birds (Imports)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken on the importation of parrots and other rare birds from South America and Senegal, in the light of the meeting between the hon. Member for Linlithgow and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) at Whitehall court.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 20 December 1989 at column *350*.

Food Processing (Safety)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has had on safety regulations for the food processing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

I met representatives of the Refrigeration Industry Board on 13 November 1989. These and many other interested bodies have been consulted on proposals for amendment of the Food Hygiene Regulations to extend temperature control to certain foods for retail sale in order to protect public health.

Food Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has had with the food industry about food safety measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Ministry continues to consult widely in the food industry on food safety matters.

Food Production

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further discussions he has had with consumer groups and others on the subject of food production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Ministers of this Department maintain regular contacts with consumer groups, as well as the agriculture and food industries, to discuss topics of mutual concern including food production matters. I recently met with representatives of these interests to hear at first hand their initial reactions to the Food Safety Bill.

Green Pound

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the current effect on United Kingdom farmers of the disparity in the green pound.

Mr. Curry: The recent fall in sterling has caused United Kingdom MCAs to increase from their previous levels. This situation may change with further movement of sterling. I shall watch the position closely during the Community price review which has just begun.

Minke Whales

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will request an emergency meeting of the International Whaling Commission in order that they may discuss the current slaughter of minke whales in the Antarctic by Japanese hunters.

Mr. Curry: The Japanese Government are well aware of our views on their programme of whaling in the Antarctic for research purposes. We have consistently taken the lead within the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in questioning its validity in the light of the concerns raised by the IWC scientific committee. In response to the IWC resolution Japan has made some changes to the plans including reducing the number of minke whales to be taken. The IWC will discuss this revised programme at its next annual meeting.

Beagles (Deaths)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is now in a position to make a statement about his Department's inquiries into the deaths of the 79 beagles en route to Sweden referred to in his

answer of 1 November, *Official Report*, column *211*, and on any other steps that can be taken to ensure that this possibility does not arise again.

Mr. Maclean: My Department's inquiries are now complete. Charges have been laid against three defendants under the Transit of Animals (General) Order 1973 and the Protection of Animals Act 1911. I believe that existing legislation provides sufficient safeguards but vigilance will always be necessary to prevent a recurrence of this kind of incident.

Alar

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will secure from the United States Environmental Protection Agency the evidence which led the agency to ban the use of the apple spray Alar on the grounds of its health damaging properties.

Mr. Maclean: We have the EPA's published review document, all the relevant studies cited therein, and all the raw test data provided by the registrant.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which countries exporting apples to the United Kingdom do not allow the use of Alar.

Mr. Maclean: Daminozide, the active ingredient of the pesticide product Alar is not approved for use in Italy and its approval has been withdrawn in the United States following the voluntary cancellation of its registration for food crop uses by the manufacturer.

Food and Drink Products

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce an environmental labelling scheme to cover food and drink products.

Mr. Maclean: No. "Environmental" claims are permitted under current food labelling legislation so long as the claim is true and not misleading to consumers. I am aware of requests for more detailed information on food, particularly on what might broadly be termed "green" issues. I have therefore asked the food advisory committee to carry out a comprehensive review of current labelling legislation and practices and to report back with any recommendations that it thinks appropriate.

Pesticides

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the pesticide safety unit's review of pesticides that currently hold his Department's approvals but which are banned or restricted in use in other countries will be completed.

Mr. Maclean: The advisory committee carries out reviews of individual products when scientific evidence suggests these are necessary. It has started the routine review of all pesticides which were approved prior to 1981, irrespective of their status in other countries, which will take several years to complete.

GATT

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he has for consulting representatives of United Kingdom consumers about the agricultural negotiations in the Uruguay round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Mr. Curry: I and my officials, and our counterparts in the Department of Trade and Industry, are in regular consultation with representatives of United Kingdom consumers on this subject.

Import Restrictions

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions exist on the import into the United Kingdom of agricultural products from *(a)* New Zealand, *(b)* Australia and *(c)* Canada; and what steps he is taking to have them reduced.

Mr. Curry: Imports of agricultural products from these, as from other, countries are subject to the rules of the common agricultural policy. Agricultural policies, including import barriers, are currently under discussion in the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations. The objectives of the negotiation, which the United Kingdom supports, include substantial, progressive reductions in support and protection, including the lowering of import barriers. The United Kingdom is working with our Community partners and other governments, including those of New Zealand, Canada and Australia, to ensure a successful outcome to these negotiations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

13. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to improve the co-ordination between local social security offices and local councils in relation to the payment of housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We attach high priority to good liaison between our local offices and local authorities and when difficulties arise we seek to remedy them promptly.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department or the transitional payments unit has maintained league tables of outstanding TP3 forms awaiting return from local authorities.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* Inquiry forms TP3 were issued to local authorities in respect of over 484,000 applicants. The return of those forms has been closely monitored by the transitional payments unit. Seven local authorities each have in excess of 100 forms outstanding and in total around 3,000 applications cannot be assessed because inquiry forms have not been returned from over 200 local authorities.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has about the number of people in the London borough of Lambeth currently entitled to housing benefit, distinguishing between *(a)* certificated housing benefit, *(b)* uncertificated benefit, *(c)* assistance with rates, *(d)* assistance with rent, *(e)* council tenants and *(f)* private tenants and owner occupiers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest complete information is in the table.

	Receiving Income Support and Housing Benefit Assistance with;			Receiving Housing Benefit only Assistance with;		
	Rent and rates	Rent only	Rates only	Rent and rates	Rent only	Rates only
Local Authority Tenants	15,568	159	—	4,691	77	284
Private Tenants	4,849	746	75	1,728	556	58
Owner Occupiers	—	—	614	—	—	332

Note: Certificated and standard housing benefit ceased to exist when income support replaced supplementary benefit from April 1988.
Source: Local authority caseload returns: November 1988

Pension Schemes

14. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the working population are investing in occupational or personal pension schemes.

Mr. Newton: Of those currently in full-time employment, we estimate that over 70 per cent. are members of occupational or personal pension schemes. In addition, some 50 per cent. of all pensioners and 70 per cent. of recently retired pensioners have an occupational pension.

Pensioners (Incomes)

16. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures he has for the increase in pensioners' incomes from savings since 1979.

17. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the increase in pensioners' average net incomes for *(a)* 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* 1979 to date.

Mr. Newton: In the five years from 1974 to 1979, pensioners' average total net incomes rose by 3 per cent. In the seven years from 1979 to 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, they rose by 23 per cent.

Income from savings is a significant factor in this improvement. Between 1979 and 1986 pensioners' average income from savings rose by 64 per cent., whereas in the previous five years it had fallen by 16 per cent.

20. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of recently-retired pensioners he estimates has sources of income in addition to the basic state retirement pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that in 1986, 70 per cent. of recently retired pensioners had an occupational pension and 85 per cent. had income from savings.

Computers

18. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the improvement in the level of service offered by his Department as a result of its computerisation programme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Computerisation has improved accuracy of payments and the speed of response to benefit inquiries. It has speeded up the availability of renewed order books. Letters to claimants are clearer and more complete. In addition, computerisation has enabled the relocation of benefit processing from London to areas where it is easier to recruit and retain good staff and this is already showing improvements in all aspects of service.

Carers' Premium

19. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will benefit from the new carers' premium to be introduced into income support.

Mr. Scott: We expect the new £10 premium, being introduced next October, to help 10,000 carers through income support, and a further 20,000 carers through housing benefit or community charge benefit.

Disabled People

21. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what proportion spending on the disabled has increased since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people increased by 90 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Independent Living Fund

22. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average weekly award paid through the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: As at 14 December 1989, the average weekly award paid to those receiving regular payments was £61·35.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if owner-occupiers and tenants supported by the independent living fund whose income above income support levels is required to supplement independent living fund contributions are entitled to rate rebates;

(2) whether adults, all of whose income above income support levels is required by the independent living fund to offset financial help from the independent living fund, will be entitled to community charge rebates.

Mr. Scott: People with incomes at or below income support levels are entitled to the full value of an award from the independent living fund. For people with incomes above income support, the ILF has to determine the amount to be offset against the ILF award. In making this calculation the fund makes allowance for the amount of rent, rates or community charge that the applicant has to pay after any housing or community charge benefit.

Any resulting payments received from the independent living fund are totally disregarded in the calculation of the income-related benefits. Entitlement to housing or community charge benefit is, therefore, calculated in the normal way and depends on the claimant's circumstances (age, family status, disability, number of children), the level of outgoings such as rent and rates or community charge, and the amount of income that is not disregarded.

Social Fund

23. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to alter the existing structure and increase the resources provided for the social fund; and what steps he is taking to ensure that decisions made in regard to grants were equitable in one area of the country against another.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend recently announced that we have made available an additional £3 million for local offices facing the heaviest pressures on their budgets.

We have no plans to alter the existing structure of the social fund. Its discretionary nature enables social fund officers to look at each application on its merits. This means that decisions on similar cases will, quite properly, differ. We are, however, taking action, for example, by regional monitoring of decisions and by regular seminars for social fund officers, to ensure the highest possible standard of decision-making across the whole country.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the 100 social security offices which are to have their social fund allocations increased as a result of particular pressures, referred to in his written answer of 19 December to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart).

Mr. Scott: Details of the 96 local offices that have received increased social fund allocations for 1989-90 are in the Library.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give consideration to amending directions 10 and 28 of his social fund directions to allow claims for the cost of redecoration in cases where applicants within the social fund manual, paragraphs 6380 and 6505, may only be decorating one room, and the cost of this may be below £30.

Mr. Scott: No. The main purpose of the social fund is to provide for expenses that are difficult to meet out of normal income. We believe that it is reasonable to expect people to budget for small expenses from their regular weekly income without help from the social fund. However, a social fund crisis loan may be considered for an amount below £30 if the applicant has no other resources and there is a serious risk to the health or safety of the applicant or a member of his or her family.

Housing Benefit (Transitional Payments)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for housing benefit transitional payments have been generated by the London borough of Ealing.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There have been 3,170 applications from people living in the London borough of Ealing.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received concerning the £5 per week increase for Department assisted residents and patients in private nursing homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have received a number of representations about our proposals for next year's uprating. Subject to parliamentary approval, the overwhelming majority of people in nursing homes receiving income support in April 1990 will be entitled to up to an additional £10 for help with fees. The limit for the mentally ill is increasing by £5, meaning an increase of £15 in two years.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, by year, for the past 10 years, the increases in allowance per week for *(a)* patients in residential private nursing homes and *(b)* residents in retirement homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The available information is set out in the tables.

National supplementary benefit income support limits, nursing and residential care homes and additions for personal expenses

	April 1985	*November 1985*	*July 1986*	*April 1987*	*April 1988*	*April 1989*	[1] *April 1990*
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Nursing homes							
Elderly and others	138·60	170	170	175	185	190	200
Mentally ill	148·60	180	180	180	185	195	200
Drug/Alcohol dependent	148·60	180	180	180	185	190	200
Mentally handicapped	168·60	200	200	200	200	205	215
Physically disabled under pension age	198·60	230	230	230	230	235	245
Terminally ill	198·60	230	230	230	230	235	245
Residential care homes							
Elderly	110	120	125	130	130	140	150
Very dependent or blind elderly	—	—	140	145	155	155	165
Mentally ill	120	130	130	130	130	140	150
Drug/Alcohol dependent	120	130	130	130	130	140	150
Mentally Handicapped	140	150	150	150	160	165	175
Physically disabled under pension age	170	180	180	190	190	200	210
Others	110	120	125	130	130	140	150
Greater London extension	—	—	17·50	17·50	17·50	23·00	23·00
Addition for personal expenses	8·50	8·95	9·05	9·25	9·55	10·05	10·55

[1] Proposed.

Notes:
1. Prior to April 1985 each social security office set two maximum amounts that could be paid in respect of fees in homes, one for residential care homes and one for nursing homes.
2. Claimants in addition to the appropriate limit receive an amount payable for personal expenses.
3. Present limits can be increased by up to £23 in London.

Income Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the final edition of the low income statistics calculated on the old basis covering 1983, 1985 and 1987.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The final edition of the low income statistics calculated on a family unit basis was published in May 1988. This covered 1981, 1983 and 1985. We have no plans to publish any further low income statistics on this basis.

Disablement Benefits

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the estimated cost of uprating social security benefits for disabled people in the United Kingdom; and what proportion of the social security budget the uprating in benefits for the disabled will take up.

Mr. Scott: The estimated cost of the April 1990 uprating of benefits for the long-term sick and disabled in Great Britain is £599 million in 1990-91. This represents 1·1 per cent. of total planned expenditure.

Information about costs of benefit in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his review of disability benefits is examining methods within the state system to provide payments to disabled people to enable them to employ their own care attendants.

Mr. Scott: Existing benefits—notably attendance allowance and the disability premiums—make some provision to enable disabled people to pay for care. We are reviewing those benefits, but in the context of the Government's aim in the White Paper "Caring for people" (Cmd 849) to establish the right framework for the delivery of good quality local services for community care.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many organisations and individuals have sent their comments on the report by the Occupational Pensions Board Protecting Pensions to his Department; if he will name them; and if he will make copies of the responses available in the Library.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: One hundred and forty two representations were made to the Department during the consultation period last year. Many of these were made in confidence. It is for those who made comments to make them publicly available if they wish to do so.

Family Incomes

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give, in tabulated form, the net income after housing costs of a divorcee with a son aged six years, receiving maintenance of £20 per week, housing benefit of £271 per calendar month and paying private rent of £385 per calendar month, and earning *(a)* nothing, *(b)* £15 per week part time, *(c)* £30 per week part time, *(d)* £50 per week part time, *(e)* £75 per week part time, *(f)* £75 per week full time, *(g)* £100 per week full time, and *(h)* £150 per week full time.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* The information is set out in the table.

Net income after housing costs at various levels of net earnings

Net Earnings (per week)	[1] *Net Income After Housing Costs (£pw)*
a. Not working	57·76
b. £15 part-time	72·76
c. £30 part-time	72·76
d. £50 part-time	75·40
e. £75 part-time	78·81
f. £75 full-time	81·63
g. £100 full-time	83·60
h. £150 full-time	94·37

[1] Net income after housing costs is based on an eligible rent for housing benefit purposes of £60pw and rates of £9·93pw.
Note:—The assumptions and methods are those used in the tax benefit model table, copies of which are available in the Library.

Computerisation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the timetable for extension of computerisation began on 23 October and name the offices concerned; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the pilot exercise report.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* The timetable for extension of computerisation from October 1989 is a lengthy document and therefore I have placed a copy in the Library rather than publishing it in the *Official Report*. I have also placed a copy of the pilot exercise report in the Library.

Child Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people who have and will become dependent on *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit as a result of the decisions not to uprate child benefit fully in line with inflation in each of the appropriate years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 15 December 1989]:* It is impossible to give any meaningful estimate to the number of people who have or will become dependent on income-related benefits as a direct consequence of not uprating child benefit in April 1988, 1989 and 1990 because the effects cannot be viewed in isolation. It is important to remember that eligible populations and their constituents for all the income-related benefits change constantly as family incomes and circumstances change. Gross earnings have risen, and our policies to reduce tax and national insurance contributions have succeeded in enabling

families with children to keep more of their earnings. In addition, we have channelled extra help to families with children through the income-related benefits.

DEFENCE

WE-177 Bomb

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Western Isles, of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *821*, what other contractors, apart from British Aerospace, are involved in the assessment of options for the replacement of the WE-177 free fall bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: A contract has also been placed with Hunting Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Western Isles, of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *821*, what information he has as to when the current assessment studies of the options for the replacement of the WE-177 free fall bomb, will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is expected that our studies will be completed later this year.

Atomic Energy

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any information on the implementation of the 1958 Anglo-American mutual defence agreement on atomic energy matters has been withheld under sections 3(4) or 5(1) of the Public Records Act 1958; and if he will make a statement on his current policy of withholding archive material.

Mr. Alan Clark: Atomic records are retained in the Department under section 3(4) of the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967 with the approval of the Lord Chancellor. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to discuss records that are so withheld from public release.

General Dynamics

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answers on 14 December, *Official Report*, columns *821-23*, what future purchases from General Dynamics have been discussed with that company as part of the negotiated memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assurances have been given to General Dynamics relating to replacement battle tanks for the British Army;

(2) what deadlines have been given to each company asked to submit proposals for replacement battle tanks for the British Army.

Mr. Alan Clark: As I told the hon. Member in my answer of 14 December 1989 (*Official Report*, Vol. 163, col. *822*), the details of the invitations to submit proposals are commercial in confidence. No assurances have been given to General Dynamics relating to replacement battle tanks for the British Army other than that its proposals will be considered. It remains our aim to make a decision by the end of 1990.

Arms

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the brokerage fees accruing from the Ministry of Defence's management of the Al Hamamah Saudi arms deal to the end of December.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Trident

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the latest estimated cost of Trident.

Mr. Alan Clark: The current estimate for Trident is £9089 million at 1988-89 prices and an exchange rate of £1 = $1·76. It is intended to announce a revised estimate shortly.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British nuclear test veterans have written to the Government asking for compensation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has received about 120 claims from individuals seeking compensation for damage to health allegedly due to their participation in the United Kingdom's nuclear weapon test programme. In addition, a number of representations have been made by test veterans' organisations concerning compensation for their members.

Berlin Saddle Club

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many people in Berlin take advantage of the facilities provided for the Saddle Club; what proportion are *(a)* officers and officers' families, *(b)* other ranks and other ranks' families and *(c)* civilians;

(2) what charges are made for the use of the Berlin Saddle Club facilities;

(3) what is the cost to public funds, including military personnel of running the Berlin Saddle Club.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend Lord Arran will write to my hon. Friend.

Residences

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many residences are currently owned by his Department in London; who occupies them and on what conditions; and how many are currently empty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence owns 19 properties classed as official service residences within the Greater London area. They are normally occupied by entitled senior service officers filling specific posts; those officers are required to pay the appropriate accommodation charge. Two are currently vacant pending the completion of maintenance work.

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any military assistance or co-operation has been given or offered to the United States authorities in respect of the invasion of Panama.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why British troops were present when the United States of America invaded Panama; how many were there; from what branch of the armed services they came; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Apart from the resident defence attache and his staff at the British embassy, no British military personnel were in Panama at the time.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Parliamentary Papers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is *(a)* the annual cost and *(b)* the nominal average cost per Member per week of the production of (i) the Order Paper plus blues, (ii) the daily Official Report and (iii) the Vote bundle.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The information requested is as follows:

	£
(a) Annual cost of production of:	
(i) Order Paper plus blues	2,727,439
(ii) The Daily Official Report	2,745,393
(iii) The Vote Bundle	4,714,676
(b) The nominal average cost per Member, per week of the production of:	
(i) The Order Paper plus blues	19·94
(ii) The Daily Official Report	17·01
(iii) The Vote Bundle	34·47

Notes:

1. Production costs relate to the 1988-89 parliamentary Session.
2. Publishing and distribution overheads are excluded (they are not production costs).
3. Blues' includes Notices of Questions and Notices of Motions.
4. Assumes one copy of each publication daily per Member.

Secretarial Allowances

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members employ from their secretarial allowance *(a)* none, *(b)* one, *(c)* two, *(d)* three, *(e)* four, *(f)* five and *(g)* six or more employees.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As at 31 December 1989, the number of staff directly employed by Members and paid by the Fees Office out of the office costs allowance are as follows:

	Number of staff employed	*Number of employing Members*
(a)	—	24
(b)	193	193
(c)	538	269
(d)	372	124
(e)	104	26
(f)	40	8
(g)	26	4
Totals	1,273	648

Notes:

1. The numbers of staff shown relates to persons directly employed by Members. They do not include persons who are fee earning, agency workers, or staff provided under an arrangement with a firm or business organisation.
2. A total of 648 Members are shown—this reflects the position as at 31 December 1989 (ie excluding the late Mr. J. Heddle and Mr. G. Adams who has not taken his seat).

Members' Employees

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Lord President of the Council what are the latest figures for the numbers of employees of hon. Members paid via the Fees Office, who are covered by contracts of employment; and whether he intends to take steps to increase the numbers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As at 31 December 1989, 1,273 staff employees of Members were paid via the Fees Office. Copies of the main terms and conditions of employment in respect of 781 staff have been furnished to the Fees Office at that date, leaving 492 staff—some of whom have been recently appointed—outstanding. The Fees Office continues to provide advice and guidance to individual Members seeking clarification on specific points of contractual detail, and I am satisfied that all reasonable steps are being taken to encourage adherence to the terms of the governing resolution.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ivory Poaching

32. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being offered to African countries willing to destroy all ivory stocks seized from poachers.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not offer assistance to African countries in response to their willingness to destroy ivory stocks seized from poachers, but we are committed to projects specifically to assist wildlife management and to help to deter and eliminate poaching.

Hungary

33. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on aid to Hungary.

Mrs. Chalker: Planning for the programme of £25 million over five years previously announced is under way. Our embassy in Budapest has been inviting appropriate contacts to submit ideas for possible financing from the fund. The programme commences substantively in April.

Pakistan

34. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review United Kingdom aid to Pakistan.

Mrs. Chalker: When I visited Pakistan last month, I was able to review our aid programme with its Prime Minister and her Ministers. I signed new aid agreements worth £35 million, on behalf of ODA and CDC, for the Karachi water and sanitation project and the Sukkur barrage project.

Bangladesh

35. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will have discussions with the Government of Bangladesh on development issues.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes. The next meeting in our annual sequence of bilateral aid talks will be held in London later this month. I am also planning to pay my first visit to Bangladesh in February.

Rain Forests

36. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the further implementation of the agreement on rain forests negotiated by the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) with the Brazilian Government.

Mrs. Chalker: British experts visited Brazil on several occasions between August and December and identified a number of well-defined possibilities for collaborative projects in tropical rain forests and urban environment. Detailed proposals are now being prepared by the Brazilian authorities for our consideration. I wrote to the hon. Member on 3 November and again on 20 December giving details of progress on the more advanced projects.

Fiji

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the levels of grant aid in pounds sterling given to Fiji for each year since 1980 and for each month during 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

United Kingdom grants to Fiji 1980-1988 (£ Thousand)

Year	Total grant aid	Financial aid	Technical co-operation
1980	2,996	20	2,976
1981	2,649	135	2,514
1982	2,358	—	2,358
1983	2,752	706	2,047
1984	2,097	291	1,805
1985	2,254	395	1,859
1986	1,975	16	1,959
1987	1,953	70	1,883
1988	1,208	39	1,168

Provisional figures for 1989, not completely comparable with the above are £1,384,000, of which £32,000 was grant financial aid and £1,352,000 was technical co-operation.

All these figures exclude expenditure by the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table on the same general basis as that provided in his written reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *728-30*, on the cost to the Exchequer of mortgage interest relief for higher-rate taxpayers in a full year at the current basic rate of mortgage interest; and if he will add a forecast for 1990-91 on the same basis, allowing for separate taxation of husbands and wives.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates of excess over basic rate relief on mortgage interest in 1989-90, based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes, are given in the table. Estimates for 1990-91 are not available.

Beneficiaries[1] of higher rate relief on mortgage interest by range of total income: 1989-90

Range of total income (£)	Number of tax units (Thousand)	Gross amount of interest qualifying for relief (£ million)	Cost of excess over basic rate relief (£ million)	Average basic rate relief (£)	Average excess over basic rate relief (£)	Number of non-aged tax units (Thousand)
Singles						
20,001-25,000	20	55	[2]—	760	50	20
25,001-30,000	80	265	25	830	340	80
30,001-40,000	60	215	30	910	550	55
40,001-50,000	25	100	15	900	540	25
Over 50,000	25	90	15	960	580	20
Total	210	725	90	870	420	200
One-earner couples						
20,001-25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
25,001-30,000	105	320	25	760	210	105
30,001-40,000	110	355	50	800	480	110
40,001-50,000	50	155	25	790	470	45
Over 50,000	55	180	25	820	490	50
Total	320	1,010	125	790	390	310
Two-earner couples						
20,001-25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
25,001-30,000	80	240	10	760	120	80
30,001-40,000	325	1,015	105	780	320	325
40,001-50,000	110	345	45	800	430	110
Over 50,000	130	425	65	830	490	130
Total	645	2,020	225	790	350	645
All						
20,001-25,000	20	55	[2]—	760	50	20

Range of total income (£)	Number of tax units (Thousand)	Gross amount of interest qualifying for relief (£ million)	Cost of excess over basic rate relief (£ million)	Average basic rate relief (£)	Average excess over basic rate relief (£)	Number of non-aged tax units (Thousand)
25,001-30,000	265	825	60	780	220	265
30,001-40,000	495	1,585	190	800	380	490
40,001-50,000	185	600	85	810	460	180
Over 50,000	210	695	105	840	500	200
Total	1,175	3,760	440	800	370	1,155

[1] Includes about 250,000 tax units who are kept out of higher rate tax by this relief.
[2] Less than £2·5 million.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing by range of income the numbers of single persons and married couples *(a)* with and *(b)* without wife's earned income below and above age 65 years in receipt of mortgage interest relief and the average relief per mortgagee in each case in a full year at the current basic rate of mortgage interest; and if he will add a forecast for 1990, allowing for separate taxation of husbands and wives.

Mr. Lilley: Provisional estimates for 1989-90 are given in the table. They are based on projections of the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes. Estimates for 1990-91 are not available.

Single people and married couples receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1989-90

Range of total income	Non-aged mortgagors		Aged mortgagors	
	Number with mortgage interest relief Thousands	Average tax cost of relief per mortgagor £	Number with mortgage interest relief Thousands	Average tax cost of relief per mortgagor £
Singles				
Up to £5,000	240	440	20	280
£5,001 to £10,000	770	610	20	350
£10,001 to £15,000	650	740	10	570
£15,001 to £20,000	400	860	[1]—	530
£20,001 to £30,000	290	940	[1]—	410
Over £30,000	110	1,490	[1]—	1,050
Total	2,450	750	60	410
Married couples with wife earning				
Up to £5,000	40	500	10	200
£5,001 to £10,000	210	550	10	500
£10,001 to £15,000	700	620	10	450
£15,001 to £20,000	980	700	10	420
£20,001 to £30,000	1,070	800	[1]—	260
Over £30,000	640	1,240	10	800
Total	3,660	800	50	480
Married couples with wife not earning				
Up to £5,000	120	470	20	390
£5,001 to £10,000	590	610	40	250
£10,001 to £15,000	940	650	10	160
£15,001 to £20,000	620	760	10	220
£20,001 to £30,000	490	820	10	320
Over £30,000	210	1,460	10	970
Total	2,970	740	90	330

[1] Less than 5,000.
Figures may not add due to rounding.

Ministers (Expenses)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what allowance is made against tax in respect of food and travel expenses incurred by Ministers of the Crown whilst employed on official duties.

Mr. Lilley: Ministers of the Crown, like all officeholders and employees, are entitled to tax relief under the schedule E expenses rules for those travel and subsistence costs that are necessarily incurred travelling in the performance of their duties.

Water (VAT)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Government intend to impose a value added tax on water; and to which description of consumer it will apply.

Mr. Ryder: In order to comply with a judgment of the European Court, the provisions of section 19 of the Finance Act 1989 extend the standard rate of VAT to supplies of water used in connection with certain industrial activities with effect from 1 July 1990. Supplies to domestic consumers will remain zero-rated.

Inflation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect on the rate of inflation since 1986 of the increase in the price of assets, including houses; what was the increase in *(a)* overhead costs of employers and employees respectively and *(b)* wage increases granted to employees; and if he will provide regional as well as national figures.

Mr. Ryder: Increases in mortgage interest payments, including the lagged effect of house prices, contributed two percentage points to the annual rate of RPI inflation in the year to November, compared with half a percentage point in the year to January 1987. There are no official figures available for the overhead costs of employers or employees. Figures for average earnings are published in the *Employment Gazette* and *New Earnings Survey*, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation in the United Kingdom and in the Group of Five leading industrial nations.

Mr. Ryder: More comparable inflation rates for members of the five leading industrial countries are given in the following table:

More comparable consumer price inflation rates

	Latest figures[1]
United Kingdom[2]	6·1
United States of America	4·4
Japan	2·6
Germany	3·4
France	3·7

[1] Figures for the United Kingdom and France are for November, the United States of America and Germany are for October and for Japan, September.
[2] The United Kingdom figure is for RPI excluding mortgage interest payments; figures for other countries exclude estimates of owner occupiers' housing costs as appropriate.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is taking to curb inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The Government's tight monetary and fiscal policies are working. Demand is slowing and lower inflation will follow.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect on the rate of wage and price inflation since 1986 of the increase since 1987 in the real exchange rate against the deutschmark measured in terms of relative export prices regionally and nationally.

Mr. Ryder: The relationship between wage and price inflation and changes in the bilateral deutschmark-sterling real exchange rate cannot be separated from the effects of exchange-rate movements against third currencies and other influences on wage and price inflation in both countries.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in real terms after tax of a married couple with two children and no tax allowances, other than personal allowances, for each of the male employees itemised in the written reply of 13 December from the Department of Employment to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, columns 658-59, showing the increase in gross real earnings between April 1979 and April 1989.

Mr. Lilley: Information is given in the table.

Increases[1] in real earnings[2] after income tax[3] and child benefit of a married man with two children[4], between April 1979 and April 1989

Point on Earnings Distribution	*Manufacturing*	*Percentage increase Non-manufacturing*
Manual Males		
Lowest decile	6	7
Lower quartile	11	11
Median	16	15
Higher quartile	20	19
Highest decile	25	21
Average earnings	17	16
Non-Manual Males		
Lowest decile	20	17
Lower quartile	26	26
Median	33	35
Higher quartile	41	42
Highest decile	47	52
Average earnings	39	41

[1] The increases shown do not relate to the same individuals at the different dates.
[2] Earnings are those for full-time males on adult rates in Great Britain.
[3] For April 1979, income tax is based on the tax regime in the Finance Act 1979.
[4] Two children, both aged under 11.
Source: New Earnings Survey data and RPI (all items).

Child Care

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, South of 3 November, *Official Report*, column 361, he will examine the disparity in respect of parental payment for day child care facilities.

Mr. Lilley: I am not aware of such a disparity.

Tax Subsidies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider introducing tax subsidies on British Rail season tickets as a means of reducing road congestion and environmental pollution.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Interest Rates

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Bank base rates are 15 per cent.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new intitiatives he plans to reduce the level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: The Government will not reduce interest rates until that can be safely done without risk to inflation.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure he has for the percentage that taxation represents of the gross domestic product; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Ryder: The information is given below.

Taxes as percentage of GDP[1]

	per cent.
1979	28·3
1988	30·4

[1] Taxes cover taxes on income, expenditure (including local authority rates) and capital. GDP is GDP(A) at market prices.

Capital Inflows

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the value of short-term capital inflows into the United Kingdom in the first three quarters of 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information on transactions in the main categories of United Kingdom external assets and liabilities in the first three quarters of 1989 was published on 14 December in the quarterly balance of payments press notice, CSO(89)143, a copy of which is in the Library. It is not considered meaningful to distinguish short-term capital flows.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* up-to-date figures on the same basis as those provided to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) in the *Official Report*, 10 January 1989, columns *633-56*.

Mr. Lilley: Figures for 1978-79 to 1988-89 were placed in the Library of the House earlier this year (as noted in *Official Report* 13 April 1989, column *624*). Revised estimates for 1988-89, and estimates for 1989-90 were given in reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 1 December 1989 (*Official Report*, col. *464*). I regret that those estimates for 1988-89 for a married man with two children contained an error. The amended tables are below.

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings—1988-89

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	19·51	35·53	51·55	83·59	129·33	231·85	334·37	436·89	641·93	949·49	1,974·69
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	9·52	12·82	19·98	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·15	18·96	27·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·68	9·35	12·99	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	31·04	85·18	115·75	171·23	156·78	259·30	361·82	464·34	669·38	976·94	2,002·14
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	15·2	18·5	20·1	21·7	25·2	30·2	32·6	34·1	35·8	37·0	38·5
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·0	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·9	7·4	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·0	3·6	3·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	24·2	44·4	45·1	44·6	30·6	33·7	35·3	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·1
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	12·35	28·37	44·39	76·43	117·87	220·39	322·91	425·43	630·47	938·03	1,963·23
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	8·73	12·32	20·12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·82	20·63	28·89	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·52	8·73	11·37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·88	78·74	109·14	164·26	145·32	247·84	350·36	452·88	657·92	965·48	1,990·68
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	9·6	14·8	17·3	19·9	23·0	28·7	31·5	33·2	35·1	36·6	38·3
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	4·5	4·8	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·8	8·1	7·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·4	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	18·6	41·0	42·6	42·7	28·3	32·2	34·2	35·3	36·7	37·7	38·8
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	0	15·84	31·86	63·9	97·83	173·19	260·33	361·18	566·22	873·78	1,898·98
NICS	7·95	15·76	21·02	34·60	45·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90
VAT	—	9·87	13·82	21·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·54	22·99	29·65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	9·29	9·92	11·14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·95	70·30	99·61	160·71	143·73	228·09	315·23	416·08	621·12	928·68	1,953·88

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·0	8·2	12·4	16·6	19·1	22·5	25·4	28·2	31·6	34·1	37·0
NICS	6·2	8·2	8·2	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	4·3	3·1	2·1	1·1
VAT	—	5·1	5·4	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	10·2	9·0	7·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·8	3·9	2·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	6·2	36·5	38·9	41·8	28·0	29·7	30·7	32·5	34·6	36·2	38·1
Married, 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	−2·15	13·87	29·89	61·93	103·37	205·89	308·41	409·93	615·97	923·53	1,948·73
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	8·69	12·76	21·59	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·67	19·71	26·33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·42	8·85	11·96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·38	63·95	94·28	149·26	130·82	233·34	335·86	437·38	643·42	950·98	1,976·18
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	−1·7	7·2	11·7	16·1	20·2	26·8	30·1	32·0	34·3	36·0	38·0
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	4·5	5·0	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·7	7·7	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·5	3·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·3	33·3	36·9	38·7	25·5	30·3	32·8	34·1	35·9	37·1	38·6

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings—1989-90

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	21·61	39·11	56·61	91·61	142·87	254·87	366·87	478·87	702·87	1,038·87	2,158·87
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	10·59	14·22	22·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·96	19·96	28·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	8·42	10·25	14·25							
Total	32·71	91·48	124·74	184·48	170·61	282·61	394·61	506·61	730·61	1,066·61	2,186·61
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income tax	20·10	36·38	52·66	85·22	132·90	237·09	341·27	445·46	653·83	966·39	2,008·25
NICS	10·33	16·19	22·05	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80
VAT	—	9·85	13·23	20·61	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	14·85	18·57	26·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·83	9·53	13·26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	30·43	85·10	116·04	171·61	158·71	262·89	367·08	471·27	679·64	992·20	2,034·06
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	15·4	18·6	20·2	21·8	25·5	30·3	32·8	34·2	35·9	37·1	38·6
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·1	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·6	7·1	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·0	3·7	3·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·4	43·6	44·6	43·9	30·5	33·6	35·2	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·0
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	13·97	31·47	48·97	83·97	130·63	242·63	354·63	466·63	690·63	1,026·63	2,146·63
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	9·73	13·69	22·33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·67	21·68	30·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	8·22	9·55	12·45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	25·07	84·49	117·59	176·91	158·37	270·37	382·37	494·37	718·37	1,054·37	2,174·37
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	13·00	29·27	45·55	78·11	121·52	225·70	329·89	434·07	642·45	955·00	1,996·87
NICS	10·33	16·19	22·05	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80
VAT	—	9·05	12·73	20·77	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·44	20·17	28·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Domestic rates	—	7·65	8·88	11·58	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·32	78·60	109·39	164·57	147·32	251·51	355·69	459·88	668·25	980·81	2,022·67
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	10·0	15·0	17·5	20·0	23·3	28·9	31·7	33·3	35·2	36·7	38·3
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	4·6	4·9	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·4	7·7	7·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·4	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	17·9	40·2	42·0	42·1	28·3	32·2	34·1	35·3	36·7	37·7	38·8
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0·58	18·08	35·58	70·58	109·21	191·08	286·28	397·73	621·73	957·73	2,077·73
NICS	9·59	15·89	22·19	34·79	46·40	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49
VAT	—	10·96	15·25	23·83	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·40	24·00	31·19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	10·10	10·78	12·15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	10·17	75·43	107·80	172·54	155·61	246·57	341·77	453·22	677·22	1,013·22	2,133·22
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income tax	0·54	16·82	33·10	65·66	101·59	177·75	266·31	369·98	578·35	890·91	1,932·77
NICS	8·92	14·78	20·64	32·36	43·16	51·62	51·62	51·62	51·62	51·62	51·62
VAT	—	10·20	14·19	22·17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·98	22·33	29·01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	9·40	10·03	11·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·46	70·17	100·28	160·50	144·75	229·37	317·93	421·60	629·97	942·53	1,984·39
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·4	8·6	12·7	16·8	19·5	22·7	25·6	28·4	31·7	34·2	37·1
NICS	6·9	7·6	7·9	8·3	8·3	6·6	5·0	4·0	2·8	2·0	1·0
VAT	—	5·2	5·4	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·7	8·6	7·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·8	3·9	2·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·3	35·9	38·5	41·1	27·8	29·4	30·5	32·4	34·6	36·2	38·1
Married, 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	−0·53	16·97	34·47	69·47	116·13	228·13	340·13	452·13	676·13	1,012·13	2,132·13
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	9·60	14·08	23·87	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·36	20·58	27·64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	8·08	9·65	13·07	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	10·57	69·41	102·48	161·79	143·87	255·87	367·87	479·87	703·87	1,039·87	2,159·87
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income tax	−0·49	15·79	32·07	64·62	108·03	212·21	316·40	420·59	628·96	941·52	1,983·38
NICS	10·33	16·19	22·05	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80
VAT	—	8·93	13·10	22·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·15	19·14	25·71	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·52	8·98	12·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·83	64·57	95·33	150·50	133·83	238·02	342·20	446·39	654·76	967·32	2,009·18
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	−0·4	8·1	12·3	16·5	20·7	27·2	30·4	32·3	34·5	36·1	38·1
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	4·6	5·0	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·4	6·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·8	3·4	3·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·6	33·1	36·6	38·5	25·7	30·5	32·8	34·3	35·9	37·1	38·6

Notes to tables

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

2. The two earner married couple is assumed to have combined earnings equal to the various multiples of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that these earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

3. For the married couple with two children, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax.

4. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.

These were £256·30 per week in 1988-89, and estimated to be £280·00 per week in 1989-90, using the Government Actuary Department's assumption of 9¼ per cent. growth over 1988-89 as published in the 1989 Autumn Statement.

5. The estimates of indirect taxation are derived from the 1985 family expenditue survey, and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and composition, and estimated payments of VAT, other indirect taxes and rates are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years.

6. 1989-90 figures are converted into 1988-89 prices by assuming that the RPI is 7½ per cent. higher in 1989-90 than the previous financial year. This is consistent with the forecasts published in the 1989 Autumn Statement.

Public Spending

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the public spending planning total for 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The public expenditure planning total for 1990-91 has been set at £179 billion, as set out in the Autumn Statement.

Trade Deficit

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the trade deficit for 1990.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to table 2·3 of the Autumn Statement.

Company Cars

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he plans to change the nature of company car taxation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

EEC Inflation

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average rate of inflation for the European Economic Community.

Mr. Ryder: The average EC inflation rate is published each month by the OECD in "Main Economic Indicators".

Industrial Investment

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further measures he plans to introduce to stimulate industrial investment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Investment in all sectors of the economy has been stimulated by confidence in the long-term prospects for the economy. Manufacturing investment is at a record level and the CSO's latest survey of manufacturers' investment intentions projects further growth over the next two years.

Members' Salaries

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to allow hon. Members to receive their House of Commons salary in European currency units.

Mr. Ryder: Members' salaries are a matter for the House and are paid in accordance with the resolution of 21 July 1987. The resolution would need to be amended if Members' salaries were to be denominated in European currency units.

PSBR

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the net public sector borrowing requirement or debt repayment for 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest forecast is for a net public sector debt repayment of £12½ billion in 1989-90, as set out in the Autumn Statement.

Cigarettes

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the United Kingdom cigarette market was accounted for by cheap foreign imports in the years 1980 to 1989 inclusive; and if he will list the Budget tax increases on cigarettes for each of those years.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* Figures on cheap foreign imports are not available. The table shows the share of imports in home consumption of cigarettes in the years 1980-89 and the rates of specific excise duty in place after the Budget. An ad valorem duty of 21 per cent. of the listed retail selling price applies to all cigarettes.

Cigarettes

	Share of consumption Per cent.	*Excise Duty Rates Specific Duty (£ per 1,000 cigarettes)*
1980	1·7	13·42
1981	1·4	18·04
1982	1·7	20·68
1983	1·9	21·67
1984	6·4	24·97
1985	11·2	26·95
1986	12·4	30·61
1987	11·6	30·61
1988	9·6	31·74
1989	7·4	31·74

[1] January to October average

Unearned Income

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate how many married women with children have unearned income.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* It is estimated that approximately 4 million married women with children have some income from investment.

Independent Taxation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide the latest estimate of the cost of bringing in independent taxation in 1990-91 next April.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for

Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 18 December, *Official Report*, col *26*, for the reduction in income tax liabilities in 1990-91 due to the introduction of independent taxation. The corresponding reduction in income tax receipts in 1990-91 is £500 million.

The estimated effect on the receipts of capital gains tax in 1990-91 is unchanged from the tentative figure of £50 million published in the 1988 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Fixed Profit Car Scheme

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *564*, about the fixed profit car scheme, if he will give details of the mileage bands and car engine sizes whereby the taxable amount is fixed.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* Under the fixed profit car scheme arrangements the car engine sizes taken into account are those up to 1000cc, 1001 to 1500cc and over 1500cc. The number and width of the mileage bands vary according to the mileage allowances reimbursed under each particular employer's mileage allowance scheme. For every band a "fixed profit" is calculated and employees are taxed on the fixed profit for the band into which the mileage driven on business falls.

Whisky

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much is the United Kingdom excise duty on a one litre bottle of whisky containing 40 per cent. alcohol imported from *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* Japan.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* A total of 630·8 pence in both cases.

Architectural Staff

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what architectural and architectural-related staff he has in the Treasury to make technical assessments of decisions by other Departments to use agents other than the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* No staff in such specialisms are currently employed in the Treasury. Where Departments are free to use agents other than PSA for building and maintenance work, it is for them to decide on value for money grounds, and after the usual tendering and contract procedures have been observed, whether such agents, or PSA, should be employed.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 9 January 1990

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to offer for full safeguards to the International Atomic Energy Agency and Euratom Safeguards Authorities all plutonium created in British Nuclear Fuels' Calder Hall and Chapelcross reactors, arising from periods when the reactors were operating on civil production cycles.

Mr. Baldry: No. These are non-safeguarded facilities.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what amount of plutonium created in civil reactors in the United Kingdom is currently allocated to the ownership of the European Community under article 86 of the Euratom treaty; and what amount of civil plutonium will be allocated to the European Community with the creation of Nuclear Electric.

Mr. Baldry: In accordance with article 86 of the Euratom treaty, all special fissile materials produced in civil reactors in the United Kingdom are the property of the Community. However, under article 87, member states or operators retain unlimited right of use and consumption. The position will not change with the creation of Nuclear Electric.

Coal (Properties)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will supply a full list of the land and properties by coal field area currently under the ownership of British Coal.

Mr. Baldry: My Department does not have this information. This is a matter for the British Coal corporation.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide a full list of land and properties currently owned by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

Mr. Baldry: Details of land and property owned are a matter for the organisation's directors.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide a full list of all producing coal mines in the United Kingdom and the numbers of persons employed in each case.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the British Coal corporation.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the nuclear reactors in Britain *(a)* with and *(b)* without secondary containment.

Mr. Wakeham: All nuclear reactors in the United Kingdom are provided with defence in depth against the release of radioactivity by means of a series of barriers which differ according to the design characteristics of the particular reactor type. The term "secondary containment" usually refers to an outer, sealed, low-leakage building which houses the reactor core and primary coolant circuits. The need for such containment depends on the operating characteristics of the reactor and the coolant activity levels. The steam-generating heavy water reactor at Winfrith, and the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay have "secondary containment" buildings, and these will also be provided for the pressurised water reactor under construction at Sizewell. The operational characteristics of Magnox, advanced gas-cooled reactors, and small research reactors are such that "secondary containment" buildings are not needed to ensure their safety.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what specialist equipment, including personal dosimeters, radial survey meters and decontamination meters are available for ambulance staff at Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool, respectively; and in each case what training staff have received;

(2) what studies have been made of the problems of evacuating all low-mobility groups in the event of a worst case atomic accident at *(a)* Sellafield, *(b)* Wylfa, *(c)* Trawsfynydd, *(d)* Oldbury, *(e)* Berkeley, *(f)* Hinkley Point, *(g)* Winfrith, *(h)* Dungeness, *(i)* Bradwell, *(j)* Sizewell and *(k)* Hartlepool; and giving for each study the geographical area covered;

(3) what training has been given to ambulance staff to deal with a major accident at each of the nuclear installations at Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool;

(4) whether ambulance staff have participated in the exercise of the local emergency plans at Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool; and in each case which units participated.

Mr. Wakeham: Health authorities, which manage the ambulance service locally, are required by circulars HC(85)24 and HC(89)8 in England and WHC(85)34 in Wales, to ensure that all ambulance staff are made aware of the contingency plans at civil nuclear sites and how they fit in with health authorities' major accident plans, and that they receive appropriate precautionary training.

National Health Service ambulance services have participated in exercises at Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool, and have been alerted by the police to their possible involvement during exercises at Sellafield and Winfrith. Site emergency plans provide that National Health Service ambulance service personnel should be under the direct supervision of qualified staff in all areas where they are required to enter contaminated areas, and that the necessary dosimeters and professional health physics assistance and decontamination equipment be provided to any such visiting service by site management.

The need to include the special requirements of low-mobility groups in the arrangements for evacuation of the public is recognised. Action at the scene by the various emergency services and local authorities would be co-ordinated by the police.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies his Department has made of evacuation procedures and other aspects of the Chernobyl disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Following the Chernobyl accident a Government working group was established to review nuclear emergency planning. This culminated in the Prime Minister's statement to Parliament on 18 December 1986 at columns 612-13. This was followed by a further statement by the Prime Minister on 12 December 1988 at column 391.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when the Central Electricity Generating Board last made a safety assessment of a nuclear reactor of a type akin to that at Chernobyl.

Mr. Wakeham: No such safety assessment has been made; the Central Electricity Generating Board has not sought a licence for a reactor with characteristics similar to that at Chernobyl.

Licences

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what regulations he plans to make under section 6(3) of the Electricity Act 1989 on how applications for licences to generate, transmit or supply electricity are to be made.

Mr. Wakeham: Draft regulations and application forms have now been prepared. My Department and the Scottish Office are seeking the views of the electricity industry, including independent generators and suppliers, on these drafts. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I intend that the regulations will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible, to give those concerned ample time to submit applications before the licensing regime provided for in section 6 of the Act comes into effect at the end of March 1990. At the same time, an order will be laid under section 5(1) of the Act as to the classes of person who will be exempt from the licensing requirement, taking into account the consultation which my Department has recently undertaken.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rhizomania

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures he intends to take to stop the spread of rhizomania in sugar beet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Until this year there had been only one outbreak of rhizomania in this country and we applied restrictions to the farm concerned to isolate the infection and prevent it from spreading. Immediate measures included destruction of the infected crop and restrictions on movements on and off the farm. Longer-term measures involve restrictions on the pattern of farming. This year there have been two further outbreaks and we are applying similar measures. We are currently considering the precise extent of the longer-term restrictions in consultation with the farmers concerned.

To prevent the introduction of rhizomania to this country we operate a range of statutory controls on imports. These include restrictions on imports of beet seeds and plants, a requirement that imported seed potatoes must come from rhizomania-free areas, a strict limitation on the amount of soil attached to imported vegetables and regulation of the disposal of waste soil following the commercial processing of the vegetables. We keep this range of measures under careful review, but I do not consider that any additional restrictions are justified at present.

Inshore Fishing

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to devolve central control of the inshore fishing industry of England and Wales to a regional fisheries management organisation which would co-ordinate the work of his Ministry's fisheries inspectorate and provide the contract and administrative body for the sea fisheries committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have no plans to create such a regional fisheries management body, but I am looking at alternative quota management measures.

Spongiform Encephalopathies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action the Government are taking on the Tyrrell committee report on research into spongiform encephalopathies.

Mr. Gummer: Dr. Tyrrell of the medical research council was asked by my predecessor and the Secretary of State for Health to chair a research consultative committee of scientific experts to advise on the research work in progress, and additional work required into the disease bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and to set out the priorities for further work. Copies of the Committee's interim report have been placed on the Library of the House. The report recommends a comprehensive programme of research on the epidemiology, transmissibility and diagnosis of BSE with the aim of extending scientific knowledge about this new disease so that animal and human health can continue to be protected and the disease eventually eradicated.

The Government have considered the report very carefully and accept the recommendations of the committee. A number of the projects are covered by the substantial programme of research that is already in progress, representing spending of some £1·3 million in the current financial year. Preparatory work is in hand on the other projects which the Tyrrell committee recommended as urgent and of high priority. This represents additional funding from my Department's votes of some £2·2 million in 1990-92 and 1991-91, and £1·7 million in 1992-93. The Secretary of State for Health is setting in hand the high priority research that is within his Department's responsibility and the Secretary of State for Education and Science is considering the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on what additional allocation

would be appropriate from the science budget to the agricultural and food research council in support of its proposed programme of research, including research into slow viruses.

The undertaking of such a large-scale programme of research into BSE demonstrates the Government's determination to deal with this disease.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Environmental Research

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on research sponsored by the research councils into environmental matters.

Mr. Jackson: All the research sponsored by the natural environment research council is concerned in some way with environmental matters. In addition all the other four research councils support work that is concerned with the environment. Details of research into environmental matters can be found in each of the research councils' most recent annual reports, copies of which have been deposited in the Library over the last two months.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* those local education authorities which have had their system of local management of schools approved by his Department and *(b)* those local education authorities whose schemes have been refused.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following local education authorities have had their schemes for the local management of schools formally approved for introduction in April 1990 or are being consulted about proposed modifications prior to approval:

Avon
Barking
Barnet
Barnsley
Bedfordshire
Birmingham
Bolton
Bromley
Buckinghamshire
Bury
Calderdale
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Lancashire
Lincolnshire
Liverpool
Merton
Newcastle

Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Oxfordshire

Richmond
Rochdale
Rotherham
Sandwell

Devon
Doncaster
Dudley
Durham

East Sussex

Essex
Gateshead
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Harrow
Havering

Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Kingston
Salford
Sheffield
Shropshire
Solihull
South Tyneside
Staffordshire
Stockport
Suffolk
Sunderland
Surrey
Sutton
Trafford
Wakefield
Warwickshire
Westminster
West Sussex
Wiltshire

We have indicated to two authorities—Leicestershire and Hereford and Worcester—that their schemes cannot be approved in their present form and that formal implementation will therefore be deferred until April 1991.

Scientific Research

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes any changes in the arrangements for funding scientific research projects.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department has today issued a consultative paper proposing changes in the method of supporting research council-funded projects in universities and other higher education institutions. Copies are being placed in the Library.

Under the current system of dual support, research sponsored by research councils in universities and other higher education institutions is funded partly from grants from the councils and partly by the institutions from their block funding. In recent years, the boundary within this system determining who pays for what has become blurred. As the ABRC has pointed out, the resulting confusion can have harmful effects—giving rise to unproductive arguments about funding responsibility, to some projects being inadequately resourced and so inefficient, and to an inadequate appreciation of the real costs of projects and ill-informed decisions on the deployment of resources.

The consultative paper proposes a new, clearer definition of the boundary. We propose that from the academic year 1991-92, universities and other institutions would continue to pay the salaries of academic staff contributing to research council projects and to provide premises free of charge. All other costs of these projects would be met by the research councils through their grants. The change in responsibility would be reflected in the amount of grant which the research councils and the institutions receive from central Government.

There would be a small decrease in the block funding provided to the institutions through the Universities Funding Council and, to a much smaller extent, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, and a small matching increase in funding of the research councils from the science budget. The Department will discuss with other Education Departments the potential implications for those higher education institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which are not funded by the Universities Funding Council or the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be producing new guidance for local education authorities on staffing for pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My Department is today issuing for consultation a draft circular containing guidance on staffing for pupils with special educational needs. The document covers both teaching and non-teaching staff in special schools and in ordinary schools. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Widows' Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to extend payment of Civil Service widows' pensions to the widows of post-retirement marriages with civil servants who retired before April 1978;

(2) what would be the cost of extending payment of Civil Service widows' pensions to the widows of post-retirement marriages with civil servants who retired before April 1978.

Mr. Ryder: I am afraid that I can hold out no hope of amendment of the Civil Service pension scheme to provide for the payment of pensions to the widows of post-retirement marriages whose husbands retired before 6 April 1978. It is rarely, if ever, possible to make retrospective improvements in pension arrangements and an exception in this particular case could not be justified. The data necessary for a reliable assessment to be made of the cost of an extension in widow's pension cover are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much value added tax was paid per annum by an average family in 1978-79; and what is the most recent estimate.

Mr. Ryder: A family consisting of a married man on average male earnings, his wife and two children would have paid approximately £130 in VAT in 1978-79 (some 2·7 per cent. of earnings) and will pay about £730 in 1989-90 (roughly 5 per cent. of earnings).

Privatisation Advisers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials are employed at the Treasury to advise him on estimates of privatisation proceeds.

Mr. Ryder: The Treasury's public enterprises group, responsible for privatisation and nationalised industry policy, employs 29 people. However, estimates of proceeds from individual sales are the responsibility of the Departments concerned.

Commercial Accounting and Auditing

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why normal commercial accountancy and auditing methods do not apply to the public sector.

Mr. Ryder: Normal commercial accountancy and auditing methods are employed or are being developed in the public sector where it is considered appropriate to use them, for example where Government Departments are engaged in commercial or quasi-commercial activities.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that the proposed European Community development bank for eastern Europe will provide technical advice on the creation of free markets as well as providing financial aid.

Mr. Ryder: The details of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development are yet to be decided. In general, the Government support the encouragement of free enterprise in eastern Europe and will be pressing for the bank to be set up so as best to promote that aim.

Flora and Fauna

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many seizures of endangered species of flora and fauna have been made at ports of entry by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in each of the past three years;

(2) how many seizures of endangered species of flora and fauna have been made at United Kingdom ports of entry by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 8 January 1980]:* The details sought are given in the following table. The figures show the number of live creatures, plants and articles derived from endangered species seized by Customs because their importation or exportation contravened the restrictions imposed by the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 or Council Regulation No. 3626/82.

Year to 31 March	*Live creatures*	*Plants*	*Articles*
1987	1,604	—	6,304
1988	2,284	500	3,000
1989	1,915	7,900	9,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Electricity Service

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list (i) the statutory requirements governing the publication of reports of the Northern Ireland electricity service, (ii) the dates on which such reports have been published in each year since nationalisation, either for existing or predecessor corporations, and (iii) indicate, if appropriate, when the report for 1988-89 will be published.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

1. Article 12 of the Electricity Supply (Northern Ireland) Order 1972.
2. Since the establishment of the Northern Ireland Electricity Service by the above Order in 1973 the Annual Reports have been published as follows:

Report for	*Published on*
Year ended 31 March	
1974	21 March 1975
1975	10 December 1975
1976	15 November 1976
1977	25 October 1977
1978	7 September 1978
1979	2 October 1979
1980	28 August 1980
1981	29 September 1981
1982	August 1982[1]
1983	8 July 1983
1984	23 July 1984
1985	22 July 1985
1986	22 July 1986
1987	6 July 1987
1988	5 July 1988

[1] Exact date not known.

3. The annual report for 1988-89 was published on 11 July 1989.

Traffic Flows

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many vehicles use Linenhall street, Limavady each day; and what is the maximum and minimum hourly flow of traffic;

(2) whether he has any estimate into the hourly vehicle capacity of Linenhall street, Limavady.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is estimated that 11,200 vehicles use Linenhall street, Limavady, over a 16-hour daily period with maximum and minimum hourly flows of 1,078 and 692 vehicles respectively. The street has an estimated hourly capacity of 1,500 vehicles.

Arts and Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expenditure was made by his Department on *(a)* the arts and *(b)* design in the last financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* In 1988-89 the Department of Education (NI) made direct grants of some £4·8 million to the Arts Council (NI) and other bodies in the arts field. Expenditure in support of the arts and of design, or design education, is not separately identifiable within the resources allocated to schools, colleges and universities.

Remand Prisoners

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were on remand in the prisons of Northern Ireland on 30 November 1989; what was the longest term of remand; and what were the comparable figures for the last three years.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* On 26 October 1989, the lastest date for which figures are available, there were 343 prisoners in remand custody in prisons in Northern Ireland. At that date the longest time spent in remand custody by an individual prisoner was 131 days.

Comparable figures for remand prisoners for the same day in 1986, 1987 and 1988 are 292, 313, 272 respectively. The details of longest time served for those years is not readily available and could not be produced except at disproportionate cost.

Short Bros

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if any Department for which he has responsibility retains any financial responsibility or liability for the formerly publicly owned companies of Short Bros.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The Department of Economic Development wholly owns four aircraft financing companies which were formerly subsidiaries of Short Brothers plc and is responsible for meeting their liabilities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chemical Weapons

91. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made through the chemical weapons convention in achieving a comprehensive and verifiable global ban on the production and use of chemical weapons.

92. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in regard to the international negotiations concerning chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: Useful progress has been made in Geneva on a number of the complex issues involved in the negotiations on a chemical weapons convention, but much work remains to be done particularly in the crucial area of verification.

High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of telegram 597, dated 16 December 1985, from the British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and if he will make a statement concerning the contents of the telegram.

Mr. Maude: No. The matter covered by the document in question is currently sub-judice.

Attorney-General, Hong Kong

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will order an independent inquiry into the performance since 1 January 1988 of the chambers of the Attorney-General of Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: No.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the performance since 1 January 1988 of the chambers of the Attorney-General of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I am satisfied with the performance of the Hong Kong Attorney-General's chambers since 1 January 1988.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what positions have been held in the chambers of the Attorney-General of Hong Kong by Mr. Warwick Reid; since when and on what grounds Mr. Reid has been suspended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Mr. Reid has held the positions of Crown counsel, senior Crown counsel, deputy principal Crown counsel, and principal Crown counsel. Except for a period of 10 months in the post of assistant to the Attorney-General, his career has been spent in the prosecutions division where, until recently, he held the post of deputy Crown prosecutor. Mr. Reid was suspended from duty on 30 October 1989 following his arrest by officers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for suspected offences contrary to the prevention of bribery ordinance.

Vietnam

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the Vietnamese authorities concerning the continued imprisonment of *(a)* Nguyen Nan Tuoi and *(b)* Nguyen Huu Guong; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has made to the Vietnamese authorities concerning the continued imprisonment of *(a)* Father Dominic Tran Ninh Thu; *(b)* Father Joseph Nguyen Cong Doan and *(c)* Pastor Ho Hieu Ha; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have raised the question of political prisoners with the Vietnamese authorities both with our partners in the European Community and bilaterally. The most recent EC demarche, concerning a number of detainees imprisoned for their political or religious beliefs, was made to the Vietnamese Government on 29 December. The Twelve have also raised at the United Nations continuing reports of abuses of human rights in Vietnam, and have called on Vietnam to release, without delay, those prisoners detained without a fair trial. We shall continue to seek appropriate opportunities to raise specific cases of human rights abuses, including those mentioned by the hon. Member.

Warsaw Pact

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials specifically designated to deal with trade relations there were at each embassy or consulate in each Warsaw pact country in April 1989; and how many he expects to be in post in April 1990.

Mr. Maude: As of April 1989 there were 46 staff specifically dealing with commercial and economic affairs in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe countries which are members of the Warsaw pact, in addition to the ambassadors and their deputies in each post who of course have commercial roles. The distribution was as follows:

	Number
USSR	13
Poland	7
Hungary	6
Czechoslovakia	6
GDR	5
Bulgaria	4
Romania	5

There are no plans at present to increase commercial staff in these countries. The situation in each is however kept under review, in consultation with the British Overseas Trade Board and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Economic Aid

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the level of direct economic aid which Her Majesty's Government has provided *(a)* bilaterally and *(b)* through the European Community to (i) Poland, (ii) Hungary, (iii) Bulgaria, (iv) Czechoslovakia and (v) East Germany since the beginning of 1989; and whether any such assistance will be used to construct free markets.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have so far committed funds only for Poland and Hungary. Details are as follows. A great deal of our total aid is being used to encourage the development of market economies. We do not yet have programmes for the other countries of eastern Europe but stand ready to respond to their needs at the time they put into place the necessary economic and political reforms.

United Kingdom Assistance for Poland

Bilateral

Know-How Fund (50 million over 5 years)
Agricultural project (£15 million)
Short-term ECGD cover
Investment insurance through ECGD (war and expropriations risk only)

EC

Free food supplies (UK share: £4-5 million)
EC budget allocation (UK share: £9-14 million, depending on size of abatements)
Trade measures (QRs and GSP)
European Investment Bank (EIB) lending (1 billion ecu over a number of years for both Poland and Hungary)

Other International

Stabilization Fund (UK contribution: $100 million)

Prospective

Debt rescheduling in Paris Club ($4 billion in 1990, of which UK would account for about 18 per cent.)
IMF drawing (about $700 million over 18 months)
World Bank/IFC loans (up to $1 billion over a number of years)

United Kingdom Assistance for Hungary

Bilateral

Know-How Fund (£25 million over 5 years)

EC
EC budget allocation (UK share: £9-14 million, depending on size of abatements)
Trade measures (QRs and GSP)
European Investment Bank (EIB) lending (1 billion ecu over a number of years for both Poland and Hungary)

Other international
IMF drawings under last SBA (July 1988-June 1989): (Total loan 265 million SDRs ($350 million) of which 215·35 SDRs (about $275 million) were drawn)
World Bank: loans outstanding: $1,165 million (30 June 1989)
IFC: commitments: $36 million

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to provide economic assistance to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are assisting Poland and Hungary through the know-how funds and other bilateral aid efforts, as well as our contribution to EC programmes. We, together with other OECD countries, have declared our willingness to respond positively to other countries in eastern Europe at the time they put into place necessary political and economic reforms.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy to ensure that bilateral and European Community assistance to the emerging democracies in Eastern Europe emphasises the mechanisms needed to create free markets in those countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: The know-how funds for Poland and Hungary set up by the Government aim to provide the skills needed to run free market economies and democratic societies. A great deal of EC project aid for these countries will be directed at vocational and management training.

Foreign Visits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is the practice for his office to be informed of visits to foreign countries by close relatives of Ministers.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations took place with EEC Governments before British endorsement of the United States invasion of Panama was given.

Mr. Sainsbury: Consultations with EC Governments began on 20 December as soon as we had information about the US action. A statement by the Twelve was issued on 22 December.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further information he has about injuries suffered by British subjects and damage of British-owned property in Panama as a result of the invasion by the United States of America; and what efforts he has made to establish the level of death and injuries among Panamanian civilians.

Mr. Sainsbury: So far as we have been able to establish, the only British national to suffer injury was a Reuters journalist who received medical treatment for a bullet wound in the thigh. I understand that he is now fully recovered. The British embassy residence suffered some damage to windows and walls which has now been repaired. There have been varying estimates of deaths and injuries among Panamanian civilians, which are hard to verify. The Panamanian authorities have not yet issued any official figures.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Maude: The following ministerial meeting is scheduled:

22-23 January—Agriculture Council.

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

(possibly) Presentation of 1990 agricultural price proposals.
(possibly) Bovine Semen (9729/89).
(possibly) Compound feedingstuffs (6904/88).

The Agriculture Council will meet on 22 and 23 January 1990. It may discuss health requirements applicable to bovine semen, and the marketing of compound feedingstuffs. The Commission is also expected to introduce its 1990 price fixing proposals.

Hong Kong (Refugees)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the future of the monks, nuns and priests at present in the Hong Kong refugee camps once repatriated.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* No monks, nuns or priests have been screened out as non-refugees. Any who arrived in Hong Kong before 16 June 1988, when screening was introduced, would have been granted refugee status and will be eligible for resettlement in the West. Among those still awaiting screening, the Hong Kong authorities have identified six nuns and four monks, all of them Buddhists, but no priests. When they are screened, such people would have a good claim to refugee status if they can demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution on religious grounds. If they are found to merit refugee status, they will then be removed to a refugee camp to await resettlement.

TRANSPORT

Ethanol and Methanol Fuels

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies are being undertaken by the transport and road research laboratory into ethanol and methanol fuels for large-scale private and commercial road vehicle use.

Mr. Atkins: The energy technology support unit published a report "An assessment of bioethanol as a transport fuel in the UK" in 1988 (ETSU Report R-44). Copies will be placed in the Library. The transport and road research laboratory's vehicles and environment division keeps in touch with the work going on worldwide on alternative fuels.

Prestwick Airport

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what valuations of land and buildings at Prestwick airport, including land not needed for airport development, have been made since 1979; and what were the figures received;

(2) what valuations of the land at Prestwick airport not required for airport operations were carried out by his Department, by the British Airports Authority, or by or on behalf of his or their advisers prior to privatisation; and what were the figures received;

(3) what was the valuation of Prestwick airport, including land not required for airport operations, when last valued by the British Airports Authority prior to privatisation;

(4) when the land at Prestwick airport, including land not required for airport operations, was last valued for his Department; and what was the valuation received.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following gross current cost valuations of land and buildings have been provided by BAA plc, based on the published accounts of Prestwick Airport Limited, which was first incorporated on 6 January 1986.

Year ended March	*£ thousand*
1987	27,552
1988	28,556
1989	32,974

The prospectus offering shares in BAA plc for sale noted that non-operational land and buildings at the seven BAA airports were valued at 1 April 1986 by Debenham, Tewson and Chinnock at £91 million. No separate figure was given for Prestwick airport. The prospectus gave a figure of £1,400 million for fixed assets at all of the BAA airports at 31 March 1987, but again did not separately identify a figure for land at Prestwick.

The Department has no readily available record of any earlier figures.

Road Improvements (Lambeth)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road improvement schemes are being supported in the London borough of Lambeth by a transport supplementary grant in 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: The London borough of Lambeth will receive transport supplementary grant of £154,000 in 1990-91 towards its contribution to Londonwide urban traffic control systems and for unspecified minor works on roads of more than local importance.

Supplementary Credit Approvals

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the 1990-91 supplementary credit approvals for public airport companies and local authority airports.

Mr. McLoughlin: Supplementary credit approvals totalling £59 million will be available for public airport companies and local authority airports for 1990-91. These borrowing approvals, together with other resources which public airport companies expect at this stage to invest, will assist the airports concerned to provide facilities which they estimate could cost some £117 million in 1990-91. I have today agreed to supplementary credit approvals totalling £46 million at this stage. The major projects concerned include the continuation of work on terminal 2 at Manchester airport and of infrastructure for the Eurohub terminal at Birmingham airport. Formal supplementary credit approvals will be issued as soon as part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 comes into effect.

"Roads for Prosperity"

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received representations from any environmental agency or organisation which supports "Roads for Prosperity".

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* A large number of organisations, including some with environmental concerns as part of their remit, have responded to "Roads for Prosperity".

Cyclists

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to ensure that cyclists are not disadvantaged in plans for Britain's road network.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The Department takes the needs of cyclists into account when planning new trunk roads and improving existing ones. Close attention is paid to the design of junctions and other locations where cyclists are known to be at greatest risk, and we try to enhance the safety and convenience of routes for cyclists. We encourage local highway authorities, which are responsible for the roads on which most cycling takes place, to do the same. We shall continue to promote safer cycling mainly through the publication of technical advice and guidance based on our research and application studies.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to ensure that local authorities are able to plan for cyclists within their tranportation plans; and if he will ensure that such initiatives are properly resourced.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* Decisions on allocating resources for cycling and the appropriate level of provision are for individual highway authorities to take. The current circular to local authorities on transport policies and programme submissions for 1990-91 encourages them to provide facilities which benefit cyclists. Such schemes will be considered for transport supplementary grant when they are integral to highway or traffic management schemes which are large enough to qualify for grant in their own right.

The Department makes available technical advice mainly in the form of publications which are available from our regional offices (free traffic advisory leaflets) and Her Majesty's Stationery Office (local transport notes). Copies are placed in the Library.

Car Accidents

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to reduce the level of car accidents from the current level.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* We aim to reduce road casualties, including car accidents, by a third by the year 2000. Copies of the second annual progress report "Road Casualty Reduction" are in the Library. Action covers roads, vehicles and drivers. Key features are bypasses, low-cost local safety schemes, traffic calming in residential areas, better signing and lighting, improved vehicle safety standards, effective driver training and testing and a developing framework of road traffic law and enforcement measures to foster sensible driving behaviour.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been undertaken into the number of fatal accidents involving two-door as against four-door cars.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* I am not aware of any specific research on this topic. The Department's database on accidents involving injuries to car occupants indicates that the ratio of two or three-door cars to four or five-door cars involved in fatal accidents follows closely their respective ratios in the car population. The following table illustrates this for the year ending 31 December 1988.

per cent.

	2/3 Doors	*4/5 Doors*	*Estates*
Total GB population (cars in 1988)	37·8	53·7	8·5
Fatal Accidents	38·9	53·4	7·7

Road Improvements

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what impact his proposals for road improvement will have on inner-city congestion; and what consultation he has had with local authorities about his planned road building programme.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The schemes in the Government's trunk road programme are designed to deal selectively with forecast levels of demand and congestion mostly on the inter-urban network, where recent traffic growth has been highest. Inner-city roads are by and large the responsibility of local highway authorities, with which the Department maintains regular contacts.

Schemes in the trunk road programme will benefit inner-city areas by relieving traffic congestion and making them more attractive places for people to live and work.

Departmental Programmes (Representations)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Council for the Protection of Rural England, Friends of the Earth, the Ramblers Association, Transport 2000, the Youth Hostels Association, the Environment Council, Greenpeace, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature on his proposals; and what action he is taking.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* We have received copies of the publication "Roads to Ruin" from these organisations. Some have separately written to me. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the Secretary of State's response to "Roads to Ruin".

Accident Statistics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the total numbers of casualties, serious injuries and deaths on *(a)* British roads, *(b)* British railways during 1988.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* In 1988, a total of 322,305 persons were killed or injured in accidents on British roads. This total includes 63,491 persons seriously injured and 5,052 persons killed.

In the same year, a total of 10,963 persons were killed or injured in accidents on British railways. This total includes 596 persons who sustained major injuries and 97 persons killed.

Bottesford Bypass

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on any action which he has taken to improve safety on the A52 trunk road bypassing Bottesford, Leicestershire, since the site meeting attended by representatives of his Department on 17 May; and whether he will list the action taken in response to each of the paragraphs of the departmental minute of proceedings sent to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 7 August.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The Department is continuing to monitor the situation. Additional signs and road markings have been provided and arrangements are in hand for "soft verge" signs and for enhancing the daytime visibility of road markings on the concrete surface. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Roadworks

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 21 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *364*, if he will state by what means his Department ensures the careful programming and traffic management arrangements of works on its own roads.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The Department oversees works carried out by its agents and seeks to ensure co-ordination in the timing and method of works. It issues departmental standards and guidance to agents on the safe design and method of carrying out works.

Road Excavations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 21 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *363*, if he will list those various organisations, other than highway authorities and the main public utilities, empowered to carry out excavation in the public highway.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* This information is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 21 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *364*, how his Department encourages highway authorities to promote co-operation between organisations having statutory rights to excavate roads.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The Department has encouraged the formation of local liaison groups between highway authorities and utilities. It has been discussing with the Association of London Borough Engineers and Surveyors the formation of a London joint utilities group. It chaired the group which last year produced a written understanding between highway authorities and utilities in London docklands on the timing and co-ordination of works.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution Inspectorate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 19 December, *Official Report*, column *126*, if he will give the length of time the vacant posts in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution have remained vacant, details of all posts on the establishment created within the past 12 months and the breakdown of field work inspection staff and support staff; what information he has on the salary scales applicable in private industry and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for similar levels of work.

Mr. Trippier: When HMIP was established there were 66 vacancies. Since then the staff complement has been increased by 37 posts, 13 announced in December 1988, three in January 1989 and 21 with effect from 2 October 1989. Allowing for the transfer in 1988 of 11 posts to a policy division there are currently 41 vacancies and recruitment competitions are being conducted to fill them. HMIP has 85 field inspectors supported by 29 administrative staff. The biennial remuneration survey of the Royal Society of Chemistry, carried out in January 1988, gave the income for the upper quartile of about £17,000 for members of the society at comparable levels to recruitment grade pollution inspectors. The current recruitment competition for pollution inspectors offers salaries ranging from £18,485 to £24,075, up to £2,835 higher in London.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he intends to introduce to ensure effective enforcement of the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 including regulations.

Mr. Trippier: The Department is preparing a consultation paper to be issued in the spring.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to review the salary structure of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Trippier: The salary structure for professional staff in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has been reviewed recently, and this has resulted in the substantial salary increases being offered in the current recruitment drive for pollution inspectors. The position will be kept under review.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what system has been agreed for the frequency of inspection of works subject to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution control; and if he will publish the programme for inspection.

Mr. Trippier: Targets for inspection of works subject to control by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are set annually according to management's assessment of regulation requirements and priorities. Details of HMIP's inspection programme for 1989-90 are set out in the Department's management information system return (MINIS 10), which is available in the Library of the House.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish and when is the closing date for the public consultation exercise for the regulations to be introduced under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989.

Mr. Trippier: The enforcement of the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 will be a matter for the waste regulation authorities. Regulations to implement the provisions of the Act will be laid as soon as possible after consultation with interested parties.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what scientific evidence will be used to formulate proposals to reduce carbon dioxide emissions following the Environment Council meeting of 28 November.

Mr. Trippier: A comprehensive assessment of the scientific evidence for climatic change and its possible impacts is being undertaken by the working groups of the intergovernmental panel on climate change. The IPCC will report later this year and its work will be considered at the second world climate conference in November 1990.

Disabled Persons' Bungalows

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of purpose-built disabled persons' bungalows owned by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations; what plans he has to increase resources available for this work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities report the number of their dwellings that have been specially designed or adapted for use by the disabled and those owned by housing associations, in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1). These returns do not distinguish bungalows from other dwelling types. Preliminary estimates for April 1989 of the number of local authority wheelchair and other dwellings for the disabled appear in columns A2c1 and A2d1, respectively, of "1989 HIP1—Regional Grossing"; the small number of dwellings owned by the local authorities outside their areas are shown at columns A2c6 and A2d6. Corresponding estimates of the numbers of housing association wheelchair and other dwellings for the disabled appear in columns A2c2 and A2d2. A copy of the document is in the Library.

We have established a statutory and financial framework to enable housing associations and the private sector to increase their provision for those in housing need, including the disabled.

The Government announced last November that total provision for gross capital expenditure by the Housing Corporation will double over the next three years, rising from £818 million this year to £1,736 million in 1992-93. Detailed allocations of funds to individual types of schemes are the responsibility of the corporation.

We are continuing to promote appropriate design standards for new housing and, with the special needs of the disabled in mind, have quite recently agreed with the Housing Corporation that all new housing association schemes should conform to basic "mobility" standards.

Environmental Labelling

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of consultation on the discussion paper on the environmental labelling of consumer products.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. My Department received over 90 responses to the discussion paper from a wide range of interested parties and individuals. A list of responses received has been placed in the Library of the House. Copies of individual responses may be received through the Library. We are grateful to all concerned for offering their views.

Consultation has shown that there is overwhelming support for an official eco-labelling scheme operating on a European Communitywide basis which is simple, flexible, transparent and commands public respect. I was pleased that the Environment Council supported this proposal at its meeting on 19 September. We intend to work closely with the European Commission and with our European partners to maintain the momentum of this initiative, taking account of the views of interested groups in this country.

A very clear majority of consultees supported our proposal that participation by companies in a scheme should be voluntary, but concern was expressed about the adequacy of controls over the making of environmental claims more generally. Policy on the latter is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. On his behalf, I can confirm that we shall be considering these representations further, looking at the possibility both of a code of practice on environmental claims and of amending the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act. The Department of Trade and Industry will be issuing a consultation letter for this purpose shortly.

Some useful comments were received on the approach which should be adopted in selecting product groups covered by the scheme. We agree with the view expressed by a number of respondents that the aim should be to get a scheme up and running as quickly as possible, and that it should focus on products with a significant environmental impact or where consumers most clearly need the guidance which an eco-label is intended to provide. We intend to look at the selection of product categories in line with these considerations.

Respondents were divided on questions of what product categories should be included in a scheme. We remain of the view that food and drink should be excluded, both because there are already extensive controls on misleading and false food descriptions, and because of the need to give a scheme a tight initial focus. We agree with the view often expressed by respondents, that it would be confusing to label packaging separately from products, but we consider that it should be possible for the assessment of a product's eligibility for an eco-label to take account of packaging considerations.

We are committed to establishing a scheme that is both credible and workable. These objectives are especially relevant to the assessment process which must underlie the award of an eco-label. Consultation has shown that confining that assessment to the direct environmental impact of a product during use and disposal would not be regarded as credible. We accept, therefore, that the assessment should be based on the setting of criteria reflecting the key characteristics of a product's environmental impact from cradle to grave. We also believe that the pass mark required to receive an official label should be set towards the top end of what technology permits, so as to give producers a real incentive to improve their environmental performance, but not so high as to distort the market or impose disproportionate costs on business. The aim must be to work with the grain of market forces, not against it.

There was some support among respondents for a graded approach to eco-labelling, under which progressively higher standards of improvement in a product's environmental impact could be recognised, for example, by awarding one or more stars. We consider that such an approach could complicate the process of assessment unacceptably, and that it would not have the same clear attraction for the market as a more straightforward pass/fail system.

Responses were divided on the timing of the award of an eco-label. We consider that manufacturers will need the certainty of a finite minimum period, after which the award of the label should be subject to review. We recognise, however, that the length of that period may well need to differ between product categories, depending not least on differing expectations of technological advance.

Consultation showed wide support for a strong national element in the development and implementation of a European Community scheme, and for arrangements which would involve interested groups on a continuing basis. We consider that these must be features of the organisation of a scheme.

It will clearly be necessary for agreement to be reached at the European level on the product categories to be selected, on the criteria to be used for their assessment, and on the standards to be set. It will be no less important to create national arrangements which ensure that opinion in each member state on these issues is properly represented at Community level. The practical operation of the scheme should also be nationally based through the determination at the national level of applications from companies for their products to be awarded an eco-label on the basis of the categories, criteria and standards agreed on a European basis. The award of a label to a particular product in one member state would be valid across the Community. We remain of the view that an organisation appropriate to these objectives would involve a single panel at the Community level advised by a series of national panels. We shall want to ensure that the organisation involves a minimum of bureaucracy and provides an effective response to the needs of consumers and producers. We re-emphasise our view that the scheme in operation should aim to be self-financing.

The consultation process has enabled us to take a view on the main issues that need to be addressed in getting an eco-labelling scheme under way. A lot more work needs to be done on the detail of a scheme, however. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I therefore propose to set up a small advisory group, to be composed of individuals with experience and knowledge relevant to the subject, to provide advice on the further

development of the scheme. I shall make a further announcement shortly about the membership of the group.

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to apply the best available technology to minimise and eliminate any pollution caused by radioactive discharges from nuclear industries, including reprocessing plants, into the marine environment.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* Radioactive waste may be discharged from nuclear installations only if an authorisation has been issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 jointly by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Such authorisations are issued only after careful assessment of the environmental impact of the proposed disposals to ensure that doses to the public are below the maximum permissible limits as recommended by the International Committee on Radiological Protection. All authorisations impose a requirement on operators to minimise discharges and to carry out a programme of monitoring including the marine environment where appropriate. All such premises are subject to scrutiny by inspectors to ensure compliance with the terms of the authorisations.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list all actions taken by his Department since 1979 to encourage the inclusion of energy conservation policies in structure plans;

(2) whether his Department requires discussion of energy conservation policies to be included in structure plans;

(3) whether his Department requires discussion of energy conservation measures within the explanatory memoranda attached to structure plans.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The memorandum attached to DOE circular 22/84 consolidated earlier advice on plan preparation, and remains the main source of guidance to local planning authorities on the content of structure plans. County planning authorities are required to have regard to current national and regional policies and to set out in the explanatory memorandum the relationship between these and the development and land use policies for the area (para 4.7). The explanatory memorandum accompanying structure plan proposals should include an indication of assumptions made about the resources likely to be available for carrying out the policies amd proposals formulated. It should

"have particular regard to the conservation of resources such as land and energy"

(para 4.9).

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which counties *(a)* do and *(b)* do not include explicit discussion of energy conservation in the explanatory memoranda attached to their structure plans;

(2) which counties *(a)* do and *(b)* do not include explicit energy conservation policies in their structure plans.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Downing Street

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if the public right of way through Downing street has been extinguished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* Access to Downing street is controlled under police common law powers which allow them to take reasonable steps to preserve the peace and prevent threats to it.

The present barriers at the Whitehall entrance to Downing street which the demountable gate will replace have been in place since 1982.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis the decision was taken to erect railings in Downing street; and who made the recommendation for their erection.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The purpose of the new demountable gateway is to enhance the security of Downing street. It is not the Government's practice to comment on such security measures.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost to public funds of all works associated with the erection of railings at the Whitehall end of Downing street.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* It is not the Government's practice to comment on the costing of individual security measures.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which authority gave planning permission for the erection of railings at the Whitehall end of Downing street; what notice was given to interested parties; and whether any objections were received.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* Normal procedures under DOE circular 18/84 were followed, including consultation with English Heritage and the Royal Fine Art Commission. Proposals were submitted to Westminster city council in May 1989; amended in September following consultations, and approved by letter dated 4 October.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms (Gwent)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will ascertain whether the Gwent district auditor has carried out an investigation into how many fees for *(a)* firearm certificates and *(b)* shotgun certificates have been paid in respect of renewals from 1 January until the latest available date;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to whether his officers issue a receipt for each shotgun or firearm taken into the possession of the police;

(3) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent into the contents and accuracy of his letter, reference HJ/DJD, dated 7 December, regarding the

whereabouts of the shotgun mentioned in the letter, which was signed by Helen Jordan, Office Manager, Firearms Administration;

(4) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to how many *(a)* fees have been reimbursed, *(b)* photographs returned, and *(c)* applications for renewals of (i) firearm and (ii) shotgun certificates there have been between 1 January and the latest available date;

(5) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Gwent as to whether he has indicated to the holders of *(a)* firearms certificates and *(b)* shotgun certificates a minimum period before the expiry of their certificates in which they should apply for (i) the renewal and (ii) the normal period taken to process such a renewal application.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Responsibility for the administration of firearm control is a matter for the chief officer of police for the area concerned.

Shotgun Certificates (Staffordshire)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the application for a shotgun certificate as issued by the Staffordshire constabulary.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Applications for the grant or renewal of a shotgun certificate may be made only in the form prescribed under the Firearms Rules 1989, a copy of which is in the Library. I understand from the chief constable of Staffordshire that the form issued by his force in addition to that prescribed by the rules has accordingly been withdrawn from use.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to investigate with the British Standards Institute the specifications for a standard for *(a)* firearms, *(b)* shotgun and *(c)* ammunition enclosure for use in domestic premises for the storage of (i) sporting firearms, (ii) sporting shotguns and (iii) ammunition.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that a committee of the British Standards Institution, on which the Home Office crime prevention centre is represented, is currently considering the introduction of a British standard for the safekeeping of firearms and their ammunition, and the safekeeping of shotguns.

SCOTLAND

Energy Management

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the hospitals where an energy management assessment study has been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Detailed energy assessments have been completed for 140 hospitals and will be completed for all remaining hospitals by the end of 1990.

Health boards are encouraged to undertake surveys of energy management for all hospitals to ensure that energy is used efficiently and boards have been given detailed guidance on energy efficiency practices.

The Public Accounts Committee has set a target of reducing consumption by 1·5 per cent. per annum in the NHS and this is being achieved in Scotland.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what studies have been done, for Chapelcross, Dounreay, Hunterston and Torness, on the problems of evacuating all mobility groups in the event of a worst-case atomic accident, giving for each study the geographical area covered.

Mr. Lang: Within the framework of the emergency plans which must be prepared by the operators of civil installations in Scotland and of their own related contingency plans, the police are responsible for evacuation. I understand from the chief constables of the forces concerned that their contingency plans for evacuation of the population in the event of a large-scale emergency take account of the problems of evacuating low-mobility groups.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if ambulance staff have participated in exercises for local emergency plans at each of Chapelcross, Dounreay, Torness and Hunterston; and in each case which units participated.

Mr. Lang: Local ambulance units have participated in exercises to test the emergency plans at Torness and Hunterston. The ambulance service has not yet participated in any such exercises at Dounreay or Chapelcross, although each service is fully aware of its role under the respective emergency plan.

SCOTLAND

Energy Statistics

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each health board and the total for the National Health Service in Scotland *(a)* the total number of licensed vehicles at the latest available date, *(b)* the total amount spent on energy during the latest year for which figures are available, broken down into (i) petrol supply, (ii) electricity supply, (iii) gas supply and (iv) other and *(c)* the total amount spent on insulation on the National Health Service estate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* Statistics on the number of licensed vehicles and on the amount spent on energy are not held in the form requested.

Figures for the total amount spent on insulation on the National Health Service estate are not available since such costs are included in both new buildings and general renovation.

Health boards have been encouraged by Ministers to pursue energy conservation policies, and savings already achieved include a 6 per cent. reduction in hospitals' energy consumption over the last three years. Energy costs have fallen from £40·9 million in 1985-86 to £30·2 million in 1988-89.

Eye Tests

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the number of eye tests in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* Between 1 April and 30 September 1989, 281,570 NHS sight tests have been carried out in Scotland under the general ophthalmic services. No information on the number of private sight tests in Scotland is held centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Residential Care

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of board and lodging expenditure for residential care accommodation in Blyth Valley in the last financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information in the form requested is not available.

Single Parents

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state *(a)* the weekly benefit entitlement when not working of a single parent with two children aged eight and 12 years and *(b)* the weekly income of a single parent with two children, also aged eight and 12 years, with earnings of £10, £15, £20, £30, £40 and £50.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is set out in the table:

Net income after housing costs at various levels of net earnings

Net earnings (per week)	*Net income after housing costs £ per week*
(a) Not working	78·00
(b) £10 part-time	88·00
(c) £15 part-time	93·00
(d) £20 part-time	93·00
(e) £30 full-time	93·97
(f) £40 full-time	95·47
(g) £50 full-time	96·74

Notes:

1. The assumptions and methods are those used in the Tax Benefit Model Table, copies of which are available in the Library.
2. At earnings £30, £40 and £50 it is assumed that the person works over 24 hours a week and therefore qualifies for family credit. At these levels of part-time earnings, net income after housing costs would remain constant at £93 as the person would remain on income support.

WALES

Cattle Feed (Contamination)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what co-operation he received from the Dutch in dealing with the lead contamination of cattle feed; and if he will make a statement on the situation in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Dutch authorities acted promptly in alerting the United Kingdom Government on 1 November that contaminated feed had been imported into the United Kingdom. Subsequently there was close liaison between Dutch officials, United Kingdom embassy staff in the Hague and officials in the United Kingdom in an effort to clarify the events leading to the contamination.

In Wales, restriction orders on the movement of milk have been lifted; 159 farms remain under restriction for the movement of livestock.

Schemes have been introduced to allow animals to be released from controls, subject to satisfactory results from blood testing and on condition that the bone and offal from slaughtered animals is not used for human consumption. Since the introduction of the schemes some 8,000 animals have been cleared in Wales.

Our primary aim has been to prevent contaminated products reaching the public. An extensive research programme is under way to monitor the rate of decay of lead in animals and depending on the results it may be possible to reduce some of the controls. Restriction cannot be eased until it is absolutely safe to do so.

Upland Farms

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest assessment of economic conditions for upland farms in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am fully apprised of the economic conditions for upland farms in Wales. The economic conditions in the hills and uplands of Wales were assessed during the annual review of the hill livestock compensatory allowances (HLCAs). An announcement on the HLCA rates for 1990 will be made very shortly.

Paediatric Intensive Care Cots

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of paediatric intensive care cots available in Wales; and the number in each health authority and their locations within each health authority in 1979-80, 1983-84 and 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: Information on paediatric intensive care cots is not available centrally. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on 18 December 1989, which provides the available statistics on special care baby unit cots.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside of 11 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *473-74*, on the number of people in employment in Wales, if he will provide comparable figures by Welsh county;

(2) if he will provide, in separate tables, information on the work force in employment, male and female, full-time and part-time, for each quarter since 1980 with actual and percentage changes by quarter and year for Wales, and for each Welsh county.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Correspondence

Q45. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* her reply to the open letter from Mr. R. W. Rowland, managing director and chief executive of Lonrho plc, dated 30 November.

The Prime Minister: No reply was sent.

Train Travel

Mr. Robert Adley: To ask the Prime Minister if she has been on a train in her official capacity during the Christmas recess.

The Prime Minister: No.

Eastern Europe

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *318*, what is the nature of the know-how advice to be given to Poland and Hungary; and what information it contains on ways to create free markets.

The Prime Minister: The Polish authorities have themselves already implemented a comprehensive economic programme which aims to move Poland towards free market conditions. We have provided economic advice to the Ministry of Finance. In addition, the know-how fund is directed partly at helping Polish managers adjust to such conditions, by means of seminars and formal and informal training.

Engagements

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministrial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Footwear

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the level of output in *(a)* dozen pairs and *(b)* numbers of full-time employees in the United Kingdom footwear industry at (i) the latest available date, and (ii) in 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available figures are shown in the table:

United Kingdom footwear industry (SIC 4510)

Unit (i)	*Year ended 30 June 1989*	*(ii) 1979*
(a) United Kingdom manufacturers sales[1] Million pairs	119·2	149·3
Unit (i)	*At June 1989*	*(ii) At June 1979*
(b) Employees[2] Thousands	46·6	68·8

[1] *Source:* Business Statistics Office. For 1979 the figures relate to establishments employing 25 or more persons and for the year ended 30 June 1989 to establishments employing 50 or more persons.

[2] *Source:* Department of Employment. Great Britain only. Part-time employees are included. Figures are based on a small sample and are subject to some estimation error.

Merchant Shipping

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of British merchant shipbuilding capacity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British merchant shipbuilding capacity will depend on the level of demand and the industry's ability to obtain orders in the face of international competition. The Government provide substantial support to the industry to assist its return to normal competitive conditions.

Royal Mail

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what calculations have been made as to the effect of any plans to break up the exclusive privilege of Royal Mail to deliver items on *(a)* cost and frequency of delivery to rural households, *(b)* cost and frequency of delivery to businesses in rural and regional areas outside London and city centres and *(c)* the number of postal workers employed by the Royal Mail in rural and regional delivery services.

Mr. Forth: We keep the options under review, but have no plans to end the letter monopoly at present. However, we have made it clear that the Post Office's monopoly is a privilege, not a right, and in the event of a cessation or serious disruption of the letter service, we would consider suspending it. I should add, however, that we attach considerable importance to the maintenance of the rural delivery network.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to visit Cardiff and inspect the work of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Trade has already visited Cardiff. I hope to do so myself shortly.

Electrical Engineering

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will provide an estimate of the increase in the volume of output of the electrical engineering industry since *(a)* 1973 and *(b)* 1979 less defence-related production.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not practicable to exclude defence-related goods from the output data available. The

output of the electrical and electronic engineering sector (Class 34 of the Standard Industrial Classification—not stock adjusted), was 32 per cent. higher in the three months to October 1989 than the average for 1973, and 31 per cent. higher than the average for 1979.

Competitiveness

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the competitiveness of British Industry.

Mr. Redwood: Most of my contacts with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

Hosiery and Knitwear

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the state of the hosiery and knitwear industry in the city of Leicester.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: While I acknowledge the problems being experienced by the hosiery and knitwear industry in Leicester, I believe I made the Government's position clear in the Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 12 December.

As I stated then the Government are prepared to contribute towards collaborative research and development projects through which the textile industry can improve its efficiency and competitiveness.

I am pleased to announce, therefore, that the Government are to provide £2·8 million over three years for a major project based in Leicester designed to improve automated assembly techniques in the garment sector. The total cost of the project will be £7·3 million. It will involve 22 industrial organisations and four leading academic institutions and will be co-ordinated by Leicester polytechnic.

The work will develop an advanced manufacturing facility to address the problems associated with the integration of manufacturing processes.

A garment design and manufacturing plant located at Leicester polytechnic will be used to demonstrate the techniques developed during the three-year research phase of the project, which will offer obvious benefits for the Leicester knitted garment industry.

Manufacturing Deficit

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he intends to take to improve Britain's manufacturing trade deficit.

Mr. Redwood: The key to our trade performance in manufactures lies in sound macro-economic policy, and the maintenance of open and competitive markets at home and abroad.

FMC

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any information concerning proposed investment in the United Kingdom by the FMC company of the United States of America.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any information received by the Department relating to a company's investment intentions would be commercially confidential and could not be disclosed.

Industrial Waste

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made by his Department's business and the environment unit in encouraging firms to reduce and recycle industrial waste.

Mr. Forth: Since its formation in June last year, the business and the environment unit has made good progress in implementing its programme to encourage firms to reduce and recycle industrial waste. A brochure entitled "Cutting Your Losses" was published in November last year, to coincide with a major CBI/DTI/DOE conference on waste minimisation. A series of regional seminars on waste minimisation is planned for 1990. The unit has also participated in numerous other seminars, conferences and exhibitions to help spread the message that waste reduction and recycling make economic and environmental sense. I am confident that this programme, together with the work of the recycling advisory group, will bring about significant improvement in waste reduction and recycling.

European Single Market

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the short title of each of the 88 European Community directives to implement the single market which should be on the statue books of each of the European Community member states: and if he will make a statement;

(2) those European Community directives to implement the single market which have so far been enacted into legislation by *(a)* Belgium, *(b)* Netherlands, *(c)* Luxembourg, *(d)* West Germany, *(e)* France, *(f)* Italy, *(g)* Denmark, *(h)* Great Britain, *(i)* Eire, *(j)* Greece, *(k)* Spain and *(l)* Portugal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The following table lists the state of application of the 86 (not 88) legislative acts for which member states must take national implementing measures by 31 December 1989. These comprise 78 directives, four regulations and four decisions. For completeness a further two directives contained in the Commission's report (Dir 89/366 for which national implementing measures are not compulsory and Dir 85/572 which cannot be implemented until certain decisions are taken in Brussels) are also shown.

This confirms the United Kingdom's excellent record on implementation. I can confidently say that on or very shortly after 31 December we will be up to date with 76 of the 77 for which implementation is possible by the end of the year. On the one exception (Dir 88/288) we are currently seeking advice and clarification from the Commission. Three further directives which should be in force by 31 December (Dirs 85/323, 85/324 and 85/572) cannot be implemented pending decisions being taken in Brussels.

	Directives											
	B	*D*	*DK*	*E*	*F*	*EL*	*I*	*IRL*	*L*	*NL*	*P*	*UK*
Various controls												
1. Duty free fuel contained in fuel tanks of commercial motor vehicles Dir. 85/347	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Veterinary and phytosanitary controls												
2. Production and trade in milk Dir. 85/397	INFR	NI	I	I	I	INFR	I	INFR	I	I	NI	I
3. Classical swine fever and swine fever Dir. 87/486	INFR	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	NA	I	I	I	I
4. Classical swine fever and swine fever Dir. 87/489	INFR	I	I	NI	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	NI	I
5. Classical swine fever and swine fever Dir. 87/487	NI	I	NI	NI	I	I	NI	NI	I	NI	NI	I
6. Hormone growth promoters Dir. 85/358	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
7. Hormone growth promoters Dir. 88/146	INFR	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	I	I	I
8. Microbiological controls Dir. 85/323	I	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
9. Microbiological controls Dir. 85/324	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
10. Medical examination of personnel Dir. 85/325	I	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	NI	I
11. Medical examination of personnel Dir. 85/326	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I
12. Medical examination of personnel Dir. 85/327	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I
13. Antibiotic residues Dir. 86/469	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
— Control of residues Dir. 86/469	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
14. Swine fever Dir. 85/320	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I
15. Swine fever Dir. 85/321	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I
16. Swine fever Dir. 85/322	I	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	NI	I
17. Control of foot and mouth disease Dir. 85/511	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
18. Amendments to directive 77/93 (plant health) Dir. 85/574	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
19. Amendment to directive 77/93 (plant health) Dir. 88/572	I	I	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	I	I	I	NI	I
20. Pesticides residues in cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin Dir. 86/362	I	I	I	NI	I	I	INFR	I	INFR	I	NI	I
21. Pesticide residues in cereals and foodstuffs of animal origin Dir 86/363	I	I	I	NI	I	INFR	INFR	I	INFR	I	NI	I
22. Amendment of Directive 79/117 (ethylene oxcide) Dir 86/355	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
23. Fixing of guidelines for additives used in animal foodstuffs Dir 87/153	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	NI	I
24. Modifications of Directive 72/461 (Community trade in fresh meat) and Directive 72/462 (importation of bovine animals swine and fresh meat from 3rd countries) Dir 87/64	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	NA	NA	I	NI	NA
25. Purebred breeding animals of the bovine species Dir 87/128	I	INFR	I	D	I	INFR	I	INFR	INFR	INFR	D	I
26. Amendment to Directive 80/215 (animal health problems: intra-Community trade in meat products) Dir 87/491	I	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	NI	I
27. Amendment to Directive 64/433 (health problems intra-Community trade in fresh meat) Dir 88/288	INFR	I	I	NI	I	INFR	INFR	I	I	INFR	NI	INFR
28. Amendment to Directive 72/462 (Inspection problems on importation of bovine animals swine and fresh meat from third countries) Dir 88/288	INFR	I	I	NI	I	INFR	INFR	I	I	INFR	NI	I
29. Certification of seeds Dir 88/380	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I
— Seed Potatoes Dir 89/366	National implementation measures not compulsory											
Control of individuals												
30. Sixth Directive—exemptions in International travel: increase to 350 ecus Dir 85/348 (Dir 88/664)	I	I	D	I	I	D	NI	D	I	I	I	I
31. Tax reliefs—Small consignments of a non-Commercial character Dir 85/349 (Dir 88/663)	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	D	I	I	I	I
32. Small consignments—exemption from VAT on the final importation of goods Dir 88/331	I	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	INFR	I	I	I	I
The removal of technical barriers free movement of goods												
New approach in technical harmonisation and standards												
33. Amendment to Directive 83/189 Information procedures etc. Dir 88/182	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	I

	Directives											
	B	*D*	*DK*	*E*	*F*	*EL*	*I*	*IRL*	*L*	*NL*	*P*	*UK*
Sectoral proposals concerning approximation of laws												
Motor Vehicles												
34. Gaseous emissions, passenger cars Dir 88/76	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I
35. Gaseous emissions, commercial vehicles Dir 88/77	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I
36. Diesel particulates Dir 88/436	NI	I	I	I	I	NI	NI	I	I	I	I	I
37. Type approval of motor vehicles and their traders, Mod Dir 70/156 Dir 87/358	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I
38. Motorcycle replacement exhaust systems Dir 89/235	NI	I	I	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	I	I	I
39. Motor Vehicles—lateral protection Dir 89/297	I	I	I	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	I	I	I
Tractors and Agricultural Machines												
40. Modification of framework Directive 74/150 Dir 88/297	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	NI	I
41. Rollover protection structures Dir 87/402	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	NI	I	I	NI	I
42. Implementation of Dir 74/150, weight dimensions etc Dir 89/173	NI	I	I	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
Food Law												
43. Sampling and methods of analysis Dir 85/591	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
44. Preservatives (modification) Dir 85/585	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I
45. Emulsifiers (modification) Dir 86/102	I	NI	I	NI	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	I	NI	I
46. Coffee and chicory extracts Dir 85/573	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
47. Obligation to indicate ingredients and alcoholic strength Dir 86/197	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I
— Simultants Dir 85/572	Time for implementation not yet fixed											
48. Flavourings Dir 88/388	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
49. Jams Dir 88/593	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I
Pharmaceuticals and High-Technology Medicines												
50. Placing on the market of high technology medicinal products including those derived from biotechnology Dir 87/22	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	NI	I	I	NI	I
51. Amendment to Dir 75/318—testing of medical specialities Dir 87/19	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I	D	I
52. Amendment to Directive 81/852 on veterinary medicinal products Dir 87/20	I	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	I	I
53. Amendment to Directive 65/65 concerning medical specialities Dir 87/21	I	I	I	D	I	D	I	I	I	I	D	I
54. Price transparency in the prices of medicines and social security refunds Dir 89/105	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I
Chemical Products												
55. PCB's (polychlorinated byphenyls) Dir 85/467	I	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
56. Asbestos Dir 85/610	I	I	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
57. Non-ionic detergents Dir 86/94	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	I	NI	NI	I
58. Liquid fertilisers Dir 88/183	NI	I	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
Construction and Construction Products												
59. Tower cranes: permissable sound levels Dir 87/405	NI exept flanders	NI	I	I	I	NI	NI	I	I	I	NI	I
Other items												
60. Tyre pressure gauge Dir 86/217	NI	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I
61. Hydraulic diggers (noise) Dir 86/662	NI	I	I	I	I	NI	NI	I	NI	I	NI	I
62. Directive on products which, appearing to be other than they are, endanger the health or safety of consumers Dir 87/357	INFR	I	I	INFR	I	INFR	INFR	I	I	I	I	I
63. Good laboratory practices: non-clinical testing of chemicals Dir 88/320	I	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I	NI	NI	I
64. Household appliances—airborne noise Dir 86/594	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
65. Cosmetics Dir 88/667	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI

	Directives											
	B	*D*	*DK*	*E*	*F*	*EL*	*I*	*IRL*	*L*	*NL*	*P*	*UK*
Public procurement												
66. Public supply contracts (amendments to Dir 77/62 & 80/767) Dir 88/295	I	I	I	D	I	D	INFR	I	I	INFR	D	I
Free movement for labour and the professions												
67. Coordination of provisions in the field of pharmacy Dir 85/432	I	I	I	NI	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	I	I
68. Mutual recognition of diploma's in pharmacy Dir 85/433	I	I	I	NI	I	I	INFR	I	INFR	I	I	I
69. Specific training in general medical practice Dir 86/457	I	INFR	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	NA	I	I	I
Common market for services												
Transaction in securities												
70. Collective investment undertakings for transferable securities Dir 85/611	NI	NI	I	NI	I	D	NI	I	NI	NI	D	I
71. UCITS Directive special measures concerning certain investments Dir 88/220	NI	NI	I	NI	I	D	NI	I	NI	NI	D	I
Transport												
72. Fares for scheduled air services Dir 87/601	INFR	I	I	I	I	I	NI	I	INFR	NI	INFR	I
New technologies and services												
73. Pan European mobile telephone Dir 87/372	INFR	I	INFR	NI	I	INFR	INFR	INFR	INFR	INFR	NI	I
Capital movements												
74. Operations such as transactions in securities, admission of securities and long-term commercial credits Dir 86/566	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	D	I
75. Units in collective investment undertakings for transferable securities Dir 85/583	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	D	I
Intellectual and industrial property												
76. Legal protection of micro circuits Dir 87/54	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	I	I	I
The removal of fiscal barriers												
VAT												
77. 13th VAT Directive Dir. 86/560	I	I	I	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	I	I
78. 17th VAT Directive Dir. 85/362	I	I	I	INFR	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Other measures Decisions												
79. African swine fever in Portugal December 86/649	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
80. African swine fever in Spain December 86/650	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
81. Eradication of brucellosis tuberculosis and teukosis (bovine species) December 87/58	I	I	N/A	I	I	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
82. Air Transport—sharing of passenger capacity and market access December 87/602	INFR	I	I	INFR	INFR	I	I	I	INFR	INFR	INFR	INFR
Regulations												
83. Spirit drinks Reg. 1576/89	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI
84. Application of competition rules to maritime transport Reg. 4056/86	NI	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I	NI	I
85. Application of competition rules to air transport Reg. 3975/87	NI	NI	I	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	NI	I
Creation of Suitable Conditions for Industrial Co-operation												
Company Law												
86. European Economic Interest Grouping Reg.85/2137	I	I	I	NI	I	NI	NI	I	NI	I	NI	I

Notes on Directives:

The Commission report incorrectly claims that this Directive has not been implemented in the United Kingdom.

1. No. 5. The Commission report incorrectly claims that this directive has not been implemented in the United Kingdom.
2. No. 27. The United Kingdom in the process of informing the Commission that all provisions of the Directive have been implemented except for two in respect of which advice an clarification is being sought.
3. No. 41. The Commission report incorrectly claims that this Directive has not been implemented in the United Kingdom.
4. No. 42. Not due for implementation until 31 December 1989. Implementing regulations are currently laid before Parliament.
5. No. 48. No action will be necessary in the United Kingdom to permit the marketing and use of products which comply with the Directive. Legislation to prohibit trade in products not complying with the Directive from the 31 December 1990 will be brought into force on or shortly after 31 December 1989.
6. No. 49. The Directive has two implementation dates. The first, namely 31 December 1989, simply relates to permitting trade in products complying with the Directive. No action will be necessary in the United Kingdom to achieve this.
7. No. 54. Not due for implementation until 31 December 1989. However, the necessary changes to administrative procedures to comply with the Directive have already been made.
8. No. 58. Regulations drafted and under consultation, should be laid before Parliament early 1990.

9. No, 64. Draft implementing regulations have been made and will be laid before Parliament shortly.
10. No. 65. Laws of compliance to be published by 31 December 1989; implementing Regulations are currently laid before Parliament.
11. No. 72. The Commission report incorrectly claims that this has not been implemented in the United Kingdom.
No. 73 The Commission report incorrectly claims that this Directive has not been implemented in the United Kingdom.
12. No. 82. The United Kingdom contests the Commission's view that the administrative measures taken to comply with this Decision are insufficient and that legal means are required. The Commission services are aware of this.
13. No. 83 The Commission have been informed that the United Kingdom cannot implement the Article 10 measures until a decision has been taken in Brussels on the transitional arrangements under the EC Spirits Drinks Regulations. This decision has yet to be taken.

Arthur Andersen

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Government are pressing ahead with their De Lorean lawsuit against Arthur Andersen.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Economic Development for Northern Ireland is pursuing its action against Arthur Andersen.

Research

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the level of financial support for collaborative research in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* on a European scale in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* It is difficult to define collaborative research which takes many forms and involves a combination of various Government Departments, industry and academic institutions etc. both in the United Kingdom and internationally. Statistics are therefore not maintained in the form requested.

However, an indicative figure for Department of Trade and Industry spend on collaborative research and development projects for each of the years since 1979 is shown in the table.

Financial year	*£ million*
1979-80	5·63
1980-81	15·32
1981-82	19·22
1982-83	22·00
1983-84	26·44
1984-85	29·70
1985-86	31·49
1986-87	34·36
1987-88	38·95
1988-89	40·72
TOTAL	263·97

Notes:

(i) The above figures include GICP (General Industrial Collaborative Projects), ATP (Advance Technology Programme), EUREKA and LINK plus previous schemes for collaborative Research and Development.

(ii) The above figures exclude ALVEY which will amount to around £100 million.

(iii) The figures from 1979-80 to 1983-84 are only approximate due to the uncertainty of early records.

In addition the United Kingdom currently contributes 18·7 per cent. to the EC framework programmes for research and development most of which is of a collaborative nature. These programmes have the following budgets:

	billion ecu	*£ billion*
1984 to 1987	3·75	2·7
1987 to 1991	5·4	3·8
1990 to 1994	5·7	4·2

Export Credits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total capital project cost cover offered under the export credits guarantee system to *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* the Gulf states, *(c)* Malaysia, *(d)* China and *(e)* Brunei in each year since 1983; and what proportion was accounted for by cover for arms exports in each case.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* It is ECGD's policy not to disclose details of its exposure on individual countries for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the total capital project cost cover offered under the export credits guarantee system in each year since 1983;

(2) what was the total capital project cost cover offered under the export credits guarantee system in respect of arms exports in each year since 1983.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The information is set out in the table.

Values in Millions Sterling

Year	*Total capital cost insured*	*Total arms capital cost insured*	*Arms as a percentage of total business*
1983	2,733·83	616·10	22·54
1984	1,679·16	199·95	11·91
1985	1,616·88	412·18	25·49
1986	1,717·54	423·80	24·67
1987	1,385·30	182·14	13·15
1988	1,863·49	625·30	33·56
1989	748·23	95·37	12·75
Total	11,744·43	2,554·84	21·75

Inland Revenue

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 19 December 1989, whether his Department was represented at any other discussions between the Inland Revenue and taxpayers or their representatives in 1988.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* Records are not kept centrally in a form which would permit meetings in 1988 between DTI, Inland Revenue and taxpayers or their representatives to be readily identified.

British Aerospace (Inland Revenue)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill on 19 December 1989, if he will list the advisers to his Department present at the meeting between the Inland Revenue and British Aerospace at his Department in July 1988.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* As was not uncommon in meetings between DTI and BAe, on

various technical aspects of the sale of Her Majesty's Government's shareholding in Rover Group during the negotiations, representatives of Baring Brothers and Slaughter and May were present to advise the Department on financial and legal matters.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill, whether his Department was represented at any other meetings between the Inland Revenue and British Aerospace in 1988.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* Two meetings were held in March 1988 at which the Department of Trade and Industry, British Aerospace and the Inland Revenue were all represented.

Babcock Fata

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 21 December, whether moneys allocated under the support for innovation scheme to Babcock Fata were expended on projects which were undertaken within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The payments made to Babcock Fata Ltd. under the support for innovation scheme were for the support of projects undertaken within the United Kingdom.

Insurance (EC Proposals)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what European Community proposals on insurance have been initiated or revised since the European Court of Justice decisions of December 1986, in particular case 205/87 Commission *v.* Federal Republic of Germany; and if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on this matter.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The European Court of Justice gave its judgment in four insurance cases, including Case 205/84, the Commission *v.* Federal Republic of Germany, on 4 December 1986. Since that date, progress on EC insurance directives has been made as follows:

Council Directive 87/343/EEC, on credit and suretyship insurance, adopted on 22 June 1987;

Council Directive 87/344/EEC, on legal expenses insurance, adopted on 22 June 1987;

Second Directive 88/357/EEC, on non-life insurance, adopted on 22 June 1988;

Proposal for a Council directive on the annual accounts and consolidated accounts of insurance undertakings, submitted by the Commission on 21 January 1987, and amended proposal submitted on 30 October 1989;

Proposal for a Council directive on the compulsory winding-up of direct insurance undertakings, submitted by the Commission on 23 January 1987, and amended proposal submitted on 18 September 1989;

Proposal for a second Council directive on life assurance, submitted by the Commission 23 December 1988, and agreement reached in the Council of Ministers on 21 December 1989 (subject to the opinion of the European Parliament).

Proposal for a third Council directive on insurance against civil liability in respect of the use of motor vehicles, submitted by the Commission on 23 December 1988 and amended proposal submitted on 6 December 1989. The Council adopted a common position on the proposal on 15 December 1989.

Proposal for a Council directive on the freedom to provide services in repect of motor vehicle liability insurance, submitted by the Commission on 3 January 1989.

The Government continue to attach a high priority to the achievement of a genuine single market in both life and non-life insurance and welcome the Commission's intention to put forward new proposals for this purpose in the next few months.

Directorships

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the directors appointed by his Department under special share provisions, giving in each case the term of their appointment and the company to which they were appointed.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* Following are the details of directors currently appointed or nominated as Government directors under the rights attached to special shares held by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. P. G. Bosonnet was nominated as a Government director on the board of British Telecom on 1 October 1986 for two years and was re-nominated in 1988 for a further two years. Mr. G. J. Mulcahy was nominated as a Government director on the board of British Telecom on 19 October 1988 for two years.

Mr. Keith Brown was appointed to the board of British Aerospace as the Government director on 16 March 1989 for a period of two years.

Tourism

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will appoint a Parliamentary Commissioner with a permanent remit to investigate the inadequacies, insufficiencies and failures of travel, tourism and leisure both at home and abroad so as to provide a means of examining and redressing grievances.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The Government have no plans to appoint an ombudsman in this area. However, the idea of a tourism ombudsman scheme set up by the industry to resolve disputes between consumers and the travel industry is one which merits serious consideration and which might be a logical extension of the work of the Association of British Travel Agents. If the industry comes up with workable proposals, these would be welcomed by Government.

DEFENCE

Western Europe

12. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies he has commissioned regarding the defence of western Europe with lower troop numbers than at present.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At the defence planning committee on 28-29 November, NATO agreed a work programme to ensure that the Alliance's defence and arms control objectives remain mutually reinforcing in support of the goal of enhanced security for all Allies at the lowest possible level of forces. The United Kingdom will play a full part in this work.

31. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies regarding the defence of western Europe with lower troop numbers than at present.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend met his NATO colleagues at the defence planning committee meeting in Brussels on 28-29 November, where a wide range of issues, including progress in the talks on conventional forces in Europe, was discussed.

Trident

14. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will announce a revised estimate of the cost of Trident shortly, and at the same time submit a report on the progress of the programme to the Defence Committee. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library of the House.

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has recently received about the Trident programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has received a number of letters from individuals and organisations recently about the Trident programme.

25. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further discussions he has had about the Trident system with members of the United States Administration in the last two months.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has met the United States Defence Secretary on one occasion in the last two months, during which a variety of matters of mutual interest were discussed. He has not met any other members of the United States Administration.

Conventional Forces

15. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the defence implications of reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

38. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the defence implications of reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

49. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the defence implications of reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

62. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the defence implications of reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Tom King: The Government are committed to seeking an agreement on conventional forces in Europe which will eliminate existing imbalances and establish security and stability at a lower level of forces. At the same time, we shall maintain the commitment to mutual defence entailed by our membership of NATO.

Chemical Weapons

16. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress of verification of chemical weapon stockpiles.

28. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress of verification of chemical weapon stockpiles.

60. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress of verification of chemical weapon stockpiles.

68. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress of verification of chemical weapon stockpiles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Useful progress was made last year at the conference on disarmament in Geneva on a number of complex issues including verification during the negotiations for a chemical weapons convention. However, much further work is required before a comprehensive and effectively verifiable chemical weapons convention can be achieved. The United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have recently concluded a bilateral agreement for the exchange of data on chemical weapons, which we hope will throw much-needed light on the size and nature of the Soviet chemical weapons stockpile.

Berlin

20. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are proposals to alter the United Kingdom's defence involvement in Berlin.

23. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any proposals to alter the United Kingdom's defence involvement in Berlin.

87. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any proposals to alter the United Kingdom's defence involvement in Berlin.

88. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any proposals to alter the United Kingdom's defence involvement in Berlin.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British forces will continue to fulfil our responsibilities for the protection of Berlin in conjunction with those of other Allies.

Fylingdales

21. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the status of contractorisation of the Fylingdales early warning system.

48. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the status of contractorisation of the Fylingdales early warning system.

84. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the status of contractorisation of the Fylingdales early warning system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

Ambulance Service

26. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to date of the forces' operation of the ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

51. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to date of the forces' operation of the ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

73. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to date of the forces' operation of the ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

89. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to date of the forces' operation of the ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Up to 30 November 1989, the latest date for which figures are currently available, extra costs in the region of £0·85 million have been reported for recovery from the Department of Health, the Scottish Home and Health Department and the Welsh Office.

Nuclear Submarines

27. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to the safe decommissioning of nuclear submarines.

72. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to the safe decommissioning of nuclear submarines.

75. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to the safe decommissioning of nuclear submarines.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

Aldermaston

29. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the contractorisation of Aldermaston.

58. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the contractorisation of Aldermaston.

59. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the contractorisation of Aldermaston.

82. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the contractorisation of Aldermaston.

Mr. Neubert: Since the announcement on the future of AWE by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 5 December, approximately 37 representations have been received from hon. Members and members of the public.

Aldermaston (Police Investigations)

30. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the MoD police investigations into malpractice at Aldermaston.

79. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the MoD police investigations into malpractice at Aldermaston.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

Frigates

32. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the United Kingdom withdrawing from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation frigate replacement for the nineties project.

55. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the United Kingdom withdrawing from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation frigate replacement for the nineties project.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse).

Tain Bombing Range

33. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his proposed noise impact survey in the vicinity of Tain bombing range, with particular reference to the geographic area over which indicative readings will be taken and the proposed time scale of the survey.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The aim of the noise survey is to establish whether any homes in the vicinity of Tain bombing range are subject to noise levels of 70dB(A) or more averaged over a continuous 12-hour period. This is the qualifying level for the payment of insulation grants under the Department's existing noise compensation policy applicable to military airfields.

In advance of the survey, it will be necessary to determine the major approach and departure routes together with the numbers and types of aircraft which use the range. This information will allow the production of a computer-predicted 70dB(A) noise contour which will form the basis of the monitoring exercise.

Measurement sites will be carefully selected, in consultation with the local district council, to check the position of the computer predictions and to ensure that a representative picture of the noise environment is obtained.

It is planned that the noise survey will take place during spring this year but, as evaluation of the noise data is likely to take some time, the results are unlikely to be available before 1991.

Soviet Overflying

34. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will waive any prohibition on defence grounds of Soviet overflying of British military facilities providing the waiver is reciprocal in an open skies agreement.

36. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will waive any prohibition on defence grounds of Soviet overflying of British military facilities providing the waiver is reciprocal in an open skies agreement.

39. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will waive any prohibition on defence grounds of Soviet overflying of British military facilities providing the waiver is reciprocal in an open skies agreement.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will waive any prohibition on defence grounds of Soviet overflying of British military facilities providing the waiver is reciprocal in an open skies agreement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The detailed implementation of an open skies regime has yet to be negotiated. However, our general intention is that limitations to overflight should be made only on grounds of flight safety.

United States Defence Secretary

35. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the United States Secretary for Defence; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Volunteer Reserve Forces

37. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in recruiting volunteer reserves into the defence services following the launch of the volunteer reserve forces campaign.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), and others, on 24 October 1989 at column *435*.

Prisoners of War

40. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received during the past six months concerning the claims for compensation by former United Kingdom prisoners of war held by the Japanese at Mukden, because of germ warfare experimentation undertaken on them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the period July to December 1989 the only representations to the Secretary of State for Defence about compensation for British prisoners of war held at Mukden have been those made by the hon. Member himself, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

Nuclear Test Veterans

41. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about providing compensation for ex-service personnel who took part in the nuclear testing programme.

67. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about providing compensation for ex-service personnel who took part in the nuclear testing programme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth).

British Forces (Germany)

42. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any proposals to change the level of British armed forces based in Germany.

69. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any proposals to change the level of British armed forces based in Germany.

77. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any proposals to change the level of British armed forces based in Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 21 December at column *382*.

Out-of-Area Commitments

43. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are engaged in duties related to the United Kingdom's out-of-area commitments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 30 June 1989 some 17,500 service personnel were deployed outside the NATO area including those on exercise and in ships at sea. Numbers may fluctuate considerably according to circumstances.

War Widows (Pensions)

44. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the level of war widows' pensions since the statement of 11 December 1989.

56. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received further to his recent statement on war widows' pensions.

63. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the level of war widows' pensions since the statement of 11 December.

64. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the level of war widows' pensions since the statement of 11 December.

Mr. Tom King: I refer to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie).

Eastern Europe

45. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of United Kingdom's forces of the changing situation in eastern Europe.

80. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact of the level of United Kingdom forces of the changing situation in eastern Europe.

81. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment of defence needs he is making in the light of political change in eastern Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields).

Defence Commitments

46. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will initiate an independent review of the United Kingdom's defence commitments.

Mr. Tom King: I have no plans to do so.

US Spending (Europe)

47. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart regarding reductions in United States military spending in Europe.

54. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart regarding reductions in United States military spending in Europe.

83. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart regarding reductions in United States military spending in Europe.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Terrorists (Equipment Sales)

50. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about sales of military equipment and technology to terrorist organisations.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department from time to time receives inquiries and representations from hon. Members, individual members of the public and organisations about the Government's policy on defence exports, including sales to terrorist organisations. Government policy is under no circumstances to sell military equipment and technology to terrorist organisations.

NATO

52. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what matters were discussed.

57. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the United Kingdom's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

76. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the United Kingdom's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

85. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the United Kingdom's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend met Dr. Woerner at the defence planning committee on 28-29 November when they discussed a range of business, including the annual review of national contributions to NATO. The communiqué issued after that meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

Dartmoor National Park

53. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he is having with the Duchy of Cornwall regarding the renewal of the licences of 1991 for live firing of ammunition in the Dartmoor national park.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is in regular contact with officers of the Duchy of Cornwall over the administration of the licence governing the use of Duchy-owned land on Dartmoor for military training and other matters. No formal discussions have yet taken place over the renewal of the current licence, which does not expire until 29 September 1991.

European Fighter Aircraft

61. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received regarding radar equipment for the European fighter aircraft.

66. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received regarding radar equipment for the European fighter aircraft.

71. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received regarding radar equipment for the European fighter aircraft.

86. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received regarding radar equipment for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of written and personal representations on the competition for the radar for the European fighter aircraft.

Warsaw Pact

65. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent evidence he has of reductions in capability by the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The unilateral force reductions which have been announced by the USSR and some other Warsaw pact countries appear to be taking place. Even when these are fully implemented, however, the Warsaw pact's conventional forces in Europe will substantially outnumber NATO's.

Safety Information

70. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will allow open public access to information on matters of safety in respect of his Department's responsibilities.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not possible to permit open public access to information on matters of safety in the

Ministry of Defence because of the practicable impossibility of separating such information from classified information about the Department's activities and weapons systems. The Ministry of Defence is subject to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and subordinate legislation, except where specific exemptions are given in the legislation. Even where such exemptions are given it is the Department's policy to observe the same standards of safety which are required of others.

Low Flying

74. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the amount of low flying carried out by the Royal Air Force.

78. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the amount of low flying carried out by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Departmental Establishments (North-East)

90. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to visit his Department's establishments in the north-east of England.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to visit Ministry of Defence establishments in the north-east of England.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 10 January 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Management Schemes

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those authorities whose schemes as submitted for his approval for the local management of schools contained insufficient information for determination.

Mrs. Rumbold: All schemes for the local management of schools, as first submitted, contained insufficient information for the purposes of statutory approval. By the end of last year all but seven local education authorities, from whom this additional information had been sought, had provided it.

Environment

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what initiatives his Department has promoted on the raising of environmental consciousness and environmental protection in schools, colleges and universities.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the course of the last 12 months, Her Majesty's inspectors of schools published "Environmental Education: 5-16", a booklet which offers advice to schools on the planning of environmental education, and the Department, in conjunction with the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Laura Ashley Foundation, launched the environmental enterprise award scheme for schools and colleges. The award scheme aims to encourage children and young people to bring their enterprise and practical ingenuity to bear in protecting or enhancing the environment.

Environmental education has also been indentified as an important theme which should run through the whole school curriculum, including the core and other foundation subjects of the national curriculum.

The natural environment research council, which receives grant-in-aid from the science budget, also played its part in raising young people's consciousness of environmental processes, the role of international scientific research, and Britain's contribution to it by circulating to secondary schools the information booklet "Our Future World".

Nuclear Physics and Engineering

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students of nuclear engineering and nuclear physics are currently registered at United Kingdom universities and polytechnics; how many places in these disciplines are presently unfilled; and if he has made any assessment as to whether the present number of students being trained in nuclear physics and engineering will be sufficient for future needs.

Mr. Jackson: Courses in nuclear physics are not separately identified in centrally available statistics. There are two first degree courses in nuclear engineering: one is at Manchester university, on which a total of 28 students were enrolled in 1988-89, the most recent year for which such statistics are currently available; the other, which had its first intake in autumn 1989, is at Queen Mary college, London university. Statistics on unfilled places on individual courses are not centrally available. I know of no evidence to suggest any current or future shortfall in the supply of highly qualified manpower to the nuclear power industry.

Human Frontier Science Programme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on developments since the 1987 economic summit in Venice on the institution of the human frontier science programme; where it will be administered; what United Kingdom contribution will be made to the first phase of the project; and how the programme will benefit United Kingdom research institutions.

Mr. Jackson: The human frontier science programme (HFSP) for research in molecular biology and neuroscience was inaugurated in November 1989, and is administered from Strasbourg. The secretary general of the new organisation is Sir James Gowans, former secretary of the Medical Research Council. The United Kingdom is represented on the HFSP council of scientists and board of trustees. The United Kingdom is contributing to the first phase through the linking of a number of fellowships and workshops to the programme. Given the quality of United Kingdom science, our research institutions will be hoping to benefit from the award of grants for research, fellowships and workshops. An announcement is expected in March of the first awards under the programme.

Sports (London)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why his Department has refused an application for funding from the Inner London Federation of School Sports Associations on behalf of its member organisations; and what other grants have been made under the 1990-91 special scheme for the headquarters of Londonwide education voluntary organisations.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The purpose of the Department's special grant aid to Londonwide headquarters bodies is to offer, following the demise of ILEA, some temporary funding to help maintain their programmes of work until arrangements have been developed for funding from the new Inner London councils. While the Department recognises the value of the work undertaken by the individual school sports associations, the modest operating costs of these individual bodies renders them ineligible for consideration under these grant arrangements. Because of the high administrative costs involved in considering small grants, the Department is unable to provide grants of less than £5,000. The role of the Inner London Federation of School Sports Associations (ILFSSA), in co-ordinating the work of these bodies, was not considered to be sufficiently well developed within the programmes of work submitted, to be accepted for grant aid.

The organisations that have received a provisional offer of grant are listed in the table:

Special grants to headquarters of Londonwide voluntary organisations

Name of organisation:
Association of Combined Youth Clubs
Association of Jewish Youth
Boys Brigade
Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council
Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
Diocese of London Lay Ministry
Friends for the Young Deaf
Girl Guides
Handicapped Adventure Playground Association
Inner London Pre-school Playgroup Association
Inner London Youth Matters
Inter-Action
London Adventure Playground Association
London Federation of Boys Clubs
London Union of Youth Clubs
London Voluntary Services Council
Methodist Association of Youth Clubs
National Federation of Gateway Clubs
Parents in Partnership
Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied
Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster
Scout Association
SENSE-National Deaf/Blind and Rubella Association
Southwark Diocesan Board of Education
United Reformed Church
Volunteer Reading Help
Woodcraft Folk
Young Women's Christian Association

Science Budget

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the distribution of the science budget for 1990-91.

Mr. MacGregor: I have considered the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and have decided that the £897 million science budget for 1990-91 should, subject to approval by Parliament of the Estimates in due course, be allocated as follows:

	£ million
Agricultural and Food Research Council	86·57
Economic and Social Research Council	36·17
Medical Research Council	185·71
Natural Environment Research Council	136·05
Science and Engineering Research Council	437·12
The Royal Society	13·94
The Fellowship of Engineering	1·19
Science Policy Studies	0·23
Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology	0·08

At £897 million, the science budget in 1990-91 is £189 million higher than expenditure in 1988-89—an increase of 27 per cent. over two years. Over the last two public expenditure exercises the Government have increased provision by £490 million; and expenditure in real terms in 1990-91 will be more than 28 per cent. higher than in 1979-80. This is further evidence for the scientific community of the importance which the Government attach to civil science in the research councils and the universities.

The increased provision next year should enable the research councils to sustain the momentum created by the substantial increase in science funding in 1989-90. Over £17 million is available towards the construction costs of the royal research ship James Clark Ross, £2·8 million towards the cost of the remote sensing instruments associated with the earth remote sensing-2 satellite and the polar platforms, and £6 million towards the cost of the refitting of the royal research ship Discovery, all of which will make important contributions to the United Kingdom's programme of global environmental research. The natural environment research council is particularly prominent in this field, and the provision made will enable the council significantly to enhance its contribution to the world ocean circulation experiment.

I am also pleased that the settlement will mean that the research councils are able to sustain and strengthen their current initiatives to maintain an adequate supply of highly qualified manpower; and that the AFRC will be able to press ahead with the restructuring of its institutes and to establish a programme on slow virus research with particular relevance to bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

I am publishing the board's advice today. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms Licence

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of a new firearms licence for a shotgun in January 1986 and January 1990.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The fee for the grant of a shotgun certificate in England and Wales was £12 on both dates.

Broadcasting

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many representations he has received, and from whom, since 1987 concerning *(a)* advertisements on commercial television, *(b)* independent television news reports, *(c)* television censorship, *(d)* private television stations, *(e)* repeats on BBC television, *(f)* video nasties and *(g)* certificates awarded to cinema films; and if he will make a statement on each of the above subjects;

(2) how many representations he has received, and from whom, since 1987 concerning *(a)* access to broadcasting for deaf people, *(b)* Ceefax, *(c)* Oracle, *(d)* Prestel, *(e)* the Peacock report and *(f)* the inclusion of broadcasting responsibilities in an Arts Ministry; and if he will make a statement on each of the above subjects;

(3) how many representations he has received, and from whom, since 1987 concerning *(a)* Channel 4 television, *(b)* a proposed fifth channel for television, *(c)* 24-hour television, *(d)* schools programmes on television, *(e)* schools programmes on radio, *(f)* funding for experimental television projects and *(g)* American television programmes shown in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on each of the above subjects;

(4) how many representations he has received, and from whom, since 1987 concerning *(a)* cable television, *(b)* satellite television, *(c)* BBC television, *(d)* the IBA, *(e)* BBC radio, *(f)* independent radio and *(g)* pirate radio stations; and if he will make a statement on each of the above subjects.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1987 many representations have been received on these and other broadcasting topics. Details could be given only at disproportionate cost. The broadcasting White Paper and more recently the Broadcasting Bill set out the Government's policies on broadcasting issues.

Salisbury Guildhall (Coat of Arms)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Wiltshire about the disappearance of the royal coat of arms from the magistrates court in Salisbury Guildhall.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of Wiltshire that the disappearance of the royal coat of arms has not been reported to police as a loss or theft. It is the property of Salisbury district council and was removed when the Crown court moved from Salisbury Guildhall. It will be replaced by a new royal coat of arms.

Dementia

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about his policy towards prisoners suffering from dementia.

Mr. Mellor: This is a medical matter. The director of prison medical services has not thought it appropriate to issue guidance on the subject to prison medical officers, all of whom are registered medical practitioners and are able to take specialist advice on the management of individual cases.

Radio Frequencies

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the progress being made by the Metropolitan police in transferring their radio frequencies from the VHF commercial broadcasting frequencies to new transmision frequencies; and if he will list for each police force the date by which they propose to complete their transfer to non-commercial frequencies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Metropolitan police completed the transfer in December 1989. All other police forces in England and Wales completed their transfer by the end of July 1989, some five months before the deadline of 31 December 1989 agreed at the world administrative radio conference in 1979.

Single European Market

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-British subjects will have the right to work and to set up business in the United Kingdom after 1992 as a result of the realisation of the single European market; and how many of these will come from overseas territorities and associated territories of other member states.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: European Community law already confers upon nationals of most other member states the right to work or to set up in business in the United Kingdom. By virtue of the transitional provisions in the treaty of accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Communities, nationals of those countries will not enjoy the same rights in Community law to take employment in this country until 1 January 1993. Except for this incidental change the rights of nationals of European Community states to work or to establish themselves in business in another member state will not be affected when the internal market is completed after 1992. Nor will the establishment of the single European market itself affect controls on the entry to this country of non-EC nationals who wish to work or set up business here.

It is, of course, possible that improved opportunities for business between Community states after 1992 will increase the mobility of workers in the Community. Although the numbers involved cannot be estimated, in respect of movement either from the member states or from the few overseas and associated territories to which the free movement provisions of the EC treaty apply, increased migration from and to other member states is likely to occur primarily among skilled and professional workers.

May Inquiry (Assessors)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has appointed lay assessors to Sir John May's inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich and Maguire cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and I have, at the request of Sir John May, appointed three assessors to assist the work of his inquiry. They are Sir Richard Barratt, currently HM chief inspector of constabulary, Mr. Alastair Graham, the director of the Industrial Society and Professor J. C. Smith, professor in legal science at Cambridge university.

DNA Tests

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the arrangements are for conducting DNA tests in criminal and civil cases which come before the courts; and what progress is being made in DNA testing techniques.

Mr. John Patten: ICI holds the worldwide rights to the DNA profiling technique using "multi locus" probes developed by Professor Jeffreys at Leicester university.

So far as DNA testing in criminal cases is concerned, Cellmark Diagnostics (a subsidiary of ICI) is contracted by the Home Office to deal with criminal paternity cases and cases involving the mass screening of large numbers of individuals. The Home Office forensic science service and the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory deal with all other criminal cases in England and Wales. A contract for the provision of DNA profiling services on this basis, and for the purchase of materials from ICI for use by the forensic science service, was agreed with ICI in 1988 and has been renewed for a further year. DNA technology is continually developing and more sensitive techniques are now being implemented within the Home Office forensic science service and the Metropolitan police laboratory.

Arrangements for carrying out civil paternity tests directed by a magistrates court are governed by regulations made under the Family Law Reform Act 1969. There is a panel of approved testers, which includes employees of Cellmark Diagnostics, any of whom can carry out tests.

Electronic Monitoring

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the circumstances with regard to the ending of the trial of electronic monitoring in Nottingham; and if there are plans for the introduction of monitoring on a trial basis in other areas.

Mr. John Patten: The Nottingham electronic monitoring trial contract was let to run from 14 August 1989 to 29 January 1990. The trial will be ending, as originally planned, on that date. Existing participants will continue to be monitored after that date. The results of the trial will be carefully evaluated, but it is already clear that the technology can be put to practical use and that the procedures for fitting the equipment and monitoring defendants are practicable. It would now be desirable to test the use of electronic monitoring on a trial basis in a larger area in which substantial numbers are likely to be eligible for its application as a condition of bail. Meanwhile other trials which started on two different later dates in the north Tyneside and Tower Bridge areas are proceeding as planned.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the average rate support grant allocated to local authorities in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Chope: In 1979-80 there were 405 local authorities in England eligible for rate support grant. The total amount of rate support grant paid was £4,624,902,834.

In 1988-89 there were 425 local authorities in England eligible for rate support grant. The total amount of rate support grant paid was £9,076,759,236.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he is giving to community chargepayers who receive communications from local authorities under the heading "Poll Tax"; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Chope: The Department continues to explain that "poll tax" is a misleading and erroneous term for the community charge and is encouraged by research which suggests that very few people are deceived. Whenever necessary, local authorities are reminded of the need for communications to be accurate and that certain formal notices to community chargepayers could be invalid if they do not conform to the requirements of regulations made under the 1988 and 1989 Acts.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the per capita levels of expenditure that he assesses for *(a)* Northampton district and *(b)* Northamptonshire county council for 1990-91; and what is the impact on the community chargepayer for each £1 per capita that either authority spends in excess of this level.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment proposed on 6 November 1989 standard spending assessments of £103 per adult and £688 per adult for Northampton district and Northamptonshire county council respectively. Each £1 per adult spent by either authority in excess of these figures would result in a £1 increase in the community charge.

Palace of Westminster

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy in the absence of Crown liability to ensure immediate replacement of faulty light bulbs in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Chope: As I advised the hon. Member on 7 December, column *323*, the established practice is to ensure that light bulbs are in working order.

Disabled People (Housing)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of money has been spent for each of the past five years for adaptations to council houses for disabled people.

Mr. Chope: The cost of work to make local authority dwellings suitable for disabled persons which was completed in 1986, 1987, 1988 and the first half of 1989 appears in table 2.20(a) of "Housing and Construction Statistics Part 2" No. 38. Figures for earlier years appear in table 7.5(a) of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Housing Development

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that the description set out in new release 515 and his accompanying statement will be included in the final planning policy guidance note on housing development and the special presumption when it is released to the planning inspectorate and local authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: As my hon. Friend will know, the consultation period on the draft planning policy guidance note on housing has just concluded. We shall bear his comments in mind as we consider the precise wording of the final version of the guidance note.

EC Grants

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of the organisations within his area of responsibility which receive grants from the EEC.

Mr. Moynihan: Within the Department of the Environment's area of responsibility, EEC grants are made in the form of assistance from the European regional development fund for certain infrastructure schemes. In accordance with criteria laid down or established by the European Commission, assistance is available for schemes wholly or substantially financed by public authorities, or by other organisations responsible in a similar way, for the carrying out of infrastructure works. A list of such organisations is not available, but they include local authorities, transport undertakings and certain charitable organisations.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many official properties are currently the responsibility of the Property Services Agency; and how many are vacant.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The Property Services Agency currently has responsibility for 8,653 official properties, of which 161 are vacant.

Microwave Ovens (Palace of Westminster)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that each of the microwave ovens in the Palace of Westminster is suitable for any uses to which it may be put.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 18 December 1989]:* The microwave ovens are purchased after discussions with the users about their needs. Copies of the manufacturers' instructions are supplied, but the onus for ensuring that ovens are used correctly must rest with the local management. The Parliamentary Works Office does however arrange for the ovens to be tested regularly by a specialist contractor.

Community Charge Booklet

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the decision was taken to reprint in a new edition the community charge booklet on second homes; when stocks are now expected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* All our community charge leaflets are revised as necessary to take account of policy developments. In the case of the leaflet dealing with the community charge and second homes, there were a number of such developments during the last Session which had to be reflected in the leaflet in order to keep it up to date. The revised leaflet will be available later this month.

TRANSPORT

M1/A1 Link Road

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what are the reasons for the current delay in the construction of the western section of the M1/A1 link road;

(2) what is the daily traffic flow on the A427 between Market Harborough and Lutterworth at the latest available date; and what is the projected flow *(a)* in five years' time, and *(b)* in 10 years' time, in the absence of an M1/A1 link;

(3) when he now expects to commence construction of the M1/A1 link road between Kettering and Lutterworth.

Mr. Atkins: The western section of the link road from Catthorpe to Kettering is divided into four contracts. Those for the Catthorpe interchange and the Rothwell-Kettering section are to be let shortly. Further progress on the two intermediate contracts is subject to the outcome of a public inquiry in February into objections to draft supplementary orders.

Approximate traffic flows on the A427 without the M1-A1 link road would be as follows:

Vehicles per day

Present	*1995*	*2000*
9,000-10,000	10,000-12,000	11,000-14,000

A5

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the accident record for the A5 within one mile of its proximity with the village of Newton, near Rugby.

Mr. Atkins: Accidents in recent years on this length of trunk road involving personal injury and reported to the police have been as follows:

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*
1986	Nil	1	1
1987	Nil	Nil	2
1988	Nil	1	Nil
[1]1989	Nil	1	2

[1] to end of November

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans exist for improvements to the A5 where it passes close to the village of Newton, near Rugby.

Mr. Atkins: Changes to white lining and signing are to be carried out shortly at the junction of the A5 with the B5414. This will provide a right-turning lane for southbound vehicles turning towards Newton and Clifton-on-Dunsmore.

The section of A5 trunk road near Newton is included in a scheme identification study in the 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity". Consultants are to be appointed shortly and work will commence this spring. The study report is expected in spring 1991. Any schemes identified by this study will be considered for addition to the trunk road programme but the time scale for construction will depend on priority and statutory procedures.

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the annual report of the disabled persons transport advisory committee.

Mr. Atkins: The committee's third annual report was submitted to me in November. Copies have already been placed in the Libraries.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary System

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning British participation in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this subject.

Free Postage

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will reinstitute free postage between taxpayers and the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Lilley: It was decided in January 1988 that—from April 1988—the provision of reply-paid envelopes by the Inland Revenue should be confined to demands for payment of tax and to a few other special instances. Treasury Ministers approved this change because it helps the Inland Revenue to keep its administrative costs as low as possible consistent with effectiveness and efficiency. The overall saving in Revenue running costs from the change was £2 million in 1988-89 and a change in the existing arrangements would not be justified.

Home Income Plans

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of elderly home owners who have taken out home income plans and similar mortgage options.

Mr. Lilley: About 4,000 elderly people took out home annuity loans qualifying for tax relief in 1988-89.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to extend tax relief on the interest payable on home income plans and similar schemes.

Mr. Lilley: Tax relief is already available for interest paid by people aged 65 or more on loans up to the £30,000 limit which are secured on their homes and used to buy a life annuity.

Tax Revenue

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure the Inland Revenue publishes in its annual report on tax information summary details of High Court cases in which the Inland Revenue has sought to recover £1 million or more of tax revenue.

Mr. Lilley: Details of High Court cases in which the Inland Revenue is involved are already available to the general public.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the results of those High Court cases in the last two years in which the Inland Revenue has sought to recover £5 million or more of tax revenue.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue does not keep statistics of the tax involved in High Court cases. The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

European Tax Legislation

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the coverage of the proposed tax legislation on European economic interest groupings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Government have received a number of representations on the taxation of European economic interest groupings. The Inland Revenue has discussed these with interested parties. Further to these discussions, the Inland Revenue is today issuing, with my agreement, a press release and a consultative document including a draft clause and schedule.

Comments on the consultative document and draft legislation should be received by 28 February 1990. We shall carefully consider all comments and representations which are made before introducing the necessary legislative provisions in the 1990 Finance Bill. I have placed copies of the document including the draft clause and schedule in the Library.

British Aerospace (Inland Revenue Discussions)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Inland Revenue attended any discussions with British Aerospace or other taxpayers at the Department of Trade and Industry in 1988 additional to those referred to in his reply of 19 December 1989 to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* In addition to the discussions referred to in my reply of 19 December 1989 to the hon. Gentleman, Inland Revenue officials attended one discussion with British Aerospace at the Department of Trade and Industry in March 1988. There was also a further discussion that month at the Inland Revenue. Records are not kept centrally in a form which would permit discussions involving the Department of Trade and Industry, the Inland Revenue and other taxpayers to be readily identified.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sri Lanka

88. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with his Sri Lankan counterpart regarding the teaching of English in Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain provides substantial assistance in English language teaching to Sri Lanka. Discussions on the programme and its possible development are held regularly by representatives of our two Governments.

Angola

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid is currently provided by the United Kingdom to *(a)* the MPLA and *(b)* UNITA in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We provide no aid for either the MPLA or UNITA. Our bilateral aid programme with the Government of Angola focuses mainly on English language training.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Northern Ireland Court Service

Mr. Lee: To ask the Attorney-General whether any changes have been made to the class XI vote 8 cash limit and running costs limit for the Northern Ireland court service.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XI vote 8 will be increased by £1,640,000 from £14,746,000 to £16,386,000. The increase arises because of additional costs incurred in respect of judicial removals and bomb damage to a number of court buildings. The running costs limit for the Northern Ireland court service will as a result be increased by £120,000 from £11,721,000 to £11,841,000.

WALES

Straw Burning

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received since the announcement on banning straw burning in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: None.

Algal Blooms

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), 19 December 1989, *Official Report*, column 124, what is the cause of toxic forms of algal blooms in Wales; what action he is taking; how he proposes to reduce their occurrence; and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Gordon, 19 December 1989, *Official Report*, column 124, if he will list, by Welsh county, the locations of toxic forms of algal blooms in Wales, identified during 1989.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority. However, the authority has advised me that it is not aware of any toxic forms of algal blooms having occurred in Wales during 1989.

DEFENCE

Al-Yamamah Defence Contracts

90. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place with Saudi officials about the financing of the Al-Yamamah defence contracts.

Mr. Alan Clark: My officials are in constant touch with representatives of the Saudi Arabian Government during which a range of Project Al Yamamah issues, including finance, are reviewed and discussed.

Conventional Forces in Europe

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to discuss progress at the talks on conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend last met the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation at the meeting of the defence planning committee on 28-29 November 1989, when a wide range of defence matters, including progress at the talks on conventional forces in Europe, were discussed.

Armed Forces (Germany)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the total overseas exchange costs of all British forces in Germany and the net cost after offsetting expenditure in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated foreign exchange cost of British forces in Germany in 1989-90 is £1,331 million. While no direct offset payments have been made by the Federal Republic of Germany since 1980, property and certain public services continue to be provided free of charge along with some tax and duty concessions.

Lasers

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many non-targeting laser devices are currently fitted to Royal Navy vessels;

(2) what is the maximum amount of power that could be used by non-targeting laser devices currently fitted to Royal Navy vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to disclose information of this nature.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances non-targeting laser devices fitted to Royal Navy vessels would be used.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As a non-lethal means of self-defence by HM ships.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under what heading in the Supply Estimates the expenditure on the non-targeting laser devices currently fitted to Royal Navy vessels was included.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Vote 2 sub head F (Sea Systems).

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of procuring the non-targeting laser devices currently fitted to Royal Navy vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of procurement is commercially confidential.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the project definition phase of the procurement programme for the non-targeting laser devices currently fitted to Royal Navy vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There was no project definition phase.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any of the non-targeting laser devices currently fitted to Royal Navy vessels have ever been used operationally.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which company supplied the non-targeting laser devices currently fitted to Royal Navy vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Irwin Desman Limited.

Risks at Sea

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government were, prior to the signature of the agreement signed between the United States and Soviet Governments on the reduction of risks at sea in 1989, consulted by either of the two Governments concerned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States Government kept their NATO allies fully informed on progress towards their conclusion of an agreement with the Soviet Union last year on the prevention of dangerous military activities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Auditing Practices Committee

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the membership of the Auditing Practices Committee is determined.

Mr. Redwood: As I explained in the replies I gave on 27 November at columns *92-93*, 18 December, at columns *22-23*, and 21 December, at columns *392-93*, to questions by the hon. Member, membership of the Auditing Practices Committee is a matter for the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies.

Information Technology

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the United Kingdom's current balance of trade in information technology.

Mr. Redwood: According to provisional figures published by the Central Statistical Office the United Kingdom had a crude trade deficit (i) in electronics and information technology manufactured goods (ii) of £3 billion for the year to June 1989.

Notes:

(i) Exports (fob) less imports (cif).

(ii) Principal products of activity headings 3301, 3302, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3453 and 3454 of the Standard Industrial Classification (revised 1980).

West Germany (Manufactured Goods)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current balance of trade in manufactured goods with West Germany.

Mr. Redwood: In the first 11 months of 1989 imports of manufactures from the Federal Republic of Germany exceeded United Kingdom exports to that country by £9 billion.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had regarding a successor to the Alvey programme.

Mr. Forth: Support for a successor to the Alvey programme was announced in the January 1988 White Paper "DTI—The Department for Enterprise" (Cm. 278). The information engineering advanced technology programme was launched in mid-1988, and is continuing.

Association of Consulting Engineers

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Association of Consulting Engineers to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Redwood: The application was considered by my noble Friend the Minister for Trade and approved by him on 21 November 1989.

Eastern Europe

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice the Government are giving to British businesses contemplating joint ventures in eastern Europe.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are well seized of the new trading opportunities opening up in eastern Europe. To assist United Kingdom industry in making commercial decisions about participation in joint venture projects in eastern Europe, the Department of Trade and Industry has produced a comprehensive guide which contains advice on the merits and difficulties of establishing joint ventures in that area.

Copies of the guide are free available from the DTI and it gives details of contact points with whom United Kingdom companies can discuss further the opportunities for joint venture projects. I am arranging for copies of the guide to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses today. In addition, officials are very willing to advise companies on specific proposals if requested.

Golden Shares

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the names, dates of appointment, remuneration and other directorships of all directors appointed by him or his predecessors under special or golden share provisions.

Mr. Redwood: Government directors appointed to the board of British Aerospace under the special share provisions, together with the dates of their appointment, have been Mr. K. M. Bevins CBE TD (1 May 1985); Mr. C. B. Gough (19 October 1987); and Mr. K. C. Brown (16 March 1989).

Government directors appointed or nominated to the board of British Telecom under the special share provisions, together with the dates of their appointment or nomination, have been Mr. G. D. W. Odgers (20 September 1984); Mr. J. M. Raisman (20 September 1984); Mr. P. G. Bosonnet (1 October 1986, and re-nominated on 1 October 1988); Mr. G. J. Mulcahy (19 October 1988).

Remuneration is a matter for the individual companies. Both companies' articles of association state that each director (including Government directors) shall receive a level of remuneration as decided by the company board subject to a maximum level agreed by shareholders.

Details of other directorships as specified in section 289 of the Companies Act 1985 are held in the register of directors maintained by each company in accordance with section 288 of the Act. Details are also publicly available from the Registrar of Companies.

Voting Rights

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many times in the last five years he has used his powers to disenfranchise voting rights in the shares of United Kingdom companies; and in how many of those cases the shares have been identified as being held by beneficial or nominee owners based in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* Guernsey, *(c)* the Isle of Man, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein.

Mr. Redwood: Seven orders imposing restrictions (since removed) on shares, including the prohibition of the exercise of voting rights, have been made during the period, all in relation to the current section 442 Companies Act 1985 investigation into Consolidated Gold Fields plc. In one case the restrictions were imposed on shares registered in the name of a United Kingdom company and held by it to the order of a Cayman Islands company. The investigation is continuing and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to investigate the extent to which competition is distorted by certain United Kingdom companies being involved in transactions, the purpose of which is solely or mainly to avoid or evade taxation, with companies' trusts and individuals based in *(a)* the Cayman Islands, *(b)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* Jersey, *(e)* the Isle of Man and *(f)* Liechtenstein.

Mr. Redwood: I will consider any evidence of the distortion of competition which the hon. Member may wish to put to me. Taxation issues are however a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, rather than for me.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will assess the case for keeping records of United Kingdom companies owned or controlled by Netherlands Antilles or Cayman Island companies in order to assist in preventing tax avoidance and evasion.

Mr. Redwood: All companies registered in Great Britain, whatever their ownership, are required to file records at Companies House. These include lists of shareholders and, for subsidiary companies, identification of the ultimate holding company.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list those company investigations in the last 10 years carried out by his Department where the conclusions have alleged wrong doing or fraud or illegality and the reports refer to business transactions involving companies, trusts or individuals based in *(a)* the Cayman Islands, *(b)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* Jersey, *(e)* the Isle of Man and *(f)* Liechtenstein.

Mr. Redwood: The following published inspectors' reports contain references to business transactions involving companies, trusts or individuals based in the countries listed in the table:

Company	
Saint Piran Ltd	Cayman Islands; Netherlands Antilles
Minet Holdings plc/WMD Underwriting agencies Ltd [interim "Unimar" report]	Netherlands Antilles
Westminster Property Group plc	Isle of Man
Equity & General plc (formerly Emray plc)	Jersey
Milbury plc/Westminster Property Group Ltd	Netherlands Antilles
Summer International plc (formerly Sumrie Clothes plc)	Isle of Man; Jersey

For further information, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reports, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will initiate an inquiry into the extent of business transactions between United Kingdom companies and companies, trusts and individuals based in *(a)* the Cayman Islands, *(b)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* Jersey, *(e)* the Isle of Man and *(f)* Liechtenstein in order to determine the purposes of those transactions and the degree to which those transactions are in the public interest;

(2) what proposals he has to prevent frauds or breaches of company law involving United Kingdom companies as a result of their directors, shareholders or other interested parties *(a)* creating transactions between those companies or *(b)* controlling some or all of their share capital through companies, trusts or individuals based in (i) the Cayman Islands, (ii) the Netherlands Antilles, (iii) Guernsey, (iv) Jersey, (v) the Isle of Man and (vi) Liechtenstein.

Mr. Redwood: There are no plans for special treatment of companies owned by, or trading with, such companies, trusts or individuals. There is a system of enforcement already in place to deal with frauds and breaches of company law. The Companies Act requires notification, in the annual accounts, of any ultimate holding company and its location, and for large companies, a breakdown of turnover by geographical area, where material. This information is available from Companies House, on a company-by-company basis.

Dixons (Takeover)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer the proposed takeover of Dixons stores group plc by Kingfisher plc, to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The proposed acquisition by Kingfisher plc of Dixons is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading who has a duty to advise the Secretary of State on whether or not it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the proposed acquisition in anticipation of the director general's advice.

Paleontological Exports

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what distinctions his Department makes between paleontological discoveries and coal, in relation to export licences;

(2) what statement was made by his Department on 22 December 1989 in relation to the legal position regarding paleontological exports.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* My Department is guided by the provisions of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987, (S.I. 1987 No. 2070) as they apply to exports of antiques, collectors' items and so on. My Department stated on 21 December that it had concluded that group B of the order should not be interpreted as bringing within export control fossils which are not the remains of man-made objects. Such fossils therefore do not require a licence under the order for export to any destination.

Tariffs

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made since 1979 in reducing the overall level of tariffs affecting imports into and exports from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: United Kingdom imports are subject to the common customs tariff of the European Communities, whose rates have been reduced by approximately 34 per cent. overall since 1979, mainly as a result of the Tokyo round of GATT negotiations. A similar reduction has taken place in the tariffs of the United Kingdom's major trading partners. Comparable figures for other markets are not available.

The tariff negotiations in the GATT Uruguay round, which is scheduled to end in December 1990, aim to achieve reductions at least as great as the 34 per cent. resulting from the Tokyo round, and in particular to reduce high tariffs. These reductions would be phased in over a period to be agreed.

Consumer Protection

Mrs Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has plans to strengthen legislation on consumer protection.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* We intend to improve the protection given to consumers in a number of ways including the introduction of an order under the Prices Act 1974, as amended, on price indications and unit pricing, and changes to other legislation affecting consumers' interests.

Poland

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the Government have had any direct contact with the Polish Privatisation Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

We are actively using the know-how fund to support privatisation in Poland. We organised a seminar on privatisation in Warsaw last year. A major consultancy report commissioned by the know-how fund, has recommended a number of future projects and programmes, including privatisation, within the Polish financial sector. These activities involve regular contact with the Plenipotentiary for Ownership Change and his office within the Polish Ministry of Finance.

Soviet Union

89. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what provision is made towards assisting British firms to exploit commercial opportunities in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Redwood: The DTI in conjunction with the Foreign Office, offers a wide range of services to help United Kingdom exporters sell more overseas, including the Soviet Union. Through the export service initiative, we provide practical assistance, advice and support for exporters at each stage of the exporting process. Approximately 150 trade inquiries about the Soviet Union are received by the DTI each week.

The Government also support 14 joint British/Soviet working groups covering several different industrial sectors, including agriculture, energy, healthcare and chemicals. They provide a framework in which United Kingdom companies can meet their Soviet counterparts and develop mutually beneficial opportunities. Companies are also represented on ministerial visits in each direction and at intergovernmental meetings such as the annual joint commission on trade and economic co-operation.

Net Book Agreement

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to reconsider the acceptability of the net book agreement.

Mr. Redwood: I have no such plans. Under the relevant existing legislation, the review of arrangements such as the net book agreement is a matter for the restrictive practices court, on application by the Director General of Fair Trading.

After looking at the case for making an application, the director general concluded in August 1989 that the basis for doing so was insufficiently strong. Although there had been many changes in book publishing and retailing since the court originally upheld the agreement in 1962, he felt that they were unlikely to be of such magnitude as to lead the court to reverse its previous finding that the agreement does not operate against the public interest.

The director general also had in mind the proposals in the Government's White Paper "Opening Markets: New Policy on Restrictive Trade Practices" published in July 1989, under which agreements such as the NBA previously upheld by the court would be automatically reviewed against a new exemption test modelled on article 85(3) of the EEC treaty.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Council

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which Ministers represented the United Kingdom at the European Economic Community Fisheries Council meeting in Brussels on 18 and 19 December; and which Minister represented the interests of the fishing industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Curry: Together with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of Fisheries Ministers on 18 and 19 December. The interests of all parts of the United Kingdom were equally defended.

Food Safety

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has had with consumer organisations about food safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Ministry continues to consult a wide range of organisations, including those representing consumers, on food safety matters.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the operation of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Curry: The United Kingdom Government have for many years insisted on the need to take action to reform the common agricultural policy (CAP), and I am glad to say that considerable progress has been made.

Of particular importance were the measures agreed at the February 1988 European Council, introducing a legally binding limit on agricultural expenditure and stabiliser mechanisms for the main commodities. The Government's policy is to build on these reforms which are creating a more rational and sustainable CAP, and to pursue agricultural policy reforms internationally through the GATT.

National Fruit Collection

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken as a result of the hon. Member for Linlithgow's communication with the Minister of State, the noble Baroness Trumpington, of 3 January, about the evidence of Dr. John Ingram, former director of national fruit trials, concerning the proposed move of the national fruit collection from Brogdale to Wye college in relation to trees allergic to frost-holes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The potential for frost damage raised by the hon. Member with my noble Friend during their telephone conversation, was fully considered, together with a number of other important issues, when the decision was taken to move the national fruit collection to Wye college. In general the soils on the site at Wye are well suited for fruit growing. Radiation frost should not be a problem although there is some risk from wind frost to the fruiting potential of trees in an exceptionally severe year because of the site's elevation and exposure. The site is not at the bottom of a frost bowl. However, the risk from wind frost at Wye is less than at the present site at Brogdale and could, if necessary, be ameliorated by the planting of shelter screens as has been done at Brogdale. This will be one of the factors taken into account as the detailed arrangements for the transfer are made. The risk of exposure to frost is, of course, of less significance for the collection than it would be for a commercial orchard, given that the collection's main purpose is as a scientific, genetic and educational resource.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for the approval of new active ingredients for pesticides he has *(a)* received and *(b)* approved for each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* The information requested is set out as follows. It relates to the applications submitted to my Ministry, although approval is required jointly by six Departments. Applications for which the Health and Safety Executive is primarily responsible have not been included.

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
(a) Received	23	12	15
(b) Approved (Fully/provisionally)	11	2	3
(c) Only approved for experimental use	—	3	2
(d) Rejected/withdrawn	1	—	1

Pwllpeirian Experimental Husbandry Farm

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of Pwllpeirian experimental husbandry farm Cwmystwyth.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) on 14 December 1989 at columns *800-02*.

SCOTLAND

Japan (Visit)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what subjects he discussed with the Japanese during his visit in the summer recess.

Mr. Rifkind: The bulk of the discussions held during my visit to Japan were the existing and potential inward investors. Meetings were also held with senior Government Ministers, to discuss trade links and other matters of mutual interest, including Scotch whisky exports.

Scottish National Health Service

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the value of the allocation to Scottish National Health Service services for 1982-83 to 1990-91 both at current and standard prices; and if he will indicate the value of the allocation in standard prices on a per capita basis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Total National Health Service Expenditure in Scotland

	Outturn £ million cash	[1] *Adjustment*	[2] *Expenditure*
1982-83	1,660	2,401	465
1983-84	1,773	2,450	476
1984-85	1,901	2,502	486
1985-86	2,015	2,518	490
1986-87	2,144	2,591	506
1987-88	2,328	2,672	523
1988-89	2,591	2,772	544
[3]1989-90	2,821	2,821	553
[4]1990-91	3,041	2,896	568

[1] Adjusted by the GDP deflator to 1989-90 prices.
[2] Expenditure per head of population adjusted by the GDP deflator to 1989-90 prices.
[3] Projected outturn.
[4] Provisional allocation.

Hospital Cleaning and Catering

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to the reply of 20 December 1989 to the hon. Member for Eastwood about standards of cleaning and catering in hospitals in Scotland, *Official Report*, column *289*, he will place a copy of the report referred to in the Library.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Eastern Europe

2. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present situation in eastern Europe.

Mr. Hurd: The whole House will welcome the momentous changes in eastern Europe which give promise of democracy and longer-term prosperity throughout the region. We hope in 1990 to see these gains consolidated. We shall do all we can to support these countries in accordance with their individual needs and stages of development.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the respective powers of *(a)* democratically controlled Ministers and *(b)* Community bureaucrats with regard to the initiation of European Community policy with regard to eastern European issues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Under the EC treaties it is the Commission which has the responsibility to put forward proposals for Community action. Formulation of policy in European political co-operation is co-ordinated by the presidency. In both areas decisions are taken by Ministers. We have taken a prominent part within the Community in ensuring that the EC has responded generously and quickly to reforming countries in eastern Europe.

80. **Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department is giving in the process of exchanges with parliamentarians from eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome the increased scope which now exists for useful contacts between Members of this House and eastern European parliamentarians. We have assisted the Great Britain-East Europe Centre in setting up successful seminars for Polish and Hungarian politicians and are involved in a similar seminar for GDR politicians in March.

We hope that future direct links and contacts within the IPU framework will encourage the further development of democracy in eastern Europe.

63. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the United Kingdom will offer for environmental improvements in eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government are fully committed to improving the environment in Europe, including eastern Europe. Environmental problems are best tackled through international co-operation, and we are working within the EC to establish how best we can help in eastern Europe. The £210 million EC assistance budget for 1990 to Poland and Hungary includes the environment as a priority area. The G24 countries, which are co-ordinating their assistance for eastern Europe, are also looking at ways to help.

54. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being made available to encourage the process of reform in eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government are committed to supporting economic and political reform in eastern Europe, and have played a leading role in encouraging the positive response of the EC and its member states to the emerging democracies in Poland and Hungary. For both these countries we have established know-how funds and provide assistance through the EC's trade, aid and other measures. We will respond positively to other countries in eastern Europe at the time they put into place necessary political and economic reforms.

22. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss the developments of the Community and relations with eastern European countries.

Mr. Maude: The next formal meeting of the Community Foreign Affairs Council will be on 5 and 6 February, the first under the Irish presidency. The agenda is not yet known but is likely to include further discussion of eastern Europe, given the continuing pace of developments in those countries. The FAC will be preceded by an extraordinary meeting of the EC Foreign Ministers, called by the Irish presidency on 20 January, specifically to discuss eastern Europe.

24. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in setting up know-how funds to assist countries in eastern Europe.

56. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by Her Majesty's Government in providing know-how funding for east European countries emerging from one-party rule.

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in setting up know-how funds to assist eastern European countries emerging from totalitarian regimes.

Mr. Waldegrave: A know-how fund for Poland was established in June, and it has subsequently been doubled in value to £50 million to be spent over five years. The aim of the fund is to help political and economic reform. To date, some 40 separate activities have been approved and £2·1 million committed. A fund of £25 million over five years for Hungary will start in April. Help for the Poles and Hungarians to prepare for democratic elections is one of the central objectives of both funds. We are considering further help for other eastern European countries.

Vietnamese Boat People

16. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people have been repatriated from Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: A total of 925 Vietnamese boat people have been repatriated from Hong Kong. Eight hundred and seventy-four of these volunteered to return. The remaining 51 were the subject of the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 12 December. I have nothing to add to what was said then.

71. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the forced repatriation of Vietnamese from Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: We have received a number of representations on the repatriation of the first group of non-volunteer boat people to Vietnam, As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said in his statement on 12 December, no force was used. The repatriation was conducted in line with procedures used worldwide to remove people refused permission to remain in a territory.

66. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to monitor the treatment in Vietnam of forcibly repatriated boat people.

Mr. Maude: No boat people have been forcibly repatriated. Normal removal procedures, which are applied worldwide in returning people refused permission to remain, were used. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs envisaged in his statement on 12 December, Her Majesty's embassy in Hanoi has monitored the conditions of the group of non-volunteers who have returned, both in the transit camp in Hanoi and in the villages to which they have subsequently returned. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) and Lord Ennals are visiting Vietnam from 7 to 11 January as independent observers to report on the conditions of those who have returned.

61. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many non-refugee Vietnamese boat people have been returned to Vietnam to date; and with what result.

Mr. Maude: A total of 925 non-refugee Vietnamese boat people have returned to Vietnam. The monitoring undertaken by the UNHCR and Her Majesty's embassy in Hanoi has shown that none has been detained or punished for having left Vietnam.

Chile

17. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the restoration of democracy in Chile.

44. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the restoration of democracy in Chile.

53. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the restoration of democracy in Chile.

65. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the restoration of democracy in Chile.

Mr. Sainsbury: We warmly welcome the exemplary conduct of the presidential and congressional elections in Chile and, with our partners in the Twelve, look forward to working closely with the new democratic Government there.

60. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to meet the President-elect of Chile.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to have an early opportunity to meet the President-elect of Chile, but has no definite plan to do so at present.

Cambodia

19. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his current policy with regard to Cambodia.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 8 November in which I made plain the Government's repugnance for the Khmer Rouge and set out our policy towards Cambodia.

Middle East

21. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government involvement in the middle east peace process.

50. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to advance the peace process in the middle east.

51. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to assist the development of the peace process in the middle east; and if he will make a statement.

74. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in promoting peace in the middle east.

86. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have been closely involved in the efforts being made to establish direct contact between Israel and a representative Palestinian delegation as an important step towards an overall settlement.

30. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on implementation of the peace plan put forward by President Mubarak of Egypt.

Mr. Waldegrave: President Mubarak deserves great credit for his efforts to help establish direct contact between Israel and a representative Palestinian delegation.

Poland

23. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Poland and its efforts to build up democratic institutions.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have close and friendly relations with Poland. We admire the courage with which the Polish Government are tackling their economic problems and will continue to give substantial help to ease the transition to democracy and a market-based economy.

48. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met a member of the Polish Government; and what was discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met the Polish Foreign Minister, Mr. Skubiszewski, at the Group of 24 ministerial meeting in Brussels on 13 December, when further Community assistance to Poland was discussed. He also met Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity, on 30 November. They discussed the internal situation in Poland and economic assistance.

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the Polish Prime Minister or members of the Polish Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs certainly hopes to meet the Polish Prime Minister in 1990. No date has yet been fixed. He met the Polish Foreign Minister at the Group of 24 ministerial meeting in Paris on 13 December and had talks with Mr. Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity, on 30 November.

We are delighted that a programme of economic reform has now been agreed with the IMF, and will continue to support the Polish Government's efforts in all appropriate ways, including through a contribution to the stabilisation fund.

Ethiopia

25. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about peace talks in Ethiopia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome the continuing peace talks between the Ethiopian Government and, respectively, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front. We urge all involved to work seriously for a negotiated settlement which offers the only lasting solution to these long-standing conflicts.

27. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present state of United Kingdom relations with Ethiopia.

42. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present state of United Kingdom relations with Ethiopia.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our relations with the Ethiopian Government enable us to maintain a dialogue on such issues as famine relief, human rights, the peace process and economic policies.

Vietnam

26. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he discussed the American trade and aid embargo against Vietnam during his recent meeting with the United States Secretary of State; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The subject was not raised during my right hon. Friend's talks with Mr. Baker on 11 December.

84. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last had discussions with his Vietnamese counterpart; and what was their content.

Mr. Sainsbury: The then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Mr. Nguyen Co Thach, on 28 June 1989. Their discussions focused on the return of the Vietnamese boat people and other bilateral issues.

59. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Vietnam.

82. **Mr. Strong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on relations with the Government of Vietnam.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have normal diplomatic relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. We expect Vietnam to meet its responsibilities towards its neighbours and its own people before we consider further development of our relations.

40. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet representatives of the Government of Vietnam; and what subjects he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no current plans to meet representatives of the Government of Vietnam.

East Germany

28. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for reform in East Germany following the meeting of the four powers in Berlin.

37. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for reform in East Germany following the meeting of the four powers in Berlin.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are greatly encouraged by the steps Mr. Modrow's Government are taking to introduce real democracy into the GDR. We hope for further progress in the run-up to the elections planned to take place next May.

Kuwait

31. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to further strengthen the United Kingdom's ties with Kuwait.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our bilateral relations remain excellent. I am pleased to say that Shaikh Sa'ad Abdullah Al Sabah, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kuwait, has recently accepted an invitation to visit the United Kingdom as a guest of the Government later this year.

Somalia

32. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Somalia ambassador; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not had the opportunity of an official meeting with the Somali ambassador since taking up his present appointment. Senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials are in frequent contact with the ambassador about developments in Somalia.

Czechoslovakia

33. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy of the prospects for reform in Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are confident that recent events in Czechoslovakia will allow much closer bilateral relations. Once the necessary economic and political reforms are in place, we will consider economic assistance at international and bilateral level.

India

34. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement concerning United Kingdom relations with India.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our relations with India are excellent. We are looking forward to developing them still further in co-operation with the newly elected Indian Government.

83. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet his opposite number in the newly elected Government of India.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs looks forward to meeting and working closely with Mr. Gujral, the new Indian Minister for External Affairs, but he has no specific plans for a meeting at present.

Israel

35. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Israel.

Mr. Waldegrave: Relations with Israel are good.

South Korea

36. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with South Korea.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our relations with the Republic of Korea are excellent. They were further strengthened by the successful visit of President Roh Tae-woo from 27 to 30 November 1989.

CSCE Review

38. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what has been Her Majesty's Government's response to President Gorbachev's proposal to bring forward the next conference on security and co-operation in Europe review conference.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Soviet Union has modified President Gorbachev's original suggestion of holding a CSCE summit meeting to launch a Helsinki follow-up meeting brought forward from 1992 to 1990. Mr. Shevardnadze has since said, on a number of occasions, that the Soviet Union does not want the CSCE summit, which the Soviet Union has proposed for 1990, to interfere with the programme of intersessional CSCE meetings arranged in 1990-92, nor with the holding of the Helsinki follow-up meeting in 1992. We are willing to consider the suggestion of a CSCE summit in 1990. A successful meeting would require careful preparation and clarity as to its intended purpose and goals.

Drugs

39. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made to co-ordinate international action against the drugs trade.

Mr. Sainsbury: International co-operation against the drugs trade takes place in a number of fora, notably the United Nations, the European Community and the Council of Europe. In my statement to the United Nations General Assembly in November, I called for greater resources for the United Nations drugs effort; and for a restructuring of the United Nations drugs bodies to make them more effective. The General Assembly has now called on the secretary-general to convene an expert group to review these issues. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to attend a United Nations special session on drugs in New York next month. The Government will also host a world ministerial summit in London in April 1990 to look at ways of reducing the demand for drugs and combating the cocaine threat.

Overseas Staff (Commercial Activities)

41. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of his Department's front-line staff resources overseas are devoted to commercial activities.

Mr. Maude: Nearly 30 per cent.

Namibia

43. **Mr. Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Namibia.

70. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Namibia.

81. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are delighted by progress towards successful completion of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence, and look forward to close relations with Namibia.

78. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the current political situation in Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: The constituent assembly has made substantial progress towards agreeing a draft constitution. On this basis, we believe Namibia will achieve independence within the timetable of the United Nations plan.

Malta

45. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Malta.

Mr. Maude: No.

Nicaragua

46. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to visit Nicaragua during the forthcoming elections.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being provided to the Nicaraguan authorities in connection with that country's forthcoming election.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 29 November at column *698*.

India-Nepal Dispute

47. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has received on the Indo-Nepalese trade and transit dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have received many representations. We have been very concerned at this dispute, and its effects on the people of Nepal, and are therefore much encouraged by the new Indian Government's statements about the need to improve relations with Nepal, and by the news that the two Foreign Ministers will meet soon.

Central America

49. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has made to the Government of the United States of America concerning peace plans for central America.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have regular discussions with the United States Administration on a wide range of issues, including central America.

EC Integration

52. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the development of further integration in the European Community following the declaration of Heads of Government at Strasbourg on 10 December.

Mr. Maude: We want to continue and to extend the process of integration, to which the main practical contribution is at present being made by the programme to complete the internal market.

Falkland Islands (Fishing Rights)

55. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if officials of his Department have entered into discussions with representatives of the Argentinian Government concerning the possible resumption of fishing of Argentinian fishing vessels in Falkland waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Talks on fisheries between British and Argentine representatives took place in a working group in Paris on 18 and 19 December 1989. Officials discussed ways of exchanging information, in order to improve both sides' understanding of fishing questions and promote the conservation of fish stocks. The report of the working group will be considered at the next substantive meeting to discuss relations between the two countries in Madrid on 14 and 15 February.

The question of fishing in the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone by Argentine vessels did not arise.

Cyprus

57. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives are proposed by Her Majesty's Government to bring about a resolution of the Cyprus problem.

Mr. Maude: We believe that the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative offers the best hope of settling the Cyprus dispute. We strongly support it, and do not propose any new initiative ourselves which might cut across it.

87. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next visit Cyprus.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no present plans to visit Cyprus.

South Africa

58. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet representatives of the African National Congress in London to discuss the situation in South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Dalai Lama

62. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now meet the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 16 November 1989 to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) at column *498*.

Arms Reductions (Verification)

64. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he accepts without serious reservation the recommendations presented in the report on force comparisons which was approved by the

WEU assembly on 6 December; and what role he envisages for the Western European Union in the pursuit of verification of arms reductions.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome the support expressed in this report for NATO's agreed arms control priorities. But we cannot endorse all its specific proposals. In particular, the report's recommendations on short-range nuclear forces differ from the Alliance's agreed position as set out in the comprehensive concept. We consider that the WEU can provide useful support for NATO's work on conventional arms control verification by helping to ensure that the European contribution is as effective as possible.

Romania

67. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what approaches he has made to the British Broadcasting Corporation external services concerning the situation in Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: We regularly review with the BBC world service the hours of broadcasting to Romania and other countries. In view of the situation in Romania, the FCO and the BBC agreed to increase the evening broadcast by 15 minutes a day, Monday to Saturday, from 21 December, and to introduce additional dawn transmissions of 15 minutes a day on Saturdays and Sundays from 23 December.

77. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the state of current relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Republic of Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: Her Majesty's ambassador in Bucharest has had cordial meetings with members of the new Government of Romania. We look forward to developments in Romania which will make close and fruitful relations possible.

75. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom policy of the current situation in Romania.

Mr. Waldegrave: We were encouraged by the commitments made by the new Government of Romania to pluralism, democracy and respect for human rights. If such commitments are fully realised it will be possible to develop cordial and close relations with Romania.

European Monetary Union

68. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out his responsibilities in relation to European Community negotiations on monetary union.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has overall responsibility for policy towards the European Community. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible for economic and monetary issues.

El Salvador

69. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of El Salvador concerning abuse of human rights in that country.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not met Salvadorean Ministers recently. The importance which we attach to respect for human rights was emphasised to both President Cristiani and Foreign Minister Pacas on the occasion of their visit in September last year.

Colombia

72. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support he is providing for President Barco of Colombia's war on the drug barons.

Mr. Sainsbury: We fully support the efforts of President Barco in combating the activities of the illegal drugs traffickers in Colombia. As my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced on 27 September in New York, the Government are providing a substantial package of practical assistance to the Colombian authorities. This includes the provision of non-lethal equipment, technical expertise and training in a number of areas including bomb disposal, close protection of VIPs, secure communications, police data processing and riverine patrolling. Royal Naval vessels in the area are periodically deployed to provide surveillance assistance to Colombia.

European Development Bank

73. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in negotiations towards achieving the creation of a European development bank.

Mr. Maude: The European Council in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December agreed in principle to set up a European bank for reconstruction and development. Follow-up discussion has continued within the Council. A substantive follow-up meeting of interested parties will take place in Paris on 15 and 16 January 1990. This is consistent with the timetable set by the European Council. The Strasbourg Council set a target for negotiations to open in January 1990.

Tibet

76. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an official visit to Tibet in 1990.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no such plans.

Australia

79. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if has any plans to visit Australia.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs would like

to make a visit to Australia in order to maintain the valuable dialogue that we now have with the Australians on a wide range of international issues. No decision has yet been made on the timing of such a visit.

Southern Africa

85. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit southern Africa in 1990.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no current plans to do so.

Albania

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to meet representatives of the Government of Albania.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Colombian Amazon

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the book "The Colombian Amazon: Policies for the Protection of its Indigenous Peoples and their Environment", by Peter Bunyard.

Mr. Sainsbury: The publication "The Colombian Amazon: Policies for the Protection of its Indigenous Peoples and their Environment", by Peter Bunyard has been ordered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office library.

Angola

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is his Department's policy towards support for President Mobutu Sese Seko in mediations between the MPLA and UNITA in Angola;

(2) whether he has made any recent representations to the MPLA-PT in Angola concerning any response which it may make to the peace proposals placed before it in October by President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have consistently stressed the need for a political settlement in Angola. The terms of such a settlement are for the MPLA Government of Angola and UNITA to decide. We support President Mobutu's work as mediator and trust that this will lead to an early end to the fighting and to negotiations without pre-conditions between the two sides.

Extradition

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Britain will ratify the European convention on extradition.

Mr. Sainsbury: We intend to introduce the necessary Orders in Council under the Extradition Act 1989 during the present Session. Subject to the approval of Parliament, signature and ratification of the convention will then follow.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there is currently a prima facie requirement in respect of requests for extradition to the United Kingdom from those countries which have ratified the European convention on extradition.

Mr. Sainsbury: Requests for extradition to the United Kingdom from those countries party to the convention with which we have bilateral extradition treaties must be supported by evidence or particulars sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the relevant treaty.

EC Grants

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to require any public bodies receiving grants from the EEC to declare this in the publications of these bodies.

Mr. Maude: Individual departmental chapters of the public expenditure White Paper already refer to any significant receipts from the EC in respect of the Department's programme. The Government expect all public bodies to publish details of significant grant receipts from the EC.

Hong Kong

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he has given to unaccompanied minors from Vietnam currently residing in Hong Kong's refugee camps.

Mr. Maude: The Hong Kong Government are discussing with UNHCR the establishment of special procedures under the comprehensive plan of action for dealing with unaccompanied minors, with the aim of identifying the most humane and appropriate course in each individual case. This might mean repatriation where the child's parents or closest relatives are in Vietnam or resettlement elsewhere where the nearest family ties are overseas.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Capital Limits

Ms. Clare Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many additional people would qualify for the following benefits if the capital limits were increased to *(a)* £8,000, where applicable, *(b)* £10,000, *(c)* £12,000 or *(d)* abolished; and what would be the full year cost of each of these changes at current benefit levels (i) income support, (ii) family credit, (iii) National Health Service benefits, (iv) housing benefit, (v) community charge benefit and (vi) the social fund.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimates are as follows (assuming in each case that the present rules for imputing a weekly income to capital holdings of more than £3,000 are maintained):

Upper capital limit	Additional people qualifying (Thousands) IS	FC	HB	CCB	Full year cost at current rate (£ million) IS	FC	HB	CCB
£8,000	10	[1]—	—	—	25	[2]—	—	—
£10,000	20	[1]—	25	35	45	[2]—	20	10
£12,000	30	[1]—	30	55	55	[2]—	25	15
Abolished	40	[3]1·5	40	85	65	[4]1	50	20

[1]Denotes less than 1·5 thousand people.
[2]Denotes less than £1 million.
[3]Approximately.
[4]Around.

Because most expenditure from the social fund is discretionary, it is not possible to estimate the effect on the fund of implementing the changes.

Qualification for the NHS low income scheme depends not only on the patient's financial circumstances but on the nature and level of the particular charge or expenses incurred. Therefore meaningful estimates of the effect of changing the capital limits are not possible.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) of 19 December on the social fund, he will publish *(a)* his revised social fund budget for 1990-91 and *(b)* the names of the benefit offices which have come under exceptional pressure and are to receive an increase in their allocation for that social fund budget during 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: With regard to the budget for 1990-91, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 10 November at column *812*. We are considering the basis on which the 1990-91 budget should be allocated to individual local offices and will announce the allocations in due course. Details of the revised allocations for 1989-90 are in the Library.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been assisted by the independent living fund since it was established; how many people he estimates will be assisted in the 1990-91 financial year; how much money is to be allocated to the fund for the 1990-91 financial year; if he envisages the fund being established on a permanent basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Up to the end of December 1989, the independent living fund had made 3,391 awards, including a small number of one-off payments. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced on 25 October 1989, provision of more than £20 million, twice the 1989-90 level, has been allocated to the fund for the 1990-91 financial year. The wider arrangements for care in the community proposed in Cm 849, "Caring for People", to take effect in 1991 envisage care packages devised by local authorities on an individual basis. We would therefore expect that people seeking help after that date should generally be able to look to local authorities. We are consulting the fund's trustees, the Disablement Income Group and DIG (Scotland) on the experience gained from running the fund and examining whether there might be a very small group of people for whom supplementary arrangements may be necessary.

Family Credit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the proposed family credit ceilings in 1990-91 for each of *(a)* a married couple with one child under five years, *(b)* a married couple with two children under 11 years, *(c)* a married couple with two children over 11 years, *(d)* a married couple with three children under 11 years, *(e)* a married couple with three children over 11 years and *(f)* a married couple with two children under 11 years and two children over 11 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: At the new benefit levels proposed for April 1990, the family credit ceiling represented by the highest amount of net earnings and other relevant income a family can have and still qualify for family credit at the minimum payment of 50p will be as follows:

	£
Married couple with one child under 5 years	120·60
Married couple with two children under 11	132·39
Married couple with two children over 11 (but under 16)	149·24
Married couple with three children under 11	144·17
Married couple with three children over 11 (but under 16)	169·46
Married couple with two children under 11 and two children over 11 (but under 16)	172·81

Income Support

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to increase the £500 capital limit in income support for help with interest on loans for necessary repairs and improvements to the home.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am pleased to announce our intention to abolish this rule from April 1990.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Firearms Certificates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of a new firearms licence for a shotgun in January 1986 and January 1990.

Mr. Cope: A new firearms certificate cost £33 in January 1986 and £46 in January 1990. A firearms certificate covers all types of firearms.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average amount of time a civilian worker in the Royal Ulster Constabulary firearms

section spends on the processing of *(a)* an application, *(b)* a variation and *(c)* the renewal of a firearms certificate in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average amount of police time it takes to process *(a)* an application, *(b)* a variation and *(c)* the renewal of a firearms certificate in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* It is difficult accurately to calculate the average amount of time spent processing a firearms certificate, as individual cases may require prolonged investigation.

However the police authority has informed me that the most recent agreed figures estimate the average amount of time spent by police officers in divisions on processing firearms certificates as follows:

(a) An application—100 minutes
(b) A variation—85 minutes
(c) A renewal—40 minutes

The figures do not include the time spent by police officers in RUC headquarters, firearms branch.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers, ranks and salaries of the Royal Ulster Constabulary officers employed in the Royal Ulster Constabulary firearms section; and what were the numbers, ranks and salaries five years and 10 years ago.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The information on staffing levels and average salaries as at 31 December 1989 and five years and 10 years ago is as follows:

Permanent headquarters staff

	Superintendent	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Sergeant*	*Constable*
1989	1	1	1	1	1
1984	1	1	1	1	1
1979	1	1	1	1	1

Pay[1]

	Superintendent	*Chief Inspector*	*Inspector*	*Sergeant*	*Constable*
1989	27,410	20,600	18,570	16,320	13,340
1984	19,480	14,400	12,940	11,350	8,920
1979	9,060	6,610	5,880	5,180	4,150

[1] Average pay for the grade or rank excluding allowance and overtime.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* applications, *(b)* renewals and *(c)* variations of firearms certificates were granted in Northern Ireland in each of the last six years; and how many in each category and year were refused.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has informed me that the information is as follows:

Year	*Firearm certificate granted (a)*	*Firearm certificate renewed (b)*	*Firearm certificate varied (c)*
1984	4,011	30,066	8,574
1985	4,222	22,463	7,082
1986	3,895	17,933	7,197
1987	3,743	29,296	8,903
1988	3,672	22,164	8,800
1989	3,185	17,910	7,776

Year	*New firearm certificate refused (a)*	*Renewal of firearm certificate refused (b)*	*Variation of firearm certificate refused (c)*
1984	313	88	465
1985	326	61	374
1986	308	43	320
1987	308	53	420
1988	262	62	471
1989	299	84	565

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many firearms certificates are held in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has informed me that there were 88,410 on 1 January 1990.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* handguns, *(b)* shotguns, *(c)* .22 rifles, *(d)* larger than .22 calibre rifles and *(e)* other firearms are currently held on firearms certificates in Northern Ireland; and what were the figures five years and 10 years ago.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has informed me that the information is as follows:

	At 31 December		
	1989	*1984*	*1979*
(a) Handguns	10,978	10,188	9,946
(b) Shotguns	83,593	79,845	72,843
(c) .22 rifles	12,161	12,395	12,469
(d) Full bore rifles	1,172	1,259	1,370
(e) Other firearms	19,139	17,459	14,154

HEALTH

NHS Accounts

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the National Health Service Accounts for 1987-88.

Mr. Freeman: Publication of the annual series of House of Commons papers on the National Health Service accounts is the responsibility of the National Audit Office. However, we understand that the papers for 1987-88 are to be published shortly. In the meantime my hon. Friend may wish to refer to the Department's annual booklet "Health Authorities Annual Accounts—National Summary (England)"—copies of which have been placed in the Library.

National Assistance Act

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has issued revised guidelines concerning section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Circulars were issued to local authorities in 1974 following changes made by the Local Government Act 1972. It has not been found necessary since then to issue revised guidelines.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures he intends to take to ensure that *(a)* there is a statutory duty upon local authorities to assess the needs of disabled people before discharge from long-term treatment in hospital and *(b)* that such a duty extends to people with physical or sensory disabilities as well as people with mental illness or mental handicap; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department issued detailed guidance to health and local authorities in February 1989 —LAC(89)7 and HC(89)5, copies of which are in the Library—emphasising the particular role and responsibilities of health and local authorities in ensuring that people do not leave hospital without adequate arrangements being made for their support in the community. Our recent White Paper "Caring for People" (Cmnd. 849) announced improved machinery for collaboration between health and local authorities in the provision of community care, and reaffirmed the responsibility of health authorities to ensure that discharge procedures are in place and agreed with the local authority so that people can return home with the support they need or move to appropriate care.

NHS Pay

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement concerning the pay levels of trained home staff in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: The pay of staff in the National Health Service is generally determined either following the advice of the pay review bodies, or through direct negotiation in the Whitley councils.

Dr. Philip Silver

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further use the National Health Service has for the unpaid honorary services of Dr. Philip Silver, chemotherapy consultant to Wigan health authority; how much equipment has been contributed over the last four years from Dr. Silver's fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand Dr. Philip Silver has held an honorary consultant contract with Wigan health authority for 10 years since he retired in February 1980 and that it has agreed with Dr. Silver that his cancer care endowment fund will continue in his name and that he will be a trustee of that fund. Dr. Silver will continue to make a valuable contribution through his administration of the fund but the authority does not consider it appropriate to extend his honorary contract beyond the age 75. Arrangements have been made for his cancer patients to be treated at the Royal Albert Edward hospital. Over the last five years, equipment has been purchased for the treatment of cancer patients from Dr. Silver's fund, including:

			£
December	1985	Mammography computer system	11,572
June	1986	Blood Aggrometer	6,470
February	1987	Colposcope	5,835
April	1987	Centaur centrifuge	2,200
July	1987	Microtome	8,331
August	1987	HPLC detector	9,800
September	1987	Endoscope trolley and suction pump	1,550
October	1987	Microwave	2,100
July	1988	Antenatal, Billinge	11,631
January	1989	Laporoscope, Billinge	1,361
March	1989	Microscope	1,670

Radiation

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will set out the terms of reference and future work programme of the independent expert committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment, COMARE.

Mr. Freeman: The committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment was established in 1985 to advise Government on the health effects of natural and man-made radiation in the environment and to assess the adequacy of the available data and the need for further research. The Government are grateful to COMARE for the three reports the committee has produced so far (1, 2, 3).

The Committee's future work programme will include:

(i) an update and review on cancer incidence in young people in the vicinity of BNFL Sellafield, in the light of emerging epidemiological work commissioned by Government in 1984 and other relevant work;

(ii) an assessment of the feasibility of advising Government on the evidence relating to leukaemia incidence in young people around Scottish nuclear sites and over Scotland as a whole;

(iii) follow-up of the results of work recommended by the Black advisory group (4) and COMARE's second and third reports (2, 3);

(iv) an overview of the evidence relating to the incidence of childhood cancer around nuclear installations once the results of studies of the geographical distribution of childhood cancer incidence on a nationwide basis become available.

In addition, COMARE will assess evidence relating to the health effects of domestic exposure to radon as further data become available. More generally, the committee will continue to review other relevant information on the health effects of ionising and non-ionising radiation in the environment and to advise Government accordingly.

References:

1. COMARE First Report: The implications of the new data on the releases from Sellafield in the 1950s for the conclusions of the Report on the Investigations of the possible increased incidence on cancer in West Cumbria. HMSO 1986.

2. COMARE Second Report: Investigation of the possible increased incidence of leukaemia in young people near Dounreay Nuclear Establishment, Caithness, Scotland. HMSO 1988.

3. COMARE Third Report: Report on the incidence of childhood cancer in the West Berkshire and North Hampshire area, in which are situated the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston and the Royal Ordnance Factory, Burghfield. HMSO 1989.

4. Investigation of the possible increased incidence of cancer in West Cumbria. Report of the independent advisory group, chairman: Sir Douglas Black. HMSO 1984.

Regional Allocations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how, in making his allocations to National Health Service regions for 1990-91, he took into account *(a)* population, *(b)* health-related deprivation such as occupation, unemployment and low incomes, *(c)* standard mortality ratios, *(d)* morbidity, *(e)* the needs of the elderly, *(f)* the needs of the mentally handicapped, and *(g)* the numbers of adult single-person households both with and without dependants stating in each case the indicators used, and how each indicator was weighted against the others.

Mr. Freeman: The White Paper "Working for Patients" sets out the principles of the new allocation formula. The 1990-91 revenue allocations are based on the new weighted capitation formula, but in such a way that the full redistributive effects are phased over three years to 1992-93. Under the new formula regions receive their main allocations on basis of their resident population, adjusted for morbidity and the relative costs of providing services within each of seven age bandings. Weighted standard mortality ratios (SMRs) for people under 75 years of age are used as measure of relative morbidity (the weighting is achieved by using the square root of the SMR). Allocations also take account of the higher costs of providing services in London by means of allowances for London weighting and market forces, and an additional 3 per cent. for the Thames regions. No other factors are taken into account.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the *(a)* cross-boundary flow adjustments and *(b)* any pre-planned adjustments in spending allocation between the Northern National Health Service region and Scotland for each year from 1983, indicating any planned provision of services between the north and Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: There have been no cash adjustments between England and Scotland in respect of patients crossing the border for treatment. However, Northern RHA has received recognition through the RAWP formula for treating patients from outside England. The amount attributable to Scotland cannot be separately identified centrally.

For the financial year 1990-91, as all regions move towards a simpler funding formula based on resident population, a cost for the net inflow of patients from Scotland has been estimated, and an adjustment made to the RHA's cash limit to cover this cost.

Dentists

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish the report on the three-year trial of a capitation system for paying dentists for the treatment of children.

Mr. Freeman: The report on the clinical trial of a capitation system for remunerating dentists for treatment of children is published today by Macmillans Press as supplement No. 1 1990 to the "Community Dental Health Journal". Copies of the report will be placed in the Library.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, pursuant to the answer, 18 December, *Official Report*, column *81-82*, he will state *(a)* the average, and *(b)* the range of expenditure per patient in each family practitioner committee area of the Northern health region for two previous quarters to the one ended June to August 1989.

Mr. Freeman: Information about individual patients is not collected. The range of expenditure per patient in each family practitioner committee area is available only on a general practitioner practice basis and by basic price of prescriptions. Basic price takes no account of discount, dispensing costs or fees and therefore does not represent actual expenditure. The information that is available on this basis is set out in the tables:

	Average basic price per patient £	*Range of basic prices per patient* *Lowest cost practice* £	*Highest cost practice* £	*Quarter ending*
Cleveland FPC	11·04	3·64	42·40	January 1989
Cumbria FPC	10·28	2·88	19·43	February 1989
Durham FPC	10·95	5·76	18·60	February 1989
Gateshead FPC	10·25	7·68	14·51	December 1988
Newcastle FPC	9·80	2·33	18·03	January 1989
Northumberland FPC	10·39	7·43	16·25	December 1988
North Tyneside FPC	12·35	7·45	22·58	December 1988
South Tyneside FPC	10·81	8·01	13·67	December 1988
Sunderland FPC	11·43	6·93	17·51	February 1989
Cleveland FPC	10·54	5·07	37·72	April 1989
Cumbria FPC	10·65	3·65	20·61	May 1989
Durham FPC	11·42	6·14	27·98	May 1989
Gateshead FPC	9·96	7·46	13·95	March 1989
Newcastle FPC	9·37	2·13	16·17	April 1989
Northumberland FPC	10·30	7·60	16·35	March 1989
North Tyneside FPC	11·98	3·57	21·60	March 1989
South Tyneside FPC	10·54	7·43	14·29	March 1989
Sunderland FPC	11·85	6·69	17·69	May 1989

Notes:

1. The figures are based on patient list sizes of 500 or more of prescribing doctors within the family practitioner committee. Lists of less than 500 and of dispensing doctors are not included.

2. The figures are net ingredient cost (basic price) of prescriptions dispensed in response to prescriptions written by practices within the family practitioner committee. They take no account of discount, dispensing costs or fees and therefore do not represent actual expenditure.
3. The family practitioner committees are divided into three streams for reporting purposes. Each stream has a different quarterly cycle. Aggregated annual data is not available.

Cochlear Implants

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to approve supraregional funding for cochlear implant operations to be made available in Manchester on the National Health Service as part of a national funding programme for such operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I was very pleased to be able to announce on 4 January the provision of central funding for a cochlear implant programme. A total of £1 million is being made available in 1990-91 and similar sums will be made available in each of the following two years. Regional health authorities have been asked to submit bids for funding on behalf of units in their area. Up to six centres will be funded. Previously there was no way of alleviating the deafness of profoundly deaf people. Cochlear implants help with lip reading, improve control of voice volume and intonation, restore self-confidence, and remove their sense of isolation.

HIV Infection

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received in regard to people who acquired HIV from blood transfusions; what reply he is sending; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has received two inquiries about people who have become infected with HIV as a result of blood transfusions.

The special financial help which the Government have made available for haemophiliacs with HIV recognises the wholly exceptional circumstances of those persons. We have no plans to extend those arrangements to those recipients of blood transfusions who have become HIV infected.

Creutzfeldt Jakob Dementia

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his research programme into Creutzfeldt Jakob dementia.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health will be supporting Dr. R. G. Will of the department of clinical neurosciences, Western General hospital, Edinburgh in the establishment of a national register of Creutzfeldt Jakob diseases cases. This study is that recommended in the Tyrell report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Ambulance Personnel

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulance workers there are per 1,000 head of population in each regional health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The information is given in the table:

NHS ambulance staff in post per thousand resident population by regional health authority in England—at 30 September 1988

Region	*Officers*[1]	*Men/Women*[1]	*Officers and Men/Women*[1]
Northern	0·06	0·38	0·44
Yorkshire	0·07	0·36	0·43
Trent	0·07	0·35	0·42
East Anglian	0·06	0·32	0·38
North West Thames	0·02	0·13	0·15
North East Thames	0·02	0·14	0·16
South East Thames	0·04	0·22	0·25
South West Thames	0·04	0·19	0·23
Wessex	0·06	0·27	0·33
Oxford	0·06	0·28	0·33
South Western	0·07	0·38	0·45
West Midlands	0·07	0·30	0·37
Mersey	0·05	0·34	0·39
North Western	0·07	0·36	0·42
England[2]	0·06	0·33	0·39

Source: Department of Health (SM13) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower and Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

[1]Ratios calculated using unrounded whole-time equivalent figures and mid-year 1988 population estimates.

[2]Includes London Ambulance Service Staff (2605 wte) not allocated to any one specific Regional Health Authority.

Visual Handicap

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, when White Papers are published which have profound implications for disabled people, particularly the visually impaired, he will consider having the documents published not only in print form but also on tape or in braille.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* We are considering a number of options for communicating our messages in a variety of languages and formats to meet the needs of particular groups, including the needs of visually impaired people.

Health Authorities

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the estimated cost of the backlog of maintenance work in each district health authority in England in 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The first returns of information about the stock of buildings of each district health authority, under the Korner requirements, are now being collected although complete information for all districts will not be available until the figures for 1989-90 are received.

The table of the preliminary information available from 133 health authorities, gives the cost of bringing the NHS estate to an overall condition which exhibits only minor deterioration. It includes property which is due to be replaced within three years, buildings which are not used for patient care, property which is awaiting planned preventive maintenance and property which is awaiting disposal.

Authority	*Cost £ million*
Northern Regional Health Authority	
Hartlepool	5·6
North Tees	19·4

Authority	Cost £ million
South Tees	4·3
East Cumbria	3·3
South Cumbria	7·9
West Cumbria	13·3
Darlington	4·5
Durham	6·0
North West Durham	1·6
South West Durham	4·5
Northumberland	15·1
North Tyneside	0·9
South Tyneside	3·1
Sunderland	2·9
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	
East Yorkshire	6·2
Grimsby	0·0
Scunthorpe	5·3
York	8·2
Scarborough	0·8
Airdale	1·5
Dewsbury	0·3
Pontefract	2·6
Trent Regional Health Authority	
South Derbyshire	0·0
Leicester	22·4
Lincolnshire-North	2·2
Central Nottingham	5·8
Nottingham (T)	10·5
Rotherham	1·4
Sheffield (T)	13·9
East Anglia Regional Health Authority	
West Suffolk	1·0
East Suffolk	10·8
Norwich	23·2
Huntingdon	1·3
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	
North Hertfordshire	7·4
East Hertfordshire	1·7
North West Hertfordshire	12·1
South West Hertfordshire	3·5
Hounslow and Spelthorne	18·9
Ealing	8·5
Riverside	34·5
Parkside	13·5
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Mid-Essex	8·9
North East Essex	22·3
Barking-Havering and Brentwood	13·9
Tower Hamlets (T)	15·0
Enfield	51·2
Harringey	6·4
Waltham Forest	2·4
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Brighton	32·5
Hastings	5·6
South East Kent	1·3
Canterbury and Thanet	56·8
Dartford and Gravesham	11·4
Maidstone	2·9
Turnbridge Wells	9·5
Bexley	4·6
Camberwell (T)	15·7
South West Thames RHA	
North West Surrey	12·4
South West Surrey	6·4
Mid-Surrey	11·3
East Surrey	6·9
Chichester	7·6
Mid-Downs	13·5
Worthing	7·1
Croydon	4·4
Kingston and Esher	10·0
Richmond-Twickenham-Roehampton	10·4
Wandsworth	7·2
Merton and Sutton	10·3
Wessex RHA	
West Dorset	0·6
Oxford RHA	
Milton Keynes	0·3
South Western RHA	
Bristol and Weston (T)	7·4
Frenchay	38·3
Southmead	4·3
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	8·5
Exeter	4·6
North Devon	1·6
Plymouth	13·6
Torbay	2·2
Cheltenham	1·5
Gloucester	11·0
Somerset	9·1
West Midlands RHA	
Bromsgrove and Redditch	3·2
Herefordshire	7·5
Kidderminster	4·0
Worcester	6·4
Shropshire	20·6
Mid Staffordshire	2·5
North Staffordshire	35·3
South East Staffordshire	24·6
Rugby	2·5
North Warwickshire	15·9
South Warwickshire	30·2
Central Birmingham	37·8
East Birmingham (T)	9·7
North Birmingham	10·9
South Birmingham	30·2
West Birmingham	12·1
Coventry	16·3
Dudley	7·0
Sandwell	6·9
Solihull	2·9
Walsall	4·9
Wolverhampton	24·9
Mersey RHA	
Chester	4·3
Crewe	3·5
Halton	0·6
Macclesfield	5·5
Warrington	3·1
Liverpool	33·7
St. Helen's Knowsley	2·4
Southport and Formby	3·3
South Sefton (Merseyside)	10·2
Wirral	2·6
North Western Regional Health Authority	
Lancaster	2·7
Blackpool-Wyre and Flyde	5·7
Preston	5·7
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	4·6
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	5·2
West Lancashire	7·6
Chorley and South Ribble	2·2
Bolton	3·9
Bury	0·9
Manchester—North	10·0
Manchester—Centre	26·7
Manchester—South	7·6
Oldham	4·2
Rochdale	8·2
Salford	9·0
Stockport	2·7
Tameside and Glossop	2·6

Authority	*Cost £ million*
Trafford	3·5
Wigan	3·6

EMPLOYMENT

Social Fund

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table for each year since 1979 of his Department's allocation of the European social fund by percentage and amount in relation to the United Kingdom's total allocation.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available for years 1979 to 1982 and separate figures over the period are not available for my Department. Figures and percentages for the allocation to all Government Departments for other years are as follows:

	£ million	*Per cent.*[1]
1983	276	86
1984	236	67
1985	159	51
1986	158	56
1987	323	74
1988	263	65
1989	236	56

[1] of national allocation.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate how many jobs would be lost were existing law on Sunday trading to be enforced throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: No such estimates are available.

Wages Council Inspectors

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments were checked by a visit by wages council inspectors in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 21 December, *Official Report*, column *450*.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom; and what is the current European Community average.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989, the latest available date, the rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom was 6·2 per cent. compared with an EEC average of 9·1 per cent. Over the past two years the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom has fallen faster than in any other major industrialised country.

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the fall in unemployment since June 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: Since June 1986 unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom has fallen by 1,480,500. Unemployment has now fallen for 40 consecutive months to the lowest level for over nine years.

Training

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans for further training initiatives.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government set out their plans for improving the quantity and quality of the national training effort in the December 1988 White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" (CM 540). My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to announce further initiatives.

A further expansion of the compacts initiative was announced on 21 November. Funds are being made available immediately to assist the establishment of compacts in the following inner-city areas: Barnsley, Burnley, Lambeth, Nottingham, Rotherham, Wandsworth and Wigan. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will shortly announce details of further compacts in Wales.

Breast and Cervical Screening

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to enable all female employees to be allowed paid leave in order to receive breast and cervical screening.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Government believe that such matters are best settled by direct agreement between employers and employees according to their own priorities.

Industrial Disputes

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the employment implications of recent industrial disputes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend receives representations about various aspects of industrial disputes from time to time. Disputes that lead to industrial action are to be regretted because they put jobs at risk.

Construction Industry

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment at what level of turnover building firms will be required to begin contributing to the financing of the construction industry training board.

Mr. Nicholls: The Industrial Training Act 1982 requires that levy proposals must include proposals exempting any employer with a small number of employees from the payment of levy. The Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1989 exempted firms with a payroll of less than £15,000, equivalent to one employee.

One of the priorities we have set for the new construction industry training board, is that more small firms should be given protection from the burden of levy.

Closed Shop

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with the Trades Union Congress regarding the closed shop; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend regularly meets representatives of the Trades Union Congress to discuss a wide range of employment issues. He has not, however, been involved in any recent meetings with them to discuss the closed shop.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further proposals he has to outlaw the closed shop.

Mr. Nicholls: The Employment Bill published on 21 December 1989 makes it unlawful to refuse to employ a person because he is or is not a trade union member and provides that any person refused employment for such a reason may complain to an industrial tribunal. This measure, together with the protections afforded by the Employment Act 1988, will make all forms of the closed shop unenforceable in law.

Skilled Workers (Holidays)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the average number of days' holiday per year for skilled workers in *(a)* France, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* Italy and *(d)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: No reliable information is available.

Weekly Pay Limit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has made of the effect on the unemployment total of the introduction of the £43 limit on weekly pay introduced on 10 December.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimated effect on the unemployment total is negligible.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to ensuring that disabled people will not be disadvantaged in qualifying for bonus or performance-related funds in the plans for training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Eggar: There will be a system of performance-related funding for training and enterprise councils (TECs). This is designed to give an incentive for good performance by TECs in achieving objectives. The needs of people with disabilities will be recognised when objectives for TECs are agreed.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what resources he has set aside to ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged by the establishment of training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) will be expected to meet the needs of people with disabilities from within their agreed budgets. Each TEC will set out how it intends to provide for the needs of people with disabilities in its business plan. This will form the basis of its contract with my Department.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make arrangements to ensure that training and enterprise councils seek expert support from appropriate agencies when dealing with disabled trainees.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) will be expected to consult and work with appropriate agencies which have the expertise necessary to meet the special needs of people with disabilities.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether funding proposals for training and enterprise councils will take into consideration the additional administrative costs likely to be incurred by voluntary sector organisations in negotiating with more than one training and enterprise council.

Mr. Nicholls: A central administrative unit has been established within my Department to facilitate negotiations and administrative arrangements between training and enterprise councils and national training providers. Voluntary sector organisations are, of course, welcome to use this facility.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to empower local training and enterprise councils to cash-limit their provision.

Mr. Nicholls: The TECs will operate under a contract with my Department which sets out targets and other outputs to be achieved together with an agreed budget. It will be for individual TECs to decide how they will negotiate provision with training providers.

Youth Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people in each separate ethnic group finished their training before the end of their scheme in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Birmingham and Solihull and *(d)* Coventry and Warwickshire.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the number and percentages of YTS leavers in each ethnic group who left YTS before the end of their YTS training entitlement:

	White	*Black/Afro Caribbean*	*Indian Sub-continent*	*Other*	*Prefer not to say*
Greater London					
Numbers	16,912	4,314	1,685	729	753
Percentage	67	78	76	74	66
Manchester					
Numbers	27,018	537	547	181	158
Percentage	73	81	80	77	73

	White	Black/Afro Caribbean	Indian Sub-continent	Other	Prefer not to say
Birmingham and Solihull					
Numbers	11,165	1,266	1,572	240	116
Percentage	74	79	82	82	73
Coventry and Warwickshire					
Numbers	7,327	141	413	40	30
Percentage	67	71	69	67	50

Training Schemes

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action is taken by his Department to ensure that an objective assessment of a quango-supported Government training scheme is provided by a Government advisory service.

Mr. Nicholls: The training standards advisory service, set up in September 1986, carries out detailed scrutiny of the design, management, delivery and outcomes of training in YT and ET on behalf of the Training Agency. From 1 September 1989 the service has been reorganised on a regional basis to reflect the greater emphasis on local autonomy under the TEC arrangements.

Minimum Wages

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to enforce minimum wage protection in Wales.

Mr. Nicholls: The level of compliance with wages orders in Wales is, as in the rest of Great Britain, very high. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the present policy of targeting the resources of the wages inspectorate towards those employers most likely to underpay is the most effective way of enforcing minimum wage legislation.

Employment Training

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the additional administrative costs incurred by the voluntary sector under the special training provision of employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The funding rules for special training provision provide for the additional administrative costs incurred in arranging an individualised training programme to be met by the Training Agency.

Earnings

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the real earnings figures for 1970, 1979 and 1989 from which each of the percentage increases was calulated in his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), of 13 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *658-59*.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The information is provided in the table:

Gross weekly earnings in real terms

	Manufacturing			Non-manufacturing		
	1970	1979	1989	1970	1979	1989
Manual males						
Lowest decile	115·3	136·8	141·0	98·0	115·7	122·4
Lower quartile	139·1	162·8	174·6	117·8	138·2	152·0
Median	169·0	194·7	217·9	146·4	171·5	193·1
Higher quartile	203·4	233·1	269·6	180·5	214·5	245·8
Highest decile	240·5	278·8	333·3	220·7	267·2	309·6
Average earnings	174·6	203·0	230·6	154·4	183·8	207·5
Non-manual males						
Lowest decile	126·5	148·3	179·0	110·7	127·4	151·0
Lower quartile	158·0	181·1	226·2	141·2	162·6	205·9
Median	198·1	221·7	289·5	189·6	212·7	282·9
Higher quartile	250·0	279·8	384·5	255·0	273·8	377·4
Highest decile	337·0	360·0	515·4	340·0	349·2	517·4
Average earnings	224·3	243·4	331·5	216·6	230·9	321·1
Manual females						
Lowest decile	60·9	85·0	90·7	50·8	74·6	82·8
Lower quartile	71·5	99·6	106·4	59·4	86·7	98·4
Median	83·9	118·7	129·7	72·1	104·0	121·4
Higher quartile	98·8	139·6	159·0	89·7	126·1	153·4
Highest decile	115·8	161·4	197·7	114·8	151·2	193·9
Average earnings	86·9	121·6	138·2	78·3	109·4	131·4
Non-manual females						
Lowest decile	66·6	94·2	110·3	63·5	89·6	108·1
Lower quartile	77·9	108·0	132·2	78·5	105·2	133·8
Median	91·1	126·2	162·3	103·8	130·1	176·0
Higher quartile	109·9	148·2	206·0	135·4	166·5	242·3
Highest decile	135·2	178·2	269·8	182·4	209·3	304·7
Average earnings	98·8	132·9	182·8	114·8	141·2	196·7

Notes:
1. Full-time adult employees in Great Britain.
2. Figures as at April of each year, revalued to April 1989 prices.
3. *Source:* New Earnings Survey.

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many agreements have been made with employers to operate the job interview guarantee scheme in each of the 20 pilot areas; how many unemployed people have taken part in the scheme in each area; and how many secured full-time employment with their sponsoring employer.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The latest available information is as follows:

Pilot Area	*Number of Employer Agreements*	[1] *Number of Unemployed People*	[2] *Number Found Employment*
Manchester	15	29	10
Salford	11	56	12
Liverpool	20	66	11
Lower Don Valley	39	100	47
Leeds	28	28	28
Birmingham	8	67	18
Wolverhampton	8	69	27
Glasgow	39	25	11
Dundee	—	—	—
Sunderland	5	14	2
Newcastle	—	—	—
Nottingham	6	93	47
Leicester	25	28	2
Cardiff	90	99	73
Merthyr Tydfil	40	66	29
Bristol (South)	26	104	37
Plymouth	14	126	61
Southwark/ Lewisham	45	101	56
Spitalfields	3	6	—
London (Docklands)	4	11	2

[1] Figures in this column represent the number of submissions to Job Interview Guarantee opportunities.

[2] It is not possible to distinguish full-time employment from part-time.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 11 January 1990

TRANSPORT

A45 Highway

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the approximate number of cars, heavy goods vehicles and passenger service vehicles that he estimates have used the A45 highway between Cambridge and the Haven ports of Ipswich and Felixstowe during each of the past 10 years; and how many he expects to use this stretch of road over the next 10 years.

Mr. Atkins: The estimated annual average daily flow of vehicles on the A45 between Cambridge and the Haven ports of Ipswich and Felixstowe in 1988 is as follows:

	Number
Heavy goods vehicles	4,500
Cars and taxis	14,500
Buses and coaches	100

Estimates of traffic levels on individual roads are made annually but the margins of error are too great to allow growth trends to be deduced.

No specific forecasts have been made for growth of traffic on this road. It is forecast by my Department that traffic in Great Britain will grow by between 20 and 35 per cent. betweeen 1990 and 2000.

Shipping Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents have taken place during the last 12 months around the coastline of Great Britain, that have involved *(a)* United Kingdom registered vessels and *(b)* foreign registered vessels; and what are the comparable figures for (i) five years and (ii) 10 years ago.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is only available for United Kingdom vessels on a worldwide basis. The numbers of accidents to United Kingdom registered vessels worldwide for 1979, 1984 and 1988 (the latest year completed statistics are available) are 421, 261 and 178 respectively. The information in respect of accidents to foreign registered vessels around the coastline of Great Britain is not kept in statistical form and is not therefore readily available.

Solar-powered Cars

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has made any study of the contribution that could be made to the reduction of carbon dioxide releases from transport from the introduction of solar-powered cars;

(2) what research his Department has initiated to evaluate the potential for solar-powered cars for short urban journeys.

Mr. Atkins: The Department keeps in touch with the various developments world wide on applying solar power to transport. At present the potential for solar powered cars to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom is small.

Car Alarms

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to ensure car alarms automatically switch off 10 minutes after activation.

Mr. Atkins: Car alarms are already required by regulations to stop emitting continuous noise after five minutes. Limiting the time of intermittent sounding of alarms would have to be agreed in the European Community. We propose to seek Community agreement for tighter standards for car alarms.

A1

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what ongoing monitoring of the condition of the recently resurfaced stretch of the A1 in west Yorkshire, immediately to the north of its junction with the M62, will be undertaken by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: The condition of the A1 is monitored regularly. The Department has initiated a regime of surveys and inspections to ensure that safety and structural integrity are monitored.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who were the analysts responsible for sampling and testing materials used in the major resurfacing work recently undertaken on the A1 in west Yorkshire immediately to the north of its junction with the M62.

Mr. Atkins: Under the Department's specification, the onus for bulk testing falls upon the contractors. Certificates of compliance are issued to the engineer who also arranges check tests. The engineer's analysts were Messrs. Sandberg of 40 Grosvenor gardens, London, SW1W 0LB.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who were the contractors responsible for the major resurfacing work undertaken on the A1 in west Yorkshire immediately to the north of its junction with the M62.

Mr. Atkins: The contractors were Tilcon Ltd., of Cleckheaton road, Low Moor, Bradford, BD12 0QH.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what period the contractor responsible for the resurfacing work undertaken recently on the A1 in west Yorkshire immediately to the north of its junction with the M62 will remain responsible for its condition.

Mr. Atkins: The contractor will be responsible for the work for a period of 12 months from the issue of the certificate of completion on 15 December 1989.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the materials used during the major resurfacing work recently completed on the A1 in west Yorkshire immediately to the north of its junction with the M62 were properly tested and sampled; and with what results.

Mr. Atkins: All materials were sampled and tested in accordance with the Department of Transport specification for highway works. Results showed that the requirements were satisfied.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made off the adequacy of the supervision of the contract for the major resurfacing work undertaken on both carriageways of the A1 in west Yorkshire immediately to the north of the junction with the M62.

Mr. Atkins: The works were supervised by Frank Graham and Partners as the Department's agents for maintenance works in this area. There is no reason to doubt that the contract was adequately supervised in accordance with the agreement between the Department and Frank Graham and Partners.

Two-Point Rollers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy towards the use of two-point rollers on motorway and major trunk road resurfacing work.

Mr. Atkins: The method of achieving the Department's specification for highway works is a matter for the contractor concerned.

M65 Extension

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received representations from *(a)* the Lancashire Trust for Nature Conservation, *(b)* the Council for the Protection of Rural England and *(c)* Save the Heart of Lancashire, opposing the M65 extension.

Mr. Atkins: Representations have been received from all three organisations. These will be put before the inspector at the public inquiry which is due to commence on 13 February.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the estimated indirect costs in improvements to connecting roads and other areas to be borne *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* Lancashire county council, as a result of the construction of the M65 extension.

Mr. Atkins: The cost of alterations to side roads directly affected by the M65 Blackburn southern bypass is included in the capital cost of the scheme. Improvements to other local roads are a matter for the Lancashire county council, as highway authority, to consider.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated direct cost to be borne by his Department of the M65 extension proposal.

Mr. Atkins: The current estimate is £117 million for works and land.

Roads for Prosperity

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to give a precise date when the full roads report, referred to in paragraph 32 of the White Paper, Roads for Prosperity, will be published.

Mr. Atkins: The roads report will be published shortly.

Greater Manchester Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates consultants were appointed for each section of the greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:
M6 to M56: 8 June 1988.
M56 to M62: 12 October 1989.
M62 to M66: Preliminary investigations into this section of the relief road are being carried out by consultants who were appointed on 14 October 1987 to advise on the widening of the M62 motorway between junctions 12 and 18.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated construction cost of each section of the greater Manchester western and northern relief road at prices consistent with those indicated in the White Paper, Roads for Prosperity.

Mr. Atkins: The estimated construction cost of each of the three sections at November 1987 prices is as follows:
M6 to M56: £45 million
M56 to M62: £105 million
M62 to M66: £150 million

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the next stage in the public consultation process for the proposed section one M6 to M56, of the greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Mr. Atkins: Public consultation has just ended. We are now considering all the comments received. The next formal stage will be the announcement of a preferred route as a basis for orders under the Highways Acts.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the attendance by interested persons at each of the public consultation meetings regarding the proposals for section one M6 to M56 of the greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Mr. Atkins: Fifty representatives of local authorities attended a preview of the public exhibition; 1,272 members of the public attended the exhibition which was held over three days.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when it is anticipated that section three M62 to M66, of the greater Manchester western and northern relief road will be open for public consultation.

Mr. Atkins: Next year.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the current plan for the greater Manchester western and northern relief road, as indicated in the White Paper, Roads for Prosperity, was first conceived, and what is the date envisaged for the completion of its construction.

Mr. Atkins: The greater Manchester western and northern relief road was conceived in its present form in 1988 during our review of trunk road needs leading to the publication of the 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity". It is too early in the planning process to say when construction might be completed.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the consultants' brief for the centre section of the greater Manchester western and northern relief road allows for access and egress to be provided at the A57.

Mr. Atkins: Connection to the A57 is not specifically provided for in the consultants' brief. This will be a matter for consideration when the consultants report.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with which organisations his Department has had consultations regarding the greater Manchester western and northern relief road, prior to and since the publication of the White Paper, "Roads for Prosperity".

Mr. Atkins: Twenty-six organisations have been consulted about proposals for the section of the greater Manchester western and northern relief road between the M6 and M56 motorways. These are listed as follows:

Cheshire County Council
Macclesfield Borough Council
Trafford Borough Council
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Ministry of Defence
Countryside Commission
Nature Conservancy Council
National Trust
Manweb
British Geological Society
British Gas
British Coal
North West Water Authority
CEGB
Cheshire Constabulary
Warrington Borough Transport
Shell UK
British Telecom
Norweb
British Waterways Board
Civil Aviation Authority
Devaway Travel
Cheshire Bus
Starling Travel
Crosville Motor Services Ltd.
Smith Shearing Ltd.

Regional Road Construction Units

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date the regional road construction units were abolished.

Mr. Atkins: On 26 October 1981.

ENVIRONMENT

Agricultural Land

74. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much agricultural land was released for residential development in 1988 and in 1978.

Mr. Moynihan: My Department's land use change data show that in 1988 the Ordnance Survey recorded 3,700 hectares of land in England as changing from agricultural to residential use. Figures for 1978 are not available in this series. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), gave my hon. Friend some MAFF data for earlier years, including 1978 on 14 December 1988 but the two sets of data are not directly comparable.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in rank order those local authorities whose 1990-91 standard spending assessments are less than 5 per cent. more than their 1989-90 grant-related expenditure assessments, showing their standard spending assessment, grant-related expenditure assessment and the percentage variation.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have today laid before the House the population report (England), the revenue support grant report (England) 1990-91, the revenue support grant distribution report (England) and the revenue support grant transition report (England). I have also laid the special grant report which makes provision for paying three special grants: towards community charge preparation costs in 1989-90; for areas of low rateable values for 1990-91 and for inner London education, also for 1990-91. Together these form the basis of the local authority grant settlement for 1990-91.

In all, local authorities will receive £23·1 billion of external support in 1990-91, an increase of 8·5 per cent. over the comparable figure for 1989-90. Of this, £9·490 billion will be revenue support grant. In order to ensure that authorities have adequate cash flow at the start of the new system, I propose to pay £2·373 billion (25 per cent) of this grant in April and May. This is about £800 million more than they might have expected to receive in these two months—a considerable cash flow advantage.

I have considered carefully the representations made to me about the consultation proposals issued in November. I have decided to confirm, and to embody in these reports, the main the proposals which I described in my statement on 6 November and put forward in the consultation paper. These proposals were the result of extensive work and discussions with the local authority associations. They are based on total standard spending of £32·8 billion and aggregate exchequer finance of £23·1 billion. This gives a community charge for standard spending of £278.

The standard spending assessment (SSA) methodology set out in the distribution report is substantively the same as that in the draft report issued on 6 November. I have, however, incorporated a revised formula for the highways maintenance SSA which properly reflects my desired treatment of winter maintenance.

As I proposed in November, there will be an area safety net giving protection against losses of more than £25 per adult, measured on the basis of various assumptions and definitions set out in the transition report. This will be paid for by gaining areas deferring part of their gain for a year.

I have placed in the Library a revised version of the exemplifications issued on 6 November.

The community charge figure shown in table 2 of the exemplifications is not a prediction of what the community charge will be in each area. It is my calculation of what the charge would be if each authority sought to raise from its residents an amount consistent with its behaviour in 1989-90 and with total standard spending of £32·8 billion for 1990-91. I intend that this assumed charge will also be used for the purposes of the transitional relief scheme.

There are a number of reasons for the differences between these figures and those published on 6 November. I have made a charge to the highways maintenance SSA; I have also been able to incorporate later figures for 1990-91 credit approvals in the capital financing SSA; I have also incorporated a better figure for budgeted expenditure by the receiver for the Metropolitan police district. There have been a few other minor changes to SSA data.

As I foreshadowed in November, grant entitlements, business rate income, safety nets and charge levels have

been affected by the replacement of the population figures used earlier, based on data from the registrar general, by figures based on information from authorities' own charge registers, in accordance with the population report.

Authorities will now have all the information they need to press ahead with their budget setting and charge setting. These tables show that with the amount of external finance available to them the average community charge need be no more than £278, although of course charges will vary around that figure, as table 2 shows. The actual charge levels will depend on authorities' own decisions on spending and service provision.

I firmly believe that authorities should be able to keep their spending down in line with TSS of £32·8 billion. If they do not, the extra spending will fall on community charge payers and will have to be justified to them. I hope that charge payers will take the opportunity of the introduction of this much more accountable system to take a good look at what their authorities are spending. It is right that where this is more than the SSA, charge payers should be able to seek an explanation. And it is right that authorities should bear in mind the effects on charge payers when they make their budget decisions.

I will write to my hon. Friend.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to begin consultations on regulations concerning the proposed test of resources for disabled facilities grants under the Local Government and Housing Act 198. ;

(2) which organisations he plans to consult on regulations concerning the proposed test of resources for disabled facilities grants under the Local Government and Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Chope: Draft regulations on the test of resources for the new disabled facilities grant are currently being prepared. I propose to consult the local authority associations, professional institutions interested in housing, and bodies representing the views of disabled people.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he anticipates that Peat Marwick McLintock will report on its study into the administrative costs of the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Chope: I expect Peat Marwick McLintock to report soon on the costs of setting up and administering the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Common Land

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he intends to take to ensure that registered commons in England and Wales, which have no registered common rights or only one right, are not deregistered;

(2) whether he will introduce legislation to safeguard common land.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 November 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), *Official Report*, Vol. 162, column *89*.

Homelessness

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has recently consulted any housing pressure groups on the problems of homelessness and what solutions were discussed.

Mr. Chope: Following publication of our review of the homelessness legislation, we have continued to visit and consult voluntary organisations concerned with the relief and prevention of homelessness and the local authority associations. We have discussed the whole range of issues involved, but one of our main concerns has been to make progress with implementing the conclusions of our review.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will commission a study into the effect of controlled tenancies on homelessness;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of planning regulations and rent controls on homelessness.

Mr. Chope: The Housing Act 1988 is designed to encourage the supply of privately rented accommodation through deregulation of new tenancies. At the same time the Government are committed to retaining the rights of existing tenants with regulated tenancies. We will commission any necessary research on the effects of the Act in due course and continue to investigate and consult on the effect of planning regulations.

Environmental Matters (Information)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Billericay of 14 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *754* if Her Majesty's Government intend to take additonal powers to require companies and individuals to provide information on environmental matters.

Mr. Trippier: In terms of the United Kingdom's contribution to the proposed European Environment Agency, Her Majesty's Government do not intend to take additional powers to require companies and individuals to provide information on environmental matters. The aim, shared by our Community partners, is to improve the co-ordination and comparability of existing information in a spirit of free co-operation to inform and support Community environmental policy. Any requests by the agency for new information will be subject to contractual agreements between the agency and the relevant contributors or individuals involved.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* those local authorities in England which have not submitted their waste disposal plans to his Department.

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many waste disposal authorities in England have now deposited waste disposal plans with his Department, pursuant to the Control of Pollution Act 1974, and how many have not yet done so.

Mr. Trippier: Forty-four authorities have now submitted either completed or draft plans while 15 single or groups of authorities have yet to submit a plan in any form. These 15 are listed below:

Essex
Nottingham
Shropshire
North London WA
City of London
City of Westminster
Tower Hamlets
Bexley
South London Waste Disposal Joint Committee
(London Borough of Bromley, Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton and Sutton)
Greater Manchester WDA
Barnsley
Doncaster
Rotherham
Sheffield
West Midlands Joint Committee
(Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton District Councils)

I am considering further steps to ensure completion of the remaining plans.

Rechem International

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his decision on the appeal by Rechem International against the licence conditions imposed by Hampshire county council.

Mr. Trippier: The appeal is being considered in the light of the exchange of representations, now completed, and the recent report of a site visit by an official from the Department.

"Closer to the People"

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received the report prepared by the National Association of Local Councils and the Association of District Councils, entitled "Closer to the People"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has received the report. He has made it clear that major changes to the structure of local government are not on the Government's agenda.

Subsidence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by location for *(a)* Severn-Trent Water and *(b)* Yorkshire Water, the number of subsidence claims that are outstanding with British Coal and the value of the claim against each location.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not held centrally.

Single-tier Local Government

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a single tier of local government in the near future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Housing

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the output figures for *(a)* private industry and *(b)* public sector dwelling-units constructed in England and Wales for 1960, 1967, 1970, 1974, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1985 and 1988.

Mr. Chope: Housebuilding completions in England and Wales are given in the table:

Thousands

	Private enterprise	*Housing associations*	*Local authorities, new towns and government departments*
1959	146·5	1·1	101·8
1960	162·1	1·7	105·5
1967	192·9	4·8	165·2
1970	162·1	8·2	136·9
1974	129·6	9·4	102·1
1978	134·6	21·6	97·8
1979	125·3	17·3	78·1
1980	115·9	20·2	78·5
1985	140·6	11·9	24·4
1988	170·6	9·9	16·8

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any recent report on the contribution made to the greenhouse global warming effect from *(a)* leaks and *(b)* deliberate venting to the atmosphere of natural gas from the United Kingdom's domestic, commercial and industrial uses.

Mr. Trippier: Estimates of emissions of methane from gas leakage and oil and gas venting were formally made on a national basis for the first time in 1989 and will be published in the Department's annual "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" early in 1990.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many units of local-authority-provided sheltered accommodation for the elderly currently exist in England.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 20 December 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) [*Official Report*, vol 164, columns *332-33*].

Protection of Archives

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to review his procedures on the protection of archives in the light of the accidental destruction of 12,000 archive files held by his Department.

Mr. Chris Patten: A review of our procedures and practices is being undertaken with the assistance of the Public Records Office.

Landfill Sites

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the special capital allocations set aside by his Department in order to deal with the problems of gassing landfill sites have so far been taken up by local authorites.

Mr. Trippier: A specific capital allocation for England of £33 million for remedial works in 1990-91 was

announced on 15 November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Local authorities will shortly be invited to make bids. Five million pounds was also reserved for urgent remedial work in 1989-90 but was not taken up.

Land Tenure

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals have been made by the European Commission for the harmonisation of the systems of land tenure in the Community; and what response Her Majesty's Government have given.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am not aware of any such proposals.

Revenue Support Grant, Leicestershire

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the recent ministerial meeting with representatives of Leicestershire county council to discuss the county's revenue support grant allocation; what response the Under-Secretary of State made to the representations by the county council that the standard spending assessment was less than the uplifted grant-related expenditure assessments; and what action he has taken since the meeting in that regard.

Mr. Chope: The representatives of Leicestershire county council were provided with an explanation of the factors which led to significant differences between the county's grant-related expenditure assessment and its proposed standard spending assessment for 1990-91. All the representations made have been carefully considered by my right hon. Friend before he took his decisions on the settlement.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in calculating the standard spending assessment for Leicestershire for the purposes of revenue support grant, he took account of the authorised increase in police manpower for the county in 1990-91; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Each authority's police component of its standard spending assessment (SSA) is its share of the total the Government are allowing nationally for the police service. In deciding this total my right hon. Friend took account of the increase in police manpower authorised for 1990-91. Each authority's share has been calculated in proportion to its police establishment as approved by the Home Secretary as available at 29 September 1989.

Sport and Active Recreation

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the estimated total cost and *(b)* the estimated cost to public funds of the review group for sport and active recreation provision in the inner cities including the cost of the report published in December 1989; and what is (i) the estimated total cost and (ii) the cost to public funds of the report.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The estimated total cost of the review of sport and active recreation in the inner cities, including the cost of publishing the review report, is £80,500, of which £62,500 will be met from public funds and £18,000 from private sector sponsorship. The review group concluded that existing resources need to be targeted more effectively, with the private sector playing a greater role in partnership with the public and voluntary sectors. The Government will be giving careful consideration to appropriate follow-up action and are encouraging other organisations to do likewise. The cost implications of the report will depend on the way in which all these organisations decide to take forward implementation and are therefore not quantifiable at this stage.

Single European Market

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the changes in responsibility and activity of local authorities in consequence of the EEC's 1992 measures.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* Local authorities will be affected across a wide range of their activities by the completion of the internal market in 1992, which is aimed at removing physical, technical and fiscal barriers to trade in goods, services, capital and the movement and employment of people.

Local Government International Bureau

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contact he maintains with the Local Government International Bureau of 35 Great Smith street, London SW1; and if any public funds are made available by Her Majesty's Government and by the EEC to that body for its information programme on the 1992 programme or for any other purpose.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* My Department has frequent contacts with the Local Government International Bureau. Various central organisations serving local government, including the bureau, are part-funded by grants deducted from the total of revenue support grant which the Government make available to local authorities. I understand that the bureau also receives some European Community funds in support of its activities.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in respect of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in response to the MINIS 10 report.

Mr. Chris Patten: MINIS provides an annual system for determining aims and objectives, setting targets and reviewing performace for each major activity undertaken by my Department. I shall be reviewing the performance targeted in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution MINIS 10 in MINIS 11, which is now commencing.

English Heritage

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a list of all those documents belonging to English Heritage which have been destroyed as a result of a clerical error.

Mr. Chris Patten: English Heritage and my Department are looking into this matter and will inform the hon. Gentleman of the outcome of our review.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs further to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *91*, if he will provide a breakdown of the use to which British aid to Malawi was put *(a)* in 1987 and *(b)* in 1988.

Mrs. Chalker: Following is the further information requested. Figures are calculated on the same basis as for my previous reply.

United Kingdom aid to Malawi 1987 and 1988

£'000

	1987	*1988*
Project Aid	2,342	6,144
Aid and Trade Provision	1,657	1,410
Programme Aid	5,699	10,273
Debt Relief	1,874	1,822
Food Aid	—	883
Disaster Relief	11	295
Technical Cooperation	8,004	9,934
	19,587	30,761

Source: British Aid Statistics.

THE ARTS

UNESCO Convention

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts in the light of the representations of the Society of Antiquaries on the theft and sale of works of art, whether he will now sign the UNESCO convention.

Mr. Luce: I am not convinced that signing the UNESCO convention would help to overcome the particular anxieties of the Society of Antiquaries.

Works of Art (Export)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the referral to the review committee on the export of works of art of the case of the 340 million-year-old Bathgate paleontological finds.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 January 1990]:* The Bathgate fossil, popularly known as "Lizzie the Lizard", was referred to the reviewing committee on 8 December 1989. However, it was subsequently decided that fossils are not covered by the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987 (SI 1987 No. 2070) and the Department of Trade and Industry notified the interested parties on 21 December to this effect.

DEFENCE

HMS Talent

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the accident which caused a spillage of cooling liquid from the nuclear submarine HMS Talent at the VSEL shipyard in Barrow on 4 December; what volume of radioactive liquids were released; and what were the health implications for Royal Naval personnel and the general public in south Cumbria.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the spillage of contaminated cooling liquid from HMS Talent at the VSEL shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness; what precautions were taken; what health risks arose; and whether any civilian or service personnel were treated in hospital.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There was a leak of coolant water from HMS Talent at Barrow, at 4.40 am on 4 December. The level of radioactivity in the water was extremely low. The coolant was being pumped to an external tank when a pipe split and approximately 140 litres were released into the dock. There was no danger to the submarine's reactor. Monitoring of the water in the dock failed to detect any radiation above the normal background and there are no health implications for either Royal Navy personnel or the general public. The incident has been fully investigated and appropriate action taken.

Ambulances

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces ambulances based overseas have been withdrawn from service, and used in the ambulance dispute in the United Kingdom; what countries they came from; and where they were deployed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Transport of Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from members of the public and local organisations about the transport of nuclear weapons through the Doncaster metropolitan borough council area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am aware of no recent representations on this subject received by my right hon. Friend.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will institute an inquiry into the incident on 3 January when a search and rescue helicopter from HMS Gannet diverted to Glasgow in the course of a rescue mission in order to pick up a television crew before proceeding to the search area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The circumstances of the incident have been investigated. On Thursday 4 January, a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter from HMS Gannet was asked to assist a mountain rescue team with a preplanned search operation for three civilians lost on Ben Nevis. Shortly before departure, an ITN camera team asked HMS Gannet if they could be picked up at Glasgow airport and be taken along to film the search. Since Glasgow was on the direct flight path from HMS Gannet to Ben Nevis, authority for this was given with the agreement of the rescue co-ordination centre at Pitreavie on the conditions that carrying the camera team would in no way prejudice the helicopter's ability to carry out its task and that its rendezvous with the mountain rescue team at Fort William would not be delayed beyond the agreed time of 0830. There was considered to be sufficient flexibility in the flight plan for this to be possible and the commitment to pick up the ITN crew was undertaken on this basis.

However, in the event, a radio breakdown delayed the departure from HMS Gannet and the helicopter was some 45 minutes late on arriving at Fort William. The embarkation of the ITN crew at Glasgow airport added only marginally to the delay as weather conditions on the route taken were significantly better than on the normal, coastal route to Ben Nevis. The search was successful and the three civilians were recovered by the helicopter.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards search and rescue helicopters carrying journalists and television crews while flying rescue operations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our policy is to consider favourably such requests from the media, but only on the condition that their carriage in no way prejudices the rescue mission.

RAF Molesworth

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the future of RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Molesworth has been placed on a care and maintenance basis since the USAF 303rd tactical missile wing was disbanded in January 1989.

The base was specially developed in 1985-87 to house the ground-launched cruise missiles of the 303rd tactical missile wing. Both the military and domestic infrastructure remain in excellent condition and there are a number of specialist facilities on the base which it would be difficult and expensive to remove. Some of these facilities are subject to inspection by the Soviet Union for the next 11 years under the terms of the INF treaty. However, the INF treaty does not prohibit the use of former GLCM bases for other military purposes.

The Government have been discussing with the United States and NATO authorities alternative military roles for RAF Molesworth which would make good use of the existing facilities while remaining consistent with the terms of the INF treaty. As a result of these discussions the Government have agreed that, subject to the normal planning procedures, the United States European Command may develop the site as its joint analysis centre. The role of this unit is to process and analyse military information from a variety of sources for the benefit of the United States, the United Kingdom and NATO.

The joint analysis centre will be constructed on a fresh site within the base at RAF Molesworth and will not be subject to Soviet inspection. Major construction work is planned to start in 1991 and completed in 1995. In addition, many of the existing facilities at the base will be modified to support the joint analysis centre and this work is planned to start shortly.

Eventually some 700 United States personnel, some of whom are currently located at RAF Alconbury and some in West Germany, will be assigned to Molesworth. This is a similar number to those stationed at the base with the 303rd tactical missile wing.

In addition, certain buildings at RAF Molesworth will be converted to accommodate the Northern region command centre, the wartime headquarters for the United States Third Air Force, while other buildings will be used for administrative purposes as an annex to RAF Alconbury. The Government consider that these developments will make optimum use of a valuable military installation for the benefit of the United States, the United Kingdom and NATO.

RAF Greenham Common

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the extinguishment of commoners' rights at RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: As my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) explained on 29 April 1988, col. *310*, it had been decided to negotiate fair compensation for the legal extinguishment of the rights of common over land owned by the Ministry of Defence at Greenham and Crookham commons, which the Department intended to pursue under the provisions of the Defence Act 1854. There is no general right of access for the public over this land; and the only people enjoying such rights are the 64 commoners. However, in view of the commoners' concerns about the loss of these rights, the Ministry of Defence has since been discussing with them a compromise solution which would have preserved their rights over a substantial area of the base while meeting essential legal and defence requirements. If the commoners would agree not to exercise their rights over the remainder of the area for as long as the base is required for defence purposes, my Department would be prepared only to extinguish their rights over those parts of the base upon which development for defence purposes has already taken place or might take place. This would leave a substantial area of the Ministry of Defence land in question subject to common rights.

Such an arrangement could be put into effect only if agreed by all the commoners and the Department has been anxious to give the commoners every opportunity to consider the proposal. However, more than a year has passed since the original offer was made, and the commoners were informed on 14 December 1989 that there would be no alternative but to proceed as originally proposed unless they had all signed the agreement by 5 January. On that date three of the 64 registered commoners had failed to sign the agreement and we have regrettably been forced to conclude that agreement on the basis of the compromise solution to full extinguishment will not be possible. The Ministry of Defence now, therefore, intends to proceed with the legal formalities to extinguish all rights of common over the MOD property on both commons.

This action is being taken to remove a legal obstacle to construction on MOD property. It is legally quite distinct from the question of the legality of the bye-laws at RAF Greenham Common which is being pursued separately through the courts. No decisions have yet been taken on any alternative roles for the base once the cruise missiles are withdrawn, but RAF Greenham Common has been designated as a NATO standby operating base for many years and we envisage that this role will continue.

ENERGY

Civil Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, in formulating his response to the Energy Committee report on British Nuclear Fuels plc Report and Accounts

1987-88, paragraph 6, page vi, on the safeguards arrangements for civil plutonium, he took into account the proposals set out in the closing submission by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND-5) to the Hinkley C inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: My Department took into account all relevant information before preparing its response.

Oil Exports (South Africa)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the scope for co-operation with the United Nations monitoring group covering oil shipping to South Africa.

Mr. Wakeham: The United Kingdom opposed the 1986 United Nations General Assembly resolution which called on the Security Council to introduce a mandatory oil embargo against South Africa and established the oil shipment monitoring organisation. Our policy is unchanged.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library the United Kingdom's guidelines prohibiting crude oil exports to South Africa.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have made clear to companies exporting North sea crude oil that they expect them to do so in the markets of our European Community and International Energy Agency partners, or where there is an existing pattern of trade. South Africa does not come within any of those categories. The guidelines were announced by the then Secretary of State for Energy on 31 January 1979 [*Official Report*, col. 461].

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what factors have affected the time taken by his officials to investigate the alleged breach of the United Kingdom's guidelines prohibiting crude oil exports to South Africa by the tanker Almare Terza;

(2) when his officials started their investigation into the alleged breach of the United Kingdom's guidelines prohibiting crude oil exports to South Africa by the tanker Almare Terza; and when he expects this investigation to be completed.

Mr. Wakeham: Some progress has been made in following the chain of events. Investigations into complex matters of this sort necessarily take time to complete and it is not possible to put a date on the completion of these inquiries.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he takes to monitor United Kingdom involvement in oil shipping to South Africa.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department receives notification of every cargo of exported UKCS crude oil, including the name of the ship, the date of departure, and intended destination. However, it is not possible for me to monitor accurately the final destination of every barrel.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were for each year since 1985 the volume and the value of petroleum products exported to South Africa, broken down by type of petroleum product.

Mr. Wakeham: Exports of petroleum products to South Africa since 1985 were as follows:

United Kingdom petroleum product exports to South Africa
(by volume and value)

	Volumes (metric tonnes)					*Value (£'000s; current prices)*				
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*[1]1989*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*[1]1989*
Motor spirits and light oils	29	19	157	8	—	13·8	10·1	51·2	16·3	1·1
Kerosenes and medium oils	14	1	1	1	—	8·5	1·6	1·9	2·0	—
Gas oils	206	324	360	3,932	7,846	76·0	109·8	113·2	742·4	1,528·9
Fuel oils	—	2	4	—	—	0·4	1·0	5·6	—	—
Lubricants	17,165	6,885	6,218	579	434	5,863·8	2,733·5	2,305·5	517·5	329·5
Petroleum jellies and waxes	83	274	1,148	808	402	72·0	192·8	716·9	506·5	323·7
Mineral tars and oil derivatives	449	706	131	194	102	152·6	309·8	81·2	133·5	81·4
Pitch and pitch coke	1	20	1	—	—	0·4	4·0	1·9	—	—
Petroleum bitumen and bituminous mixtures	4,238	11,777	10,528	109	34	1,830·5	3,924·0	3,053·8	75·5	30·6
TOTALS	22,185	20,008	18,548	5,631	8,818	8,017·9	7,286·6	6,331·2	1,993·7	2,295·2

[1] January to July only.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

National Energy Foundation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the outcome of his meeting with the director and trustees of the National Energy Foundation on 20 December 1989.

Mr. Wakeham: I had a most interesting and useful meeting with representatives of the National Energy Foundation. Among the topics discussed where the foundation's plans for the development of an energy rating system for housing (which would indicate the energy efficiency of houses by means of a rating scale) and proposals for a national energy centre at Milton Keynes.

I welcomed the opportunity to discuss the foundation's plans, and look forward to a constructive working relationship between the foundation and my Energy Efficiency Office.

Electricity Bills

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how estimated electricity bills to domestic consumers are calculated;

(2) if he will give for each year since 1979 and for each area board the number of electricity bills to domestic consumers which have been estimated;

(3) if he will give for each year since 1979 and for each area board the number of complaints from domestic consumers about estimated electricity bills;

(4) if he will give for each year since 1979 and for each area board the number of electricity bills to domestic consumers which have recorded credits due to over-estimation in the use of electricity in previous bills.

Mr. Wakeham: These are matters for the electricity supply industry. I will ask the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken by the post in Islamabad on the application of Mr. Rashad Mahmood, who was born in 1968, Ref. IASP/P/40627; serial No. 81159, to join his wife in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the post in Islamabad adopted a policy of expediting settlement applications in cases when DNA test results were positive and there were no other factors affecting an application being considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In Islamabad, or at any other overseas post where a DNA test is undertaken, first-time applicants producing DNA-positive evidence are dealt with in their turn in the queue. As I stated in my letter of 21 December 1989, re-applicants producing DNA-positive evidence are fast-streamed when:

(i) there is no issue to address other than confirmation of the claimed relationship, for example, in right-of-abode cases; or

(ii) proof of relationship confers British nationality on other members of the same family; in such cases, in order to keep families together, applications for entry clearance and British passports are considered at the same time.

Where, however, other requirements of the immigration rules need also to be satisfied, such as support and accommodation, re-applicants will continue to wait their turn in Q4.

These arrangements have been in force since the early part of last year.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the post in Islamabad received instructions to issue a passport to Shamim Ayaz, Ref. H 162359; Imm/15031, enabling him to join his father in the United Kingdom; how many times Shamim Ayaz has been invited to call at the post in Islamabad; why he has not, to date, been issued with a visa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on 8 January to the hon. Member.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are for the disposal of radioactive waste arising from the joint Hong Kong-Guangdong nuclear power plant at Daya Bay.

Mr. Maude: These are matters for the Chinese authorities. Nevertheless, I understand that the intention is for there to be initial treatment and storage on-site followed by transfer off-site to permanent storage or disposal facilities.

Refugees

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of British aid for refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border is spent on employing protection officers under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to prevent refugees being disturbed by political or military groups.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not possible to identify the percentage of British aid for refugee camps spent on employing protection officers. UNHCR has responsibility for two refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border and employs 12 officers who carry out protection and other duties. Funding for these officers comes from the general pool of UNHCR money.

Human Rights

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information on the human rights situation in other countries is regularly compiled by his Department; and whether such information is made public.

Mr. Sainsbury: We compile a wide range of information on such situations on a continuing basis.

We do not publish all the information that we collect. Much of its is, in any case, already publicly available.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training on details of international human rights standards and on the monitoring and assessment of the human rights situation in the country in which they are working is given to British diplomats overseas.

Mr. Sainsbury: Before a posting overseas, diplomats are given comprehensive briefing on all aspects of life in that country, including the human rights situation. In addition, officers whose duties specifically include human rights issues get more detailed briefing, including from non-governmental organisations.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether British embassies and

overseas missions are required to report regularly to his Department on the human rights situation in their country.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether military and police training given by Britain to other countries always includes training in the protection of human rights.

Mr. Sainsbury: Respect for human rights is fundamental and underlies all British police and military training. It is therefore integral to the training of overseas students.

Hong Kong

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Chief Police Officer in Hong Kong sought permission from the Governor and Ministers of Her Majesty's Government in advance of using force and tear gas on Vietnamese on Lantau island, in the Crown Territories of Hong Kong after Christmas.

Mr. Maude: The operation was carried out only after protracted efforts by the Hong Kong Government and UNHCR and voluntary agency staff to persuade the boat people to allow the camp to be searched for weapons. When it was clear that the boat people would not co-operate, those in charge of the operation were authorised to use the minimum force necessary to ensure its success. Over 700 home-made weapons were subsequently found.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Steel

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent communications he has had with the chairman of British Steel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: In the past few months, I have had communications with the chairman of British Steel in connection with a number of European issues affecting the steel industry, including the Community's voluntary restraint agreement with the United States of America and about British Steel's proposed acquisition of C. Walker and Sons.

Mergers and Acquisitions

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress is being made in removing the barriers to British firms seeking to pursue mergers and acquisitions within the European Community.

Mr. Redwood: At the December Internal Market Council the Commission undertook to bring forward proposals by the end of March 1990 for the reduction and elimination of a range of practices that serve as barriers to takeovers. The Council undertook to examine the proposals in due course, taking particular account of the objective of completing the internal market. The DTI has commissioned and published a report by Coopers and Lybrand—which is available in the Library—which sets out the range of barriers that need to be addressed.

Passenger Liners

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many passenger liners are currently being built in the member countries of the EEC; and if he will publish a list of the number of such vessels ranging in displacement from 3,500 tonnes upwards that are due to be launched in 1990, indicating in each case the countries where they are being built.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Twenty four passenger ships—other than ferries—were on order books of EC shipyards at the end of the third quarter of 1989. The other information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Engineering Industry

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many new jobs have been created in the engineering industry in the west midlands since 1986.

Mr. Forth: There are no official statistics available to show the extent of job creation in the engineering industry over the period in question. Since the beginning of 1986, however, a total of 944 offers of regional selective assistance have been made to engineering companies in the west midlands and those are expected to lead to the creation of 20,000 new jobs.

Securities and Investments Board (Chairman)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next plans to meet the chairman of the SIB; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 December 1989]:* My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board as frequently as is necessary. I expect to meet him shortly when a range of topics concerning the regulation of financial services will be discussed.

Internal Market

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of European Community directives issued consequent to the decisions to complete the internal market by 1992; and what is the number of such directives passed into the domestic law of each member state respectively as at 31 December 1989.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 8 January]:* By 31 December 1989 the Council had adopted some 140 directives in the context of the Commission's programme for completing the single market, of which 77 are required to be in force in member states. Details on the state of implementation of those 77 measures in the individual states was given in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), *Official Report*, 9 January, columns *600-08*.

Since publication of that answer the following directives have been implemented in the United Kingdom:

(i) Tractors and Agricultural Machines: Implementation of Dir 74/150, weight dimensions etc Dir 89/173.

(ii) Other Items: Cosmetics Dir 88/667.

British Flag

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many vessels of more than 10,000 tonnes displacement now operate under the British flag.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply. At the end of November 1989, the numbers of vessels of more than 10,000 deadweight tonnes registered under the British flag were:

	Number
United Kingdom registry	111
Isle of Man or Channel Island registries	43
Dependent territory registries	269

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Letter Board

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is his estimate of the cost incurred by the House of hon. Members having to use franked envelopes to communicate with colleagues when they have reached their limit of six unposted letters on the Members' letter board; whether he will consider establishing a more convenient and inexpensive system; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not possible to estimate the cost of postage incurred by hon. Members who wish to communicate with their colleagues other than by means of the letter board. The efficiency of the letter board system depends on a limit of acceptance of six letters daily from each hon. Member. I have asked the authorities of the House to discuss alternative distribution systems with the hon. Member.

Mail

Mr. Snape: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will introduce a system for delivery of post for those hon. Members requesting it to a central location in the various outbuildings of the Palace of Westminster for collection on Monday to Friday.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Mail for hon. Members may be redirected by the House of Commons post office to the parliamentary outbuildings on application to the Postmaster, but this service would result in a delivery some hours later than mail is available at the House post office. Alternatively, correspondence may be addressed direct to the oubuildings and the full addresses of individual buildings are available from the Postmaster. The policy for the distribution of mail within the precincts is a matter for consideration initially by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee and the hon. Member may wish to write to the Chairman about it.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sunday Trading

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General if he has received any representations following the European Court of Justice decision on Sunday trading made on 23 November 1989; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I commonly receive representations from diverse sources on the enforcement of the legislation relating to Sunday trading, and I have continued to receive such representations since the European Court of Justice gave its judgment in case 145/88 on 23 November 1989.

The task of interpreting the judgment of the European Court of Justice now falls to the national courts both in the case in which the judgment has been given and in any other cases to which it may be relevant. I understand that a very large number of cases were adjourned to await the decision of the European Court. The way is now open for those cases to proceed to a conclusion.

A duty to enforce the Sunday trading legislation was expressly imposed on local authorities by section 71 of the Shops Act 1950. I said in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on 17 April 1989 that in my view local authorities did not cease to be bound by that duty while the decision of the European Court was awaited, and they continue to be under that duty now that the decision of the European Court has been given.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Growth

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to help increase the net contribution to employment growth among firms with between 20 and 50 employees.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's policy is to create a beneficial climate for small businesses generally, mainly by encouraging conditions of fair competition and minimising regulation, and by providing a complementary range of fiscal, financial and advisory measures.

Within this policy, my own Department's services include the loan guarantee scheme, action to improve Government purchasing opportunities, the small firms service and a wide range of training schemes for small businesses. All these services offer particular benefits to firms with growth potential, including those with more than 20 employees.

Among the training schemes the new business growth training programme, introduced in April last year, contains a number of options which are particularly relevant to this group and which are designed to help them plan and manage their growth.

I have also taken action to alert small business organisations to recent research published by my Department showing a relatively poor job creation record by firms employing 20 to 49 staff. These firms face substantial market, management and technological challenges which they can meet more successfully with the support of the network of organisations representing or providing a service to small businesses.

Overseas Spending

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has as to the amount spent overseas by United Kingdom residents during 1989; and what was the figure for the previous 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated that United Kingdom residents spent £8,370 million overseas during the first 10

months of 1989, the latest period for which estimates are available. During 1988 as a whole, United Kingdom residents spent an estimated £8,228 million overseas.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of its planned programme of basic inspections the Health and Safety Executive area offices *(a)* 01 south-west, *(b)* 02 south, *(c)* 03 south-east, *(d)* 05/06 London north and south, *(e)* 07 East Anglia, *(f)* 08 northern home counties, *(g)* 09 east midlands, *(h)* 10 west midlands, *(i)* 11 Wales, *(j)* 12 Marches, *(k)* 13 north midlands, *(l)* 14 South Yorkshire and Humberside, *(m)* 15 West and North Yorkshire, *(n)* 20 Scotland east and *(o)* 21 Scotland west have achieved in the half year from 1 April to 31 October 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The plan of the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate is based on proportions of time to be spent on different aspects of its work. The information requested is given in the table:

Preventive inspection visits made as a percentage of the total number of visits it was estimated would be carried out in the half year 1 April 1989 to 30 September 1989

Area	*Per cent.*
01 South West	88·6
02 South	106·4
03 South East	107·5
05/06 London North and South	79·8
07 East Anglia	93·8
08 Northern Home Counties	80·3
09 East Midlands	103·5
10 West Midlands	109·5
11 Wales	99·6
12 Marches	108·8
13 North Midlands	89·7
14 South Yorkshire and Humberside	87·5
15 West and North Yorkshire	93·9
20 Scotland East	98·1
21 Scotland West	75·1

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the establishment of a training and enterprise council in Hampshire.

Mr. Eggar: An application for development funding of a TEC in Hampshire was approved on 12 July 1989. The TEC board is working on the corporate plan and I expect the TEC to be fully operational in the summer of 1990.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to ensuring that training and enterprise councils are not financially disadvantaged by taking on disabled people who may have greater difficulty in meeting outcome targets.

Mr. Eggar: The number of people with disabilities who have special training needs will be an important consideration when a TEC's funds are agreed. The difficulties that some people with disabilities may face in achieving outcomes will be taken into account when targets are negotiated.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to the establishment of a national training and enterprise council to meet the specific needs of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to establish a national training and enterprise council to meet the specific needs of people with disabilities. Every TEC will be required to set out in its plans how it intends to meet the needs of people with disabilities in its area.

Redundant Mineworkers' Payments Scheme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers and percentages of unemployed persons removed from all English and Welsh unemployment registers as a result of changes that took effect in August 1989 in the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme, by region.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest estimates of the number of mineworkers who have decided to take advantage of the change in the redundant mineworkers' payment scheme are given in the following table. There has been little or no effect in the Greater London, south-east, East Anglia, and south-west regions.

Region	*Estimated effect*[1]	*Percentage effect*[2]
West Midlands	500	0·3
East Midlands	4,500	4·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,500	2·0
North West	500	0·2
North	2,000	1·5
Wales	500	0·5

[1]These estimates are derived from latest available information and are subject to revision.
[2]Using August 1989 unadjusted unemployment totals.

Ko Hsuan School, North Devon

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits have been issued to foreign nationals to work at the Ko Hsuan school in Chawleigh, North Devon.

Mr. Eggar: We have no record of any work permits being issued to this school.

Earnings

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of national average earnings was earned by the lowest paid decile of workers in each decade since 1960; and what are the comparable figures, so far as available for *(a)* France, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* the United States of America, *(d)* Sweden, and *(e)* Japan.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information for Great Britain is published in table 15 of part A of the NES reports for 1979 and 1989, copies of which are in the Library. Comparable data for the other countries are not available.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Curriculum

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of documents relating to the national curriculum are issued on recycled paper.

Mrs. Rumbold: National curriculum subject orders and associated documents under section 4 of the 1988 Education Reform Act are published in ring-binders made of recycled paper. The Department is continuing to look for opportunities for using recycled paper.

Supply Teachers

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to remove the discretion by local education authorities in England and Wales as to the scale point used in the payment of supply teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Education Support Grants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the increased volume of underspending on education support grants 1988-89 shown in Class XII Vote 1; and what changes have been made for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The size of each year's Vote for education support grants (ESGs) depends not on the overall total for that year's ESG programme, but rather on the amount of grant still to be paid in respect of previous years' ESG programmes as well as the amount expected to be paid within the financial year on the current year's programme. The size of the underspend on a given year's Vote will reflect both the success of local education authorities in submitting grant claims promptly, and the size of successive ESG programmes. To increase the proportion of grant paid during the financial year in which the expenditure is incurred, authorites will from this year on be invited to submit, before the end of the financial year in question, a claim for expenditure incurred during the last quarter, 50 per cent. of which may be paid before the year end.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of those local education authorities which, in respect of education support grant claims for 1988-89 *(a)* have claimed significantly less than the maximum allocated amount for that year or *(b)* have not yet made either final claims for all quarters of 1987-88 or a provisional end-of-year claim, showing for each of *(a)* and *(b)* the amount underspent or apparently unclaimed.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for individual local education authorities to determine whether they wish to claim all the education support grant (ESG) allocated to them. Among the 90 authorities in England who have to date submitted final claims for the 1988-89 programme, the average rate of claim is over 90 per cent. of expenditure approved. But 15 of those authorities have claimed grant on less than 85 per cent. of expenditure approved. The details are:

Amount of approved expenditure not spent

LEA	*£*
Barnet	132,138
Enfield	268,731
Haringey	156,627
Newham	160,300
Birmingham	417,246
Walsall	152,365
Sefton	241,707
Tameside	146,750
Wigan	286,400
South Tyneside	257,770
Berkshire	394,718
Buckinghamshire	299,131
Devon	427,668
Kent	591,877
Lincolnshire	235,627

In addition, seven local education authorities have not yet submitted a final claim. They are:

Amount of approved expenditure on which grant has not yet been claimed

Local education authorities	*£*
Merton	97,459
Waltham Forest	175,655
Leeds	392,800
Hertfordshire	765,707
Norfolk	367,590
Northamptonshire	999,860
Oxfordshire	384,519

All authorities have now submitted final claims for 1987-88.

Teacher Training Grants

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the increased volume of underspending on in-service teacher training grants 1988-89 shown in Class XII, Vote 1, 12; and what changes have been made for 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Vote provision for the local education authority training grants scheme, which was introduced on 1 April 1987, is for the payment of grant to local education authorities in response to claims submitted by those authorities in respect of training that they have provided. Vote provision for this purpose in 1988-89 was £130 million, expenditure was £89·2 million and the underspending was £40·8 million. The corresponding figures for 1987-88 were provision, £105 million, outturn £79·4 million and underspending £25·6 million.

The underspend in 1987-88 resulted from local authorities submitting claims later than expected outside the year to which they related. This was also the case in 1988-89 when, in addition, authorities were late in submitting audit certificates for 1987-88 without payments for claims under the 1988-89 programme submitted after 1 October 1988 could not be made.

The provision for 1989-90 is £130 million. Late claims for previous years of the scheme will continue to be paid from the Vote provision as soon as possible after their submission. No changes have been made to the arrangements for payments in 1989-90 and no decision has yet been taken on the arrangements for 1990-91.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of those local education authorities which in respect of in-service teacher training grant claims for 1988-89 *(a)* have claimed significantly less than the maximum allocated amount for that year or *(b)* have not yet made either final claims for all quarters of 1987-88 or a provisional end-of-year claim showing for each of *(a)* and *(b)* the amount underspent or apparently unclaimed.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The following LEAs underspent by 5 per cent. or more in 1988-89:

Local Education Authority	*Total amount unclaimed*	*Underspend as percentage of total maxima*
Bromley	183,000	16·7
Haringey	[1]421,315	44·5
Kent	534,000	9·0
Liverpool	[1]497,400	20·9
Oldham	[1]52,528	5·0
Walsall	[1]76,555	5·9

[1] provisional end-of-year claims only.

Newham has not yet submitted an end-of-year claim for 1988-89; the total amount yet to be claimed is £371,889.

There are no authorities that have not yet made either final claims for all quarters of 1987-88 or a provisional end-of-year claim for that year.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what amount and proportion of the 1987-88 Vote provision for the in-service teacher training grant scheme realted to *(a)* areas of national priority and *(b)* areas of local priority; what amount and proportion of claims made for 1987-88 relate to each of *(a)* and *(b)*; what further information is available as to the breakdown of expenditure claims between separate national priorities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what amount and proportion of the 1988-89 Vote provision for the in-service teacher training grant scheme related to *(a)* areas of national priority and *(b)* areas of local priority; what amount and proportion of claims made for 1988-89 relate to each of *(a)* and *(b)*; what further information is available as to the breakdown of expenditure claims between separate national priorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The level of Vote provision in 1987-88 was based on an estimate of the likely claims by local education authorities under the local education authority training grants scheme in 1987-88, and the in-service teacher training grants scheme, which preceded the local education authority training grants scheme, for the years prior to 1987-88. The level in 1988-89 was based on a similar estimate covering that year and previous years. Because Vote provision is calculated to meet local authorities' overall claims, no further breakdown is made between the areas of training to which the claims relate. such an analysis could be made only at disproportionate cost. Local authorities have been told that delays in submitting claims will be taken into account in setting their allocations of grant for future years.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the expenditure on in-service teacher training grants 1988-89 shown in Class XII Vote 1, 12 includes any amount relating to late claims made for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Yes. A total of nearly £5 million expenditure relating to late claims for local education authority expenditure in 1987-88 was included in the expenditure for 1988-89.

Ko Hsuan School, North Devon

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will instigate an investigation into the operation, teaching curriculum, and control of students at the Ko Hsuan school in Chawleigh, north Devon.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The proprietor of the Ko Hsuan school has already been asked for a full explanation of the events leading to the death of one of its pupils, and of all facts and circumstances relating to those events. My right hon. Friend will decide in the light of the response what further action, if any, may be appropriate.

Independent Schools

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what powers he has to investigate and to control the teaching curriculum, teaching methods, staff qualifications and control of pupils at independent schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has powers under section 71 of the Education Act 1944 (as amended) to serve a notice of complaint upon the proprietor of an independent school if he is satisfied that a school is objectionable on certain specified grounds. These include instances where efficient and suitable instruction is not being provided or the proprietor or any teacher is not a proper person.

Failure to comply with a notice of complaint will cause the school to be deleted from the register of independent schools. It is an offence to act as proprietor of or a teacher in an independent school while disqualified by an order made by the Secretary of State following a notice of complaint. A school has a right of appeal to the independent schools tribunal against a notice of complaint.

In addition, under section 77(2) of the Education Act 1944, my right hon. Friend may also cause a special inspection of any school to be made whenever he considers such an inspection to be desirable.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost to the Exchequer of tax reliefs on private medical insurance.

Mr. Lilley: The 1989-90 Financial Statement and Budget report estimated that the cost of tax relief for private medical insurance for those aged 60 and over will be about £40 million in 1990-91.

Philip Core

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the outcome of the investigation by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of the material they intercepted belonging to the late Philip Core; and where are its present whereabouts.

Mr. Ryder: Goods imported into the United Kingdom by post for Mr. Philip Core were intercepted and examined by Customs. They contained a book and photographs which were considered to be obscene under section 42 of

the Customs Consolidation Act 1876 and accordingly they were seized as forfeit. Mr. Core appealed against seizure and condemnation proceedings were instituted under schedule 3 to the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979. On Thursday 9 November 1989, condemnation proceedings were commenced in Wells Street magistrates court, but adjourned until 20 November for consideration of certain legal points.

Sadly, Mr. Core died on 13 November and, at the adjourned hearing on 20 November, it was disclosed that he had died intestate. The case was adjourned to 11 January 1990 when it will be decided whether Mr. Core's administrators wish to continue the proceedings.

In accordance with normal practice, the offending material is still in the possession of Customs pending the outcome of court proceedings.

Commercial Borrowing

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to bring down the cost of commercial borrowing by smaller business industry and home owners.

Mr. Ryder: The Government will not reduce interest rates until that can be safely done without risk to inflation. Everyone has far more to fear from a resurgence of inflation than from a period of higher interest rates.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the latest retail prices index figure; what percentage of this covers the mortgage interest element; what were the comparable figures in 1975 and 1976; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The table summarises the information requested:

	All-items RPI annual inflation rate	*Contribution of the mortgage interest payments component to the RPI inflation rate*
	per cent.	*per cent. points*
November 1989	7·7	2
November 1976	15·0	¼
November 1975	25·2	Not available

Taxation

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will investigate the extent of tax avoidance and evasion through the creation of business transactions carried out solely or mainly for tax reasons between United Kingdom based trusts, companies and individuals and trusts and companies based in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein during the last five years;

(2) if he will make it his policy to review all high court cases involving the Inland Revenue in seeking to recover £1 million or more of tax revenue and to bring in legislation to prevent the loss of such tax revenue where it has been lost as a result of transactions created between United Kingdom based companies, trusts and individuals and companies or trusts or individuals based in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein;

(3) if he will publish an annual table of information about tax avoidance and tax evasion by United Kingdom based trusts, individuals and companies through transactions created with trusts and companies in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein;

(4) if he will set up a system requiring the prior notification to the Inland Revenue of business transactions between United Kingdom-based trusts, companies and individuals and trusts and companies based in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein;

(5) what proposals he has to prevent tax revenue being lost to the Exchequer through the use of business transactions created solely or mainly for tax reasons between United Kingdom-based trusts, individuals and companies and trusts and companies in *(a)* Jersey, *(b)* the Isle of Man, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(e)* the Cayman Islands and *(f)* Liechtenstein;

(6) if he will make it his policy to bring forward amendments to company law to prevent tax avoidance and evasion by United Kingdom companies through the creation of business transactions solely or mainly for tax purposes with companies, trusts and individuals based in *(a)* the Cayman Islands, *(b)* the Netherlands Antilles, *(c)* Guernsey, *(d)* the Isle of Man, *(e)* Jersey and *(f)* Liechtenstein; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* The Inland Revenue devotes substantial resources to countering tax avoidance and evasion including the kind of offshore transactions involving tax havens to which the questions refer. Where appropriate the Government would not hesitate to bring forward such further legislation as was found to be necessary.

To require general notifications of business transactions with tax havens would, however, impose a substantial and unreasonable burden on business.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Eastern Health Board

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the additional £50,000 allocated by the Eastern health board to the North Down and Ards unit of management was intended for the wages of home helps and how much for the salaries of clerical and administrative staff.

Mr. Needham: The allocation will be used to provide an additional 15,000 home help hours in a full year. None of it will be used for the salaries of either clerical or administrative staff.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northen Ireland what effect he estimates the appointment of a manager for each unit of management in the Eastern health board area will have on the cost of administration and the numbers of staff.

Mr. Needham: As part of the management restructuring exercise being undertaken by the Eastern health and social services board the present 14 units of management

are being reorganised to form nine units with effect from 1 April 1990. A unit general manager has been appointed to each and the cost of the introduction of the new structures will be met within the board's overall provision for management costs.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the number of full-time clerical and administrative staff employed by the North Down and Ards unit of management of the Eastern health and social services board in the years 1986-87 to the present day; and what was the total cost of their salaries and associated expenses.

Mr. Needham: The information requested in respect of clerical and administrative staff in the North Down and Ards unit of management is in the table:

Year	*Number*[1]	*Salaries*[2] *£000's*
1986-87	113	701·7
1987-88	129	916
1988-89	131	1,028·1

[1] Full-time administrative and clerical staff.
[2] And related expenses.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the salary of the new post of manager of a unit of management in a health board; and what was the salary payable to the person who was previously in charge of a unit of management.

Mr. Needham: The unit general manager grading structure provides for five grades based on the unit's estimated revenue expenditure and on the presence or absence of teaching responsibilities. The flat rate salaries range from £22,150 to £31,020 in addition to which discretionary awards of up to 15 per cent. on basic salary, and performance related pay are available. As these are new posts and units were previously managed by a unit management team acting collectively, no direct comparison with previous post holders is possible.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will set out the job description agreed by the Eastern health and social services board for the position of manager of units of management.

Mr. Needham: I have arranged for a copy of the job description, which is considerably detailed, to be sent to the hon. Member.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the personal circumstances taken into account by the Eastern health board in targeting the individual clients most in need of the home help service; what is the reason for the exclusion of former clients from the benefits of the service; and whether there are any differences between the various units of management in the criteria they adopt.

Mr. Needham: Assessment of clients for the home help service in all boards is based on the ability of the individual to perform a wide range of daily personal and domestic tasks including dressing, washing, feeding and lavatorial functions. Account is also taken of the level of support available from the client's family and other sources. Decisions about the level of assistance appropriate in individual cases and the criteria to be applied are matters for the boards in the light of local circumstances and priorities.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the positions of manager of the various units of management of the Eastern health board were publicly advertised before the recent appointments were made; whether the job description was the same for each post; and when the interviews took place.

Mr. Needham: The unit general manager posts in the Eastern health and social services board were publicly advertised before the appointments were made. The outline job description was the same for each post and interviews were held from 22 to 29 November 1989.

Military Personnel

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many military personnel who have been sentenced to custody have been transferred to a gaol in England and Wales in the past 10 years.

Mr. Cope: During the 10-year period ended 31 December 1989, seven members of the armed services, sentenced to custody in Northern Ireland, have been transferred to serve the remainder of their sentences in England and Wales.

Prison Population

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the certified normal accommodation and current population of gaols in Northern Ireland; and if he will list them for each establishment for the latest date available.

Mr. Cope: The certified normal accommodation of each prison in Northern Ireland together with the actual number of prisoners currently housed is:

	Single cell accommodation	*Population as at 0830 hours 9 January 1990*
HMP Belfast	433	496
HMP Maghaberry	486	[1]294
HMP Magilligan	288	258
HMP Maze	744	517

[1] Including 20 female prisoners.
These figures include prisoners on home leave and in outside hospitals.
In addition, the young offenders centre, Hydebank has single cell accommodation for 300 and has a current population of 140.

HEALTH

Mental Health Act

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence led to the conclusion in the preface to the Mental Health Act 1983 Code of Practice laid before the House on 5 December that most of the guidance in the code has no resource implications; and what steps are being taken to ensure that adequate resources will be provided for those parts of the code which require them.

Mr. Freeman: The code covers matters which are part of the daily work of thousands of health and social services

staff. We have no systematic evidence as to how much of the practice of all these staff is in conformity with the recommendations, but believe that many of the recommendations represent common practice. Where this is not the case, changing current practice will sometimes be possible without additional resources. Where new resources are required, authorities must judge the pace at which the changes can be introduced, as we have no plans to make resources available specifically to enable the code to be implemented.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement concerning the growth in use of private nursing homes in community care programmes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In our White Paper "Caring for People" we are firmly committed to a policy of community care which provides dignity and choice to the frail and vulnerable. While for most people this will be achieved by continuing to live in their own homes, others would benefit from care in a more supportive environment. We welcome the growth of private nursing home provision and believe that this sector will continue to play an important part in meeting people's care needs along with other providers.

NHS Reform

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the timetable under the White Paper "Working for Patients" for health authorities to contract with hospital and community units for the provision of services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to approval of the Bill currently before Parliament, all DHAs will use contracts from April 1991 to obtain services they require from NHS trusts or units in other districts. To enable them to do this, all DHAs will be funded to meet the cost of services currently used by their residents from the same date. The services that DHAs obtain from their own directly managed units will be placed on a similar footing on the same timetable. This means that from April 1991 all DHAs will be obtaining hospital and community health services for their residents through contracts and the objective will be for these to be negotiated direct with the units concerned wherever possible.

This timetable will enable the benefits of contractual funding to be achieved more quickly and more uniformly than original proposals in working paper 2, which involved different DHAs and units moving at different timescales. The timetable has been discussed and agreed with NHS managers.

We are issuing a working paper on information requirements. Guidance on DHA allocations and further guidance on contracts will be issued shortly.

Copies of the working paper on information requirements, Working Paper 11, "Framework for Information Systems: Overview", have been placed in the Library.

Nurses

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people responded to the Government's recent television campaign to recruit nursing staff; what proportion then returned the application form and administration fee; and, if available, how many indicated they were unable to afford the fee.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To date the most recent television nursing recruitment campaign has produced 86,653 initial responses; 5,428 inquirers have subsequently returned the application form and administration fee. We are aware of only one case where a potential applicant indicated that he was unable to afford the £6 administration fee levied by the nurses' central clearing house.

Mortuary Charges

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will as a matter of urgency instruct Wakefield district health authority to cease charging for the measurement of bodies within its hospital mortuary prior to their removal by undertakers.

Mr. Freeman: This is a local mangement issue and I refer the hon. Member to Mr. Brian Hayward, the chairman of Wakefield health authority.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his Department's policy to encourage health authorities to charge undertakers for the measurement of bodies prior to their removal from hospital mortuaries.

Mr. Freeman: The Department does not encourage health authorities to charge for services provided to undertakers. If, however, undertakers make use of health authority personnel to assist in the measurement of bodies, it is reasonable for authorities to recoup any costs incurred.

Dental Practice Board

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to reduce the number of those employed at the dental practice board, Eastbourne.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no such proposals. The dental practice board is an independent statutory body: decisions about its staffing requirements are a matter for the board.

Operations, Canterbury and Thanet

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many operations have been cancelled in the Canterbury and Thanet health authority area, between 10 December 1989 and 10 January 1990, as a result of a shortage of blood supplies; what steps he is taking to ensure that supplies reach the district immediately and to prevent a recurrence of shortage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Between 10 December 1989 and 10 January 1990, operations on 21 non-emergency patients were postponed by Canterbury and Thanet health authority because these would have required large amounts of blood. The theatres were, however, used to full capacity by rescheduling operations. Patients whose operations were postponed will be given priority for new dates.

Donor attendances at blood collection sessions in the pre-Christmas period is traditionally low. Promotional effort is therefore increased at that time to maintain

adequate blood supplies. In particular in December 1989, the national directorate of the blood transfusion service co-ordinated the mailing of a quarter of a million special reminder cards in a £65,000 campaign intended to encourage blood donors to keep their appointments. In the event, the unforeseeable complicaton of the flu epidemic severely reduced the number of donors available, and additional national and local media were used to boost donor attendance.

Nationally, through the good response of blood donors, the campaign was successful in maintaining blood supplies in most areas through a period of particular difficulty, and blood stocks have returned to normal levels.

Residential Homes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many places are currently provided by local authorities for the elderly in residential homes in each county in England and Wales.

Mr. Freeman: The provisional number of places in local authority homes for elderly people as at 31 March 1988, by local authority, is set out in the table. Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Number of places in local authority homes for elderly people, by local authority, as at 31 March 1988 (provisional)

Local authority	*Number of places*
Cleveland	1,433
Cumbria	1,641
Durham	1,805
Northumberland	792
Gateshead	623
Newcastle upon Tyne	866
North Tyneside	506
South Tyneside	508
Sunderland	842
Humberside	2,292
North Yorkshire	1,984
Barnsley	708
Doncaster	718
Rotherham	712
Sheffield	1,720
Bradford	1,425
Calderdale	646
Kirklees	1,156
Leeds	2,083
Wakefield	738
Cheshire	2,156
Lancashire	3,863
Bolton	667
Bury	445
Manchester	1,613
Oldham	618
Rochdale	565
Salford	730
Stockport	587
Tameside	455
Trafford	521
Wigan	803
Knowsley	223
Liverpool	1,391
Sefton	701
St. Helens	306
Wirral	962
Hereford and Worcester	1,160
Shropshire	1,034
Staffordshire	2,130
Warwickshire	865
Birmingham	2,317
Coventry	598
Dudley	542
Sandwell	911
Solihull	352
Walsall	678
Wolverhampton	687
Derbyshire	2,033
Leicestershire	2,116
Lincolnshire	1,419
Northamptonshire	1,234
Nottinghamshire	2,152
Bedfordshire	1,098
Berkshire	1,113
Buckinghamshire	1,053
Cambridgeshire	1,344
Essex	3,301
Hertfordshire	1,742
Norfolk	1,799
Oxfordshire	1,185
Suffolk	1,478
Camden	553
Greenwich	556
Hackney	497
Hammersmith	461
Islington	601
Kensington	298
Lambeth	667
Lewisham	760
Southwark	492
Tower Hamlets	378
Wandsworth	570
Westminster	505
City of London	0
Barking	412
Barnet	520
Bexley	439
Brent	437
Bromley	450
Croydon	560
Ealing	595
Enfield	537
Haringey	456
Harrow	379
Havering	490
Hillingdon	498
Hounslow	432
Kingston upon Thames	253
Merton	262
Newham	578
Redbridge	477
Richmond upon Thames	349
Sutton	296
Waltham Forest	461
Dorset	1,345
Hampshire	2,751
Isle of Wight	316
Kent	2,807
Surrey	1,978
East Sussex	1,520
West Sussex	1,532
Wiltshire	1,153
Avon	2,470
Cornwall	1,008
Devon	2,204
Gloucestershire	1,075
Somerset	1,065
Isles of Scilly	10
England	110,598

Children (Smoking)

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest Government statistical information available on the prevalence of children who smoke; and what trend these figures reflect.

Mr. Freeman: The latest information is contained in the report entitled "Smoking among secondary school children in England in 1988" prepared by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1989 (ISBN 0 11 691267 7). The report, which is in the Library, shows that in 1988, 7 per cent. of first to fifth form boys (mainly aged 11-15) and 9 per cent. of first to fifth form girls smoked at least one cigarette per week. This represents a welcome decline in smoking prevalence among 11 to 15-year-olds since 1984 when 13 per cent. of boys and girls smoked at least one cigarette per week.

Hyperkinesis

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by regional health authority, for the latest data he has available, what tests are being carried out on children for hyperkinesis; what is the percentage of those diagnosed as suffering from this condition; at what ages these tests are carried out; what were the comparable figures *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years ago; and at what age these tests are stopped.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected centrally.

In-vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will place a copy of the ministerial briefing on legislation and controls covering in-vitro fertilisation in other countries in the Library.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This research report, which is a descriptive survey of the law and practice in a number of countries, will be made available when it is ready. This is expected shortly.

Prescription Costs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, pursuant to the answer *Official Report*, column *81-82* on 18 December, he will publish a table showing prescription costs for each region and family practitioner committee area for 1986-87 and 1987-88 on the same price base as previously, showing both total cost and cost per head.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is set out in the table.

Total cost of prescriptions dispensed by chemists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors (Based on 1988-89 prices)

	April 1986 to March 1987		*April 1987 to March 1988*	
	Total cost (£ thousands)	*Total cost per head (£)*	*Total cost (£ thousands)*	*Total cost per head (£)*
Cleveland	25,879	46·41	27,467	49·54
Cumbria	22,234	45,69	23,567	48·40
Durham	28,367	47·31	30,154	50·37
Northumberland	13,728	45·61	14,605	48·53
Gateshead	9,703	46·80	10,107	48·85
Newcastle	13,249	47·08	13,930	49·28
North Tyne	10,649	55·38	11,247	58·31
South Tyne	7,303	46·54	7,789	49·85
Sunderland	15,085	50·67	15,987	53·81
Northern RHA	146,197	47·46	154,853	50·33
Humberside	39,740	46·84	42,465	50·16
North Yorkshire	30,444	43·50	32,523	46·08
Bradford	20,495	44·26	21,882	47·31
Calderdale	9,031	46·77	9,602	49·28
Kirklees	15,146	40·22	16,367	43·55
Leeds	32,158	45·23	34,153	48·17
Wakefield	14,842	47·99	15,854	51·10
Yorkshire RHA	161,857	44·94	172,846	47·95
Derbyshire	37,401	40·80	40,250	43·81
Leicester	35,575	40,66	36,198	43·44
Lincoln	27,168	47·89	29,988	52·19
Nottinghamshire	39,197	38·95	42,085	41·76
Barnsley	11,315	50·92	12,198	55·08
Doncaster	13,485	46·61	14,714	50·73
Rotherham	10,549	41·85	11,281	44·74
Sheffield	23,261	43·53	24,700	46·40
Trent RHA	197,951	42·45	213,394	45·64
Cambridgeshire	25,142	39·58	26,958	41·96
Norfolk	32,740	44,99	35,417	48·11
Suffolk	26,354	41·92	28,148	44·32
East Anglia RHA	84,236	42·30	90,524	44·95
Bedford	20,843	40·01	22,193	42·20
Hertfordshire	37,940	38·49	40,356	40·89
Barnet	11,911	39·10	12,608	41·22

	April 1986 to March 1987 Total cost (£ thousands)	April 1986 to March 1987 Total cost per head (£)	April 1987 to March 1988 Total cost (£ thousands)	April 1987 to March 1988 Total cost per head (£)
Brent and Harrow	19,263	42·10	20,335	44·53
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	26,288	41·00	27,875	43·42
Hillingdon	9,313	40·14	9,941	43·00
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	15,479	49·36	15,793	51·52
North West Thames RHA	141,039	40·81	149,101	43·15
Essex	60,214	39·82	65,564	43·08
Barking and Havering	15,461	40·03	16,406	42·60
Camden and Islington	14,350	40·85	15,213	43·03
City and East London	24,729	44·97	26,309	47·18
Enfield and Harringey	17,434	37·78	18,327	40·26
Redbridge and Walthamforest	19,355	43·61	20,419	45·93
North East Thames RHA	151,543	40·90	162,238	43·64
East Sussex	32,961	47·79	35,016	50·17
Kent	63,977	42·63	68,480	45·33
Bexley and Greenwich	16,290	37·19	17,498	40·03
Bromley	11,360	38·25	11,873	39·82
Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	27,550	39·75	29,451	42·59
South East Thames RHA	152,138	42·04	162,317	44·65
Surrey	38,851	38·41	41,125	41·11
West Sussex	31,880	45·89	34,091	48·70
Croydon	12,183	38·16	12,615	39·52
Kingston and Richmond	12,309	41·63	13,010	44·06
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	24,042	40·71	25,090	42·47
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	119,266	40·96	125,930	43·34
Dorsetshire	31,462	49·30	33,654	51·89
Hampshire	61,605	40·33	65,685	42·74
Wiltshire	20,770	38·10	22,527	40·89
Isle of Wight	6,350	50·96	6,664	52·52
Wessex Regional Health Authority	120,188	42·38	128,531	44·89
Berkshire	28,366	38·64	29,944	40·43
Buckinghamshire	22,972	37·48	24,568	39·54
Northamptonshire	21,523	38·82	23,474	41·79
Oxfordshire	21,008	36·55	22,421	38·79
Oxford Regional Health Authority	93,869	37·91	100,407	40·14
Avon	36,792	38·87	39,442	41·47
Cornwall	21,682	48·38	23,296	51·41
Devon	44,718	44·76	47,732	47·26
Gloucester	19,406	37·53	21,035	40·28
Somerset	19,069	42·48	20,405	45·11
South Western Regional Health Authority	141,666	42·17	151,910	44·83
Hereford and Worcester	25,781	39·39	27,899	41·93
Salop	16,202	41·26	17,516	44·18
Staffordshire	42,618	41·74	45,627	44·41
Warwickshire	20,166	41·95	22,051	45·54
Birmingham	48,036	47·84	51,431	51·52
Coventry	13,657	44·00	14,858	48·10
Dudley	11,698	38·88	12,629	41·73
Sandwell	14,515	48·21	15,656	52·47
Solihull	8,395	41·52	9,219	45·21
Walsall	12,551	47·94	13,652	52·15
Wolverhampton	11,806	46·87	12,653	50·51
West Midlands RHA	225,426	43·51	243,182	46·79
Cheshire	41,224	43·55	44,295	46·53
Liverpool	24,578	50·89	26,154	54·95

	April 1986 to March 1987 Total cost (£ thousands)	Total cost per head (£)	April 1987 to March 1988 Total cost (£ thousands)	Total cost per head (£)
St. Helens with Knowsley	15,905	45·21	16,973	48·67
Sefton	13,356	44·82	14,507	48·80
Wirral	16,539	49·40	17,861	53·35
Mersey RHA	111,601	46·23	119,790	49·73
Lancashire	69,366	50·24	74,441	53·89
Bolton	11,373	43·48	12,024	45·85
Bury	8,782	50·88	9,289	53·48
Manchester	21,449	47·52	23,118	51·37
Oldham	9,667	43·94	10,341	47·12
Rochdale	9,697	46·94	10,538	50·99
Salford	13,089	54·70	13,847	58·26
Stockport	13,092	45·16	14,245	48·94
Tameside	9,729	45·21	10,569	48·94
Trafford	10,940	50·58	11,670	54·00
Wigan	14,944	48·74	16,009	52·12
North Western RHA	192,128	48·51	206,093	52·03

1. The figures include prescriptions dispensed by retail chemists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors.
2. Total cost includes the basic price of the drug less discount plus dispensing costs and fees.
3. Figures are based on OPCS estimates of resident populations for mid years 1986 and 1987.
4. Figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 have been revalued to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.

Airline Food

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many food poisoning incidents have been recorded for each year from 1980 to 1989 involving food served on passenger aeroplanes; if he will list the airlines involved; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people have died as a result of food poisoning incidents aboard passenger aeroplanes for each year from 1980 to 1989; and if he will list the airlines involved.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 14 December 1989]:* In the period 1980 to 1989 there were 22 suspected food poisoning reports to the public health laboratory service communicable disease surveillance centre by laboratories and local authorities associated with commercial air flights arriving or departing from England and Wales. No information is available about any deaths resulting from in-flight catering.

The table shows the 22 reported outbreaks of food poisoning associated with in-flight meals, although the carrier airline was not identified in every case.

Year	Number of outbreaks
1980	1
1981	1
1982	3
1983	2
1984	3
1985	4
1986	1
1987	6
1988	0
1989	1

West Lambeth Health Authority

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department has received from the regional liaison committee concerning the West Lambeth health authority.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 December 1989]:* The South East Thames regional health authority provides information regularly and frequently to the Department about all the health authorities within the region, and as necessary provides information about activities concerning individual health authorities. Perhaps the hon. Member would write to me if she is seeking information about a particular event.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of income support claimants who continue to receive transitional addition; and what proportion of these are pensioners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information requested is not available. Based on the May 1988 annual statistical inquiry an estimated 570,000 income support claimants were receiving a transitional addition immediately after the April 1989 annual benefit uprating, of whom an estimated 255,000 were aged 60 or over.

Local Officers, Doncaster and Wath upon Dearne

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff at his Department's offices in *(a)* Doncaster and *(b)* Wath upon Dearne, speak (i) Urdu, (ii) Punjabi, (iii) Bengali, including the Sylheti dialect, (iv) Chinese, (v) Farsi, (vi) Hindi and (vii) Gujerati.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Should the need arise, local offices have access to local community interpreters.

Social Security Reform

Miss Widdicombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will respond to the report by the Social Services Select Committee on the reform of social security in April 1988.

Mr. Newton: I have today laid before Parliament copies of the Government's observations on the Committee's report, which I recognise as a constructive contribution to the debate on these issues.

Pensions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table indicating for each of the last 10 years *(a)* the level of the basic state pension, *(b)* the average industrial wage and *(c)* the percentage of average industrial wage represented by the basic state pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 19 December 1989]:* The latest available information is set out in the table. The relationship between state retirement pension and earnings is not the key factor in improving pensioners' income. The key factor is pensioners' total incomes. Pensioners' average total net incomes increased by 23 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1986.

	[1]£pw.	[2]£pw.	[3]Per cent.
1979	23·30	86·20	27
1980	27·15	106·30	26
1981	29·60	119·80	25
1982	32·85	132·10	25
1983	34·05	143·20	24
1984	35·80	155·80	23
1985	38·30	167·40	23
1986	38·70	181·20	21
1987	39·50	194·90	20
1988	41·15	213·60	19

Source for data on earnings: New Earnings Survey.

[1] Basic State Pension.

[2] Average weekly earnings of full time adults in all industries and services.

[3] Basic state pension as proportion of average weekly earnings.

WALES

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to ensure that Wales retains the use of hill livestock compensatory allowances to assist farms in the less favoured areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I fully recognise the importance of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments to farmers in the less-favoured areas of Wales and remain committed to their continuance.

Welsh Dairy Sector

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy sector in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have no current plans to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, but I am in frequent contact with him.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state for each year since 1979 *(a)* spending by local authorities under the energy conservation programme in cash and real terms for Wales and by local authority and *(b)* the number of dwellings receiving energy efficiency improvements in Wales and by local authority.

Mr. Peter Walker: The available information on dwellings receiving energy efficiency improvements under the energy conservation programme or the homes insulation scheme are shown in the following tables for years since 1982. Figures for earlier years appear in table 10 of "Local Housing Statistics No. 66", a copy of which is available in the Library. Information on spending by local authorities under the energy conservation programme is not collected centrally.

Table 1: Work completed for local authorities under the energy conservation programme[1]

Number of dwellings

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Alyn and Deeside	103	4	755	15	5
Colwyn	92	0	0	0	48
Delyn	255	674	125	0	141
Glyndwr	0	0	7	23	0
Rhuddlan	0	0	0	0	0
Wrexham Maelor	114	698	1,194	304	266
Carmarthen	80	0	0	0	0
Ceredigion	0	64	0	0	0
Dinefwr	0	0	0	0	0
Llanelli	0	173	0	0	0
Preseli	22	0	140	20	7
South Pembrokeshire	0	2	0	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	215	14	0	0	0
Islwyn	0	0	0	0	0
Monmouth	276	0	0	0	0
Newport	30	0	310	819	996
Torfaen	0	0	0	0	0
Aberconwy	0	0	0	0	0
Arfon	0	0	0	39	90
Dwyfor	0	0	0	0	0
Meirionnydd	0	0	0	0	0
Ynys Mon	0	0	120	1,307	561
Cynon Valley	0	0	0	0	861
Merthyr Tydfil	1	0	0	0	0
Ogwr	0	0	0	0	0
Rhondda	0	0	0	0	0
Rhymney Valley	665	26	0	96	105
Taff-Ely	0	0	0	0	0
Brecknock	0	80	27	26	0
Montgomeryshire	3	4	33	12	18
Radnor	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiff	1,334	2,255	2,914	1,400	220
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	32	0	0
Port Talbot (Afan)	0	0	110	143	0
Lliw Valley	30	0	0	0	703
Neath	4	0	52	0	0
Swansea	23	0	140	0	70
Wales	3,247	3,994	5,959	4,204	4,091

[1] Figures for Wales were not collected from April 1981 to December 1983. Figures relate to activity where the only work carried out to the dwelling is under the energy conservation programme. Local authority dwellings may also be insulated when other general renovation work is carried out, but these cases cannot be separately identified.

Table 2: Grants paid under the Homes Insulation Scheme[1]

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Alyn and Deeside	655	275	304	616	666	417	102
Colwyn	354	381	421	583	580	438	148
Delyn	1,181	796	384	758	529	403	150
Glyndwr	404	496	405	425	424	312	123
Rhuddlan	759	867	579	620	532	429	313
Wrexham Maelor	577	616	286	669	764	561	196
Carmarthen	378	412	337	361	342	325	163
Ceredigion	342	465	413	300	421	410	175
Dinefwr	379	117	294	311	313	240	158
Llanelli	1,548	2,107	890	592	843	498	592
Preseli Pembrokeshire	630	419	354	381	445	435	371
South Pembrokeshire	346	403	315	344	295	267	140
Blaenau Gwent	878	1,408	957	957	348	396	483
Islwyn	1,035	1,042	481	608	789	732	1,049
Monmouth	240	559	265	394	440	250	141
Newport	1,944	1,216	856	622	1,255	804	262
Torfaen	313	422	420	499	523	308	139
Aberconwy	717	824	884	705	389	290	207
Arfon	739	430	509	448	374	276	118
Dwyfor	233	354	267	199	193	173	116
Meirionnydd	208	391	191	90	268	152	57
Ynys Mon	272	216	407	587	471	491	193
Cynon Valley	638	1,292	628	269	907	898	393
Merthyr Tydfil	428	467	332	493	832	537	974
Ogwr	949	1,463	802	916	1,912	1,224	1,110
Rhondda	2,119	1,822	999	765	1,141	720	794
Rhymney Valley	1,558	1,092	556	1,017	1,060	920	496
Taff-Ely	805	637	454	691	821	450	209
Brecknock	245	423	229	229	246	300	156
Montgomeryshire	303	296	231	281	340	284	247
Radnorshire	67	104	85	144	134	154	49
Cardiff	2,804	2,920	2,158	2,270	2,797	1,865	1,399
Vale of Glamorgan	664	715	684	1,320	1,377	1,089	545
Port Talbot (Afan)	307	719	404	365	228	700	949
Lliw Valley	627	595	307	628	705	528	427
Neath	1,167	876	573	505	639	485	162
Swansea	2,153	1,737	1,162	1,616	1,409	1,229	710
Wales	28,966	29,374	19,823	22,578	25,752	19,900	14,016

[1] Figures prior to 1984 are for the private sector only.

Skills Shortages

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of skills shortages and training needs in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Training Agency for Wales monitors constantly labour market developments in Wales, with particular emphasis on skills and training issues. The findings of its research are published in its annual labour market assessments and in the quarterly "Marchnad Lafur Cymru/Labour Market Wales".

Valleys Programme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Training Agency to publish the skills audit contained within the Valleys Programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The skills audit consists of a number of individual research projects convering the subjects of labour supply, labour demand and training provision. An introductory report was published on 5 October 1989. A report on each individual project will be published as results become available over the coming months. A final report will then bring together the separate components.

Employment Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by district and county, the number of trainees undergoing employment training in Wales; and how many training scheme vacancies exist.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is shown in the table:

County	*Total numbers in training at 29 December 1989*	*Total number of unfilled places at 29 December 1989*
Mid Glamorgan	3,080	600
South Glamorgan	1,837	978
Gwent	2,665	969
Dyfed	2,503	30
West Glamorgan	2,083	348
Clwyd	2,037	291
Powys	536	11
Gwynedd	1,315	289

Information at district level is not available.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost of writing to every business concerning the uniform business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will not be writing to each business concerning the uniform business rate. Several months ago

I made available to Welsh local authorities and business organisations a booklet "The New Business Rating System in Wales". Copies have also been sent to ratepayers in response to inquiries, and continue to be available from the Welsh Office on request.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the new uniform business rate for *(a)* the national museum of Wales, *(b)* Theatre Clwyd, *(c)* the Deeside leisure centre and *(d)* the national stadium, Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The uniform business rate for each of the hereditaments listed is 36·8p in the pound. This is the same as for all rateable hereditaments in Wales.

Businesses

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many businesses there are in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: There were 81,790 VAT-registered businesses in Wales at the end of 1988.

Allocation of Resources

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has now reached decisions about the allocation of resources of hospital and community health services in Wales for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I announced on 19 December, columns *161-62*, that, subject to parliamentary approval, I propose to provide £1,055·8 million for the hospital and community health services in Wales. Excluding the cost of the artificial limb and appliance service (which is administered on my behalf by the Welsh health common services authority) £962·6 million will be provided for current purposes and £86·9 million for capital spending.

For current spending this represents a cash increase of £72·8 million over estimated outturn for the current financial year and together with the additional £12 million which Welsh health authorities are expected to realise, as a minimum target, from new cost improvements and income generation schemes, provides an effective total increase in resources over 1989-90 of 9·5 per cent. This is on top of the extra funding which is being provided to meet the recurrent effect of the supplementary provisions made available in 1989-90 for the review body pay awards and also as a contribution toward the cost of implementing the White Paper "Working for Patients".

£57·6 million of this sum will be made available to health authorities for their discretionary use, which represents a cash increase of 6·5 per cent. over this year's provision. £7·5 million will be allocated to fund the balance of the full-year cost of developments which are being funded centrally in 1989-90 including those associated with the implementation of "Working for Patients". £7·7 million will be allocated to new centrally-funded developments. These developments, which are listed in the table, will considerably assist authorities in meeting future service requirements.

	£ million
Regional Services and Centrally-funded developments	2·0
Project 2000 including nurse education and support worker training and facilities	1·2
Consultant Expansion Programme	0·3
New Developments arising from the implementation of the White Paper "Working for Patients"	3·2
Other	1·0
	7·7

Of the capital provision, £45 million will be made available to health authorities for their discretionary use. This amounts to a cash increase of almost 14 per cent. over last year's capital allocation. The balance is required for the all-Wales capital programme, including provision for developments associated with implementation of "Working for Patients" and further developments to be undertaken under my Programme for the Valleys initiative. Further details will be announced in due course.

Authorities will be able to retain all the proceeds of their cost improvement programmes and income-generation schemes. They will also retain the income which they raise from charges for private treatment and the receipts which they obtain from the sale of surplus land and buildings. Property sales are expected to generate a further £5 million in 1990-91. In total, I will expect authorities to achieve additional savings, income and receipts amounting to at least 1·3 per cent. of their recurrent revenue allocations.

The current and capital allocations to individual authorities will be as shown in the table. These allocations do not take into account the further sums which will be allocated when decisions have been taken on the distribution of the funds available for centrally-directed developments.

£ million

	Allocation current element	*Capital element*
Clwyd	116·584	6·277
East Dyfed	74·897	3·205
Pembrokeshire	28·379	1·968
Gwent	137·968	6·184
Gwynedd	69·164	1·710
Mid Glamorgan	161·446	8·054
Powys	33·393	1·113
South Glamorgan	188·955	7·938
West Glamorgan	119·263	8·072

These current and capital allocations provide for a real increase in spending by health authorities after taking into account the level of general inflation forecast by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement. They more than fulfil the resource planning assumptions which were issued to authorities last year.

The current allocation, as in previous years, have been weighted in favour of those authorities which are shown by the latest revenue formula assessment to be furthest below their target shares of available revenue resources (which are based on the catchment populations for the services which they provide).

The revenue formula has been subject to further refinements this year to include a weighting for the effects of sparsity of population on community health services and, in accordance with allocations in England, to adjust the allowance which South Glamorgan health authority receives in respect of the medical teaching service that it provides.

The effect of the new revenue formula assessment is to weight the distribution of the 6·5 per cent. cash increase to

be made available to health authorities, in favour of the Clwyd, East Dyfed, Pembrokeshire, Gwent and Powys health authorities in such a way as to bring all these authorities to within 1·4 per cent. of their revised revenue formula target shares. This represents a continuance of the Government's longstanding commitment to the progressive equalisation of resources between health authorities in Wales.

It also provides a firm foundation for moving towards an allocation system based directly upon shares of the population served as set out in "Working for Patients". The joint Welsh Office-NHS resources allocation working group is currently considering how resource allocation arrangements in Wales might best be changed to achieve the objectives of the White Paper, and I look forward to receiving its recommendations and the comments of health authorities during 1990.

The capital allocations have, accordingly, also been determined in accordance with the existing allocation procedures, using the second revise of the original capital formula assessment, which, as in previous years, includes an allowance for the progressive equalisation of capital stock between authorities.

PRIME MINISTER

Flora and Fauna

Q89. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister which Departments have responsibility for the genetic conservation of flora and fauna.

The Prime Minister: The following Departments all have responsibilities for aspects of the genetic conservation of flora and fauna: Department of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Department of Education and Science, Department of Environment for Northern Ireland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, Welsh Office Agriculture Department and the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland.

Textiles

Q99. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to a textile factory.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

European Social Charter

Q110. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the programme for directives covered by the social charter.

The Prime Minister: At the European Council in December in Strasbourg Heads of Government took note of the European Commission's action programme of measures necessary to implement the proposed charter of fundamental social rights of workers. I have at present no plans to raise the matter at the next European Council meeting in June. However, we will of course examine carefully the individual proposals in the action programme as they are brought forward by the European Commission, and will participate fully in the detailed negotiations.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to raise the matter of the forthcoming fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with Prime Minister Kaifu of Japan when they meet on 12 January.

The Prime Minister: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister whether during her meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister on 19 December 1989, the forthcoming fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was discussed.

The Prime Minister: No.

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she plans to propose any joint Anglo-Japanese initiative on mitigation of the greenhouse effect during her meeting with Prime Minister Kaifu of Japan on 12 January.

The Prime Minister: I look forward to discussing with the Japanese Prime Minister ways of meeting the challenge of climate change, including action to mitigate the adverse effect of greenhouse gas emissions. However, this is a global problem requiring global solutions: the intergovernmental panel on climate change was set up to report precisely on this.

I am happy to say that there is very close, harmonious and productive Anglo-Japanese co-operation in that body and in other international fora dealing with these matters.

Plutonium Transfer

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her meeting with Prime Minister Kaifu of Japan on 12 January, she plans to raise the issue of United Kingdom-Japanese collaboration on the design of safe transport systems to transfer plutonium from the United Kingdom back to Japan after reprocessing at Sellafield.

The Prime Minister: In my talks with the Japanese Prime Minister I shall be discussing a wide range of issues. Responsibility for developing transport proposals rests with BNFL in association with its foreign customers. These arrangements will have to comply with international regulations.

Daya Bay Nuclear Reactor

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister whether safety of the Daya Bay nuclear reactor and evacuation plans for Hong Kong in the event of an accident involving radiation release therefrom have been discussed with the Chinese authorities.

The Prime Minister: There has been regular contact between the British and Chinese Governments about the safety of the plant. The Chinese authorities have assured us that the construction and operation of the plant will be to the highest safety standards. A consultancy undertaken by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, subsequently confirmed by experts from the International Atomic Energy Authority, concluded that planning for evacuation from Hong Kong was not required in view of the territory's distance from the plant.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Nuclear Weapon States

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has given consideration to the implications for *(a)* national and *(b)* global security that would arise from the complete separation of military and civilian nuclear facilities in nuclear weapon states.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* Such matters are kept under review, and to a large extent civil and military nuclear facilities are already separated in the United Kingdom. However, the complete separation of the remaining nuclear facilities is currently regarded as uneconomic and the additional costs would outweigh any security gains.

SCOTLAND

Postgraduate Student Allowance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his detailed criteria for deciding whether courses qualify for assistance under the postgraduate students allowances scheme.

Mr. Lang: All postgraduate courses which have been approved by a validating body are considered for assistance under the postgraduate students allowances scheme. Decisions on specific courses are made in the light of changing trends in education and vocational requirements and the bids received from institutions.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why the M.Sc. in finance at the University of Strathclyde does not qualify for assistance under the post-graduate students allowances scheme.

Mr. Lang: Assistance for higher postgraduate degree study is not offered under the postgraduate students allowances scheme and assistance for this course is the responsibility of the Economic and Social Research Council.

Hospices

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current Government funding arrangements for hospices in Scotland; when they came into effect; and what changes are anticipated in the near future.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Many health boards in Scotland directly use the services of hospices on a contractual basis and others provide assistance by way of financial support or provision of supplies.

With effect from 1 April 1990, the support given to independent hospices will be increased to provide public funding of at least 50 per cent. of their running costs.

Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he plans to issue on the grounds on which a patient can be detained under section 18 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 and to clarify section 20(1)*(b)* of that Act.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Guidance on the compulsory detention of patients under part V of the 1984 Act is contained in a code of practice currently lying before Parliament in terms of section 119 of the Act.

I am considering separately the question of clarification of section 20(1)*(b)* in the light of the circumstances of a particular case which the hon. Member has drawn to my attention and hope to reach conclusions shortly.

Scottish Transport Group

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Scottish Transport Group's external financing limit for 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Transport Group's external financing limit for 1989-90 was originally set at minus £4·7 million as recorded in the Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92 published in January 1989 (Cm 616). I have now set a revised EFL for 1989-90 of minus £12·1 million to reflect the changed financial circumstances of the group, particularly in relation to lower capital expenditure requirements in the Scottish Bus Group in advance of privatisation.

Department of the Registers of Scotland

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the candidature of the Department of the Registers of Scotland for agency status.

Mr. Rifkind: I have concluded that the Department would benefit from establishment as an agency and hope that this may be achieved on 1 April 1990. It will be the first such agency from within my areas of responsibility.

The agency will be headed by the Keeper of the Registers of Scotland who, as chief executive, will enjoy extensive managerial freedom to organise the work of the agency so as to provide the best possible service to the public within a policy and resources framework which I shall set. The Keeper will be responsible to me for meeting specific objectives and challenging targets but will be free to determine how those are to be achieved. The staff of the agency will remain within the Civil Service.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Bicycles

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police authorities provide a post-coding service for bicycles seven days per week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not held centrally. Police forces encourage owners of bicycles to

have them marked with their post code; owners should contact the police crime prevention officer who will be able to advise on local arrangements for marking to be carried out.

Prison Transfers

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many petitions for transfer from a gaol in England and Wales to a gaol in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland are currently outstanding;

(2) how many petitions for transfer from gaols in England and Wales to gaols in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland have been received in the last 10 years; and how many have been successful;

(3) how many prisoners who are serving a prison sentence in England and Wales have been transferred following a petition, to a gaol in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland in the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The table gives the numbers of petitions that have been received for permanent transfer under section 26(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 from prisons in England and Wales to prisons in Northern Ireland, and the number granted, in each year since 1980.

Year	*Petitions*	*Transfers*
1980	10	1
1981	7	—
1982	7	—
1983	20	3
1984	12	1
1985	26	4
1986	25	2
1987	31	3
1988	62	10
1989	55	17

There are 15 petitions for permanent transfer to Northern Ireland to which a final reply has not yet been given; and three prisoners whose transfers have been agreed are currently awaiting transfer.

Transfers of prisoners are not possible between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland as, although the Republic of Ireland has signed the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons, it has not yet ratified it. The United Kingdom ratified the convention in 1985.

Category A Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in England and Wales who orginally came from *(a)* Northern Ireland or *(b)* the Republic of Ireland are deemed category A.

Mr. Mellor: The figures are (a) 21 and (b) 17.

Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners who are currently serving a prison sentence in England and Wales originally emanated from *(a)* Northern Ireland or *(b)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, on 30 September 1989, about 320 sentenced prisoners in prison service establishments in England and Wales who were citizens of the United Kingdom or whose citizenship was unknown were known to have been born in Northern Ireland.

The recording of nationality in the records held currently for citizens of the Republic of Ireland is not completely reliable because it depends upon information provided by the prisoner. On 30 September, about 460 sentenced prisoners in establishments in England and Wales were recorded as citizens of or born in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners who are serving a sentence in England and Wales have petitioned for transfer to gaol in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland on more than *(a)* two occasions, *(b)* four occasions, *(c)* six occasions, *(d)* eight occasions or *(e)* 10 occasions.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

NTVLRO

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek an explanation from the NTVLRO as to the reasons for its delay in making a substantive response to Manchester city council's application for Keary close, Gorton, to be accepted as eligible for the reduced television licence; and if he will request the NTVLRO to make such a response without further delay.

Mr. Mellor: On 18 April 1989 NTVLRO refused an application made in March 1989 by the city of Manchester social services department in respect of accommodation at Annesley gardens and Keary close. In response to representations dated 16 June, NTVLRO wrote again on 28 June 1989 seeking more information. NTVLRO has no trace of a reply to that letter, and has therefore been unable to consider the matter further.

Ambulance Stations (Telephone Numbers)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to authorise the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to make available to the public telephone numbers of ambulance stations in London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The question of the publication of the telephone numbers of ambulance stations in London is not a matter for the Home Office or the police but for the London ambulance service.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the provision of concessionary television licences for pensioners living in residential or sheltered accommodation;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of individuals currently covered by the television concessionary licence available to retirement pensioners' sheltered and residential accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: The concessionary licence is available to retirement pensioners and disabled people living in residential or nursing homes, or in equivalent sheltered accommodation provided by a local authority or a housing association. New regulations governing the issue of the licence came into force on 19 May 1988.

Since then about 33,000 schemes have been reviewed by NTVLRO. Four thousand outstanding applications will be resolved when further information requested by NTVLRO is supplied by the applicant authorities.

The annual £5 fee is now payable per household, rather than per individual. At 30 November 1989, it is estimated that about 864,240 people in 677,835 households were covered by the licence.

Welsh Television Broadcasting

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals for extending to the English-speaking population of Wales similar television broadcasting facilities to those provided to Welsh speakers by S4C.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have made no proposal to provide a specific alternative to S4C programmes. But English speakers in Wales already receive three UHF channels and the majority of English programmes on the fourth channel, and with the encouragement of the Government's Broadcasting Bill the choice for the viewer is likely progressively to increase through the addition of new services.

Detective Chief Inspector Paul Matthews

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the nature of the disciplinary offence for which DCI Paul Matthews was ordered to return to uniform duties in 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands that Mr. Matthews was transferred to uniform duties in 1985. This was a management decision and not the result of any disciplinary action.

Explosives Charges

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list any cases in the last two years where persons facing explosives charges have been released despite positive forensic tests.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name the forensic test which proved positive against Mr. Daniel McBrearty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Positive results were obtained from three separate tests—(i) gas chromatography with chemiluminescent detection; (i) gas chromatography with mass spectrometric detection; (iii) thin layer chromatography.

Prison Visitors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each region, the names of the individual members of boards of visitors of prisons for England and Wales; who their representing body is; and if he will indicate those who are members of an ethnic minority.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) on 20 December 1989 at column *270*. I am arranging for details of the current membership of the board of visitors for each prison establishment in England and Wales to be placed in the Library but it would not be appropriate, without seeking their individual consent, to indicate those who are members of ethnic minorities.

The Co-ordinating Committee of Boards of Visitors considers and raises matters of common concern to boards with the Department.

Prison Service

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached on the review of the organisation and location above establishment level of the prison service in England and Wales.

Mr. Waddington: The report was published on 10 August and copies were placed in the Library. I have been able to consider the report's recommendations in the light of over 150 written submissions, and of comments made in presentations conducted by prison service management. I have myself had discussions with many people in the service, and have met representatives of all the major trade unions concerned.

I am satisfied that it is right to accept all the main recommendations of the review. The Prisons Board will be restructured by the creation of operational directorates. The regional system will be replaced by area managers who will be part of the headquarters structure. More work will be devolved to establishments from headquarters and regional offices. The whole of headquarters up to and including the Director General will in due course be relocated to the midlands. Work will begin to determine whether, and if so when, the prison service should become an executive agency.

The new organisation will come into being in September and will be based in existing accommodation in London and Birmingham until a new midlands location is available.

I believe that these radical changes will place the service in a stronger position to meet the challenges it faces. They will build on the existing major programme of reforms and modernisation resulting from "Fresh Start", the prison building and refurbishment programme, an increased use of information technology and renewed work to improve regimes for inmates.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the statement by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on his strategy for 1990.

Mr. Waddington: I am placing copies of the commissioner's strategy statement for 1990 in the Library today. I am also sending copies to all right hon. and hon. Members whose constituencies fall wholly or partly within the Metropolitan police district. I am inviting London Members to discuss the statement with me.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lead-contaminated Feed

5. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tests are available to ensure that meat from cattle whose feed has been contaminated by lead is safe for human consumption.

Mr. Gummer: Every animal going to slaughter which has eaten contaminated feed is tested and consumers can be fully assured that the meat will not enter the food chain unless it is safe for it to do so.

18. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current position regarding the lead-contaminated feed problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: We have lifted restrictions from all 1,162 farms subject to milk controls and the orderly disposal of contaminated feed is proceeding as planned. Schemes are in operation to enable livestock to be removed from restricted farms as soon as that can be done without compromising the safety of the food chain.

60. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what co-operation he received from the Dutch in dealing with the lead contamination of cattle feed.

Mr. Gummer: The Dutch authorities alerted my officials on 1 November that a consignment of contaminated feed had been imported into the United Kingdom. Subsequently there was close liaison between Dutch officials and United Kingdom embassy staff in the Hague and between officials in London in our efforts to clarify the events leading to the contamination. A more detailed account will become available once the Dutch court case on this matter is concluded.

National Farmers Union

12. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what subjects he discussed.

20. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: I last met the chairman of the National Farmers Union yesterday, when we discussed a range of agricultural matters.

58. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the National Farmers Union; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: I meet representatives of the National Farmers Union frequently to discuss agricultural matters.

Lead in Milk

13. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the arrangements in his Department for dealing with lead contamination in milk.

Mr. Gummer: My overriding concern has been to protect the consumer. I therefore required the milk from affected farms to be segregated and converted into butter and powder. An intensive sampling/testing programme was introduced and the restrictions were not lifted until we were satisfied that there was no longer any danger to public health.

Harbour Grants

14. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial aid is being made available in 1989-90 in the form of harbour grants to the sea fish industry.

Mr. Curry: Some £4·4 million is being made available in 1989-90 for such harbour improvements in the United Kingdom.

Green Pound

15. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to place a ceiling on any future movements of the green pound.

Mr. Gummer: The level of the green pound will be considered as part of the annual price review. The Commission is to produce proposals on the long-term future of the agrimonetary system; when these emerge they will be considered by the Council.

Bread Production

16. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors will affect bread production in the next 12 months.

Mr. Curry: The main factors affecting bread production are: raw material prices, mainly grain, which have eased in the past few months; and labour costs, which have recently increased quite significantly, together with energy and other manufacturing costs. However, the price increases announced by the major bakeries are likely to be offset by the effects of discounting and other promotions by retailers.

Sell-by Dates

17. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will initiate national guidelines on sell-by dates.

Mr. Maclean: "Sell-by" dates will soon be phased out and "use by" dates for highly perishable foods will be introduced. This will give better protection and information to our consumers. I am presently considering with interested parties whether guidelines should be developed setting out the criteria to be used to determine which foodstuffs should carry a "use by" date.

Food Safety

19. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to ensure that the consumer has access to safe, wholesome food.

30. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve food safety in the United Kingdom.

62. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his Ministry's work on food safety.

Mr. Maclean: It is our policy to encourage the widest availability of wholesome, attractive foods throughout the country as set out in the recent White Paper, "Food Safety —Protecting the Consumer" (Cm. 732), and the Food Safety Bill. While encouraging freedom of choice, we give the highest priority to the safety of the consumer and examples of recent work to improve this are set out in the White Paper. For the future the Food Safety Bill sets out proposals for a wider, stronger and more flexible legislative base for improving food safety right through the food chain from the farm to the shop.

My right hon. Friend has established a food safety directorate which brings together all the main aspects of the Ministry's food safety work. We shall continue to be advised by various independent expert committees on all aspects of food safety.

59. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to meet the local authority associations to discuss the role of environmental health officers in ensuring food safety.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend maintains regular contacts with the enforcement authorities. In addition, I have recently met several local authority associations to discuss the enforcement of food safety legislation in the context of the Food Safety Bill and my officials are discussing with the local authority and enforcement associations the implementation of the Official Control of Foodstuffs Directive.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether requirements of food safety measures in the Food Safety Bill have been taken into account in the calculations of the standard spending assessment of metropolitan and non-metropolitan local authorities for 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The majority of new requirements involving costs to local authorities will be in regulations to be made after the Bill has received Royal Assent. Local authorities are unlikely to have to incur additional expenditure before 1 April 1991. This is why the additional £30 million to enable local authorities to enforce the additional requirements of the Bill is to be taken into account in the revenue support grant settlement for 1991-92.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline his consultation process with local authorities concerning the additional costs to them of the measures in the Food Safety Bill; if he will list those local authorities which have been consulted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Officials in the Departments concerned held discussions with a number of organisations and individuals from local authorities in order to assess the resources needed. The following local authority bodies were consulted:

The Institution of Environmental Health Officers;
The Association of District Councils;
The Association of County Councils;
The Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards;
The Association of Public Analysts;
The Association of Metropolitan Authorities;
The Association of Port Health Authorities;
The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities;
The Institute of Trading Standards Administration.

The Government have announced that an additional £30 million will be taken into account in the revenue support grant for 1991-92 onwards. This has been widely welcomed.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will describe the formulation and basis of his calculation of the additional cost to local authorities of the Food Safety Bill; how he expects this to be distributed among *(a)* shire counties, *(b)* non-metropolitan districts and boroughs, and *(c)* metropolitan districts and boroughs including London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Officials in the Departments concerned consulted interested parties in order to assess the additional resources local authorities would need in order to finance the additional requirements arising from the Food Safety Bill. The Government concluded that an additional £30 million should be taken into account in the revenue support grant settlement for 1991-92 onwards. The additional resources will be distributed between local authorities according to the usual conventions.

Straw Burning

21. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received since his announcement on straw burning.

Mr. Gummer: I have received 54 letters from right hon. and hon. Members and members of the public. Most expressed support for my decision to prohibit straw burning subject to strictly limited exemptions, on which I shall be consulting the industry.

Isle of Man

22. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about the fishing limit around the Isle of Man.

Mr. Curry: I have nothing to add to what my fellow Parliamentary Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) said in the Adjournment debate on 13 December (*Official Report*, columns 1142-48.)

Sheepmeat Regime

23. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what meetings he has had with outside organisations to discuss the future of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Curry: During the recent review of the sheepmeat regime Ministers and officials consulted widely with interested parties. We shall continue to do so on the details that remain to be resolved.

28. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the future of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Curry: The recent reform of the sheepmeat regime offers excellent prospects for United Kingdom producers to compete on an equal basis in Europe as they enter the next decade.

61. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about recent discussions he has had in the European Council concerning the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council on 11-12 December, as part of the follow-up to the reform of the sheepmeat regime, agreed a definition of a heavy lamb carcase for the purpose of determinin the level of ewe premium payments to be paid to sheep milk producers. That will not affect the payments under the 1990 scheme to sheep milk producers in this country. The special arrangements governing payments to sheeps' milk producers, which were agreed by the September Council, will come into effect in the United Kingdom from the beginning of 1991. The Council also agreed revised terms of access for Argentinian and Australian sheepmeat exports to the EC.

Food and Farming Year

24. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the key achievements of Food and Farming Year; and what assessment he has made of its effectiveness.

Mr. Gummer: Food and Farming Year was organised by the industry to increase public awareness of farming and food production as an industry and as a way of life. The high interest shown at food and farming events throughout the country, and particularly at the major exhibitions at Hyde park and Gateshead, is a clear indication of the year's success.

Salmonella

25. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support his Department has given to scheme quality certification for British eggs and for the exclusion of imported eggs that do not meet the United Kingdom's anti-salmonella measures.

Mr. Curry: This certification scheme is an initiative by Food from Britain, which we welcome. We are also encouraging egg packers and retailers to market "British eggs" positively so that consumers are able to identify, and select, such eggs. As for the banning of imported eggs, we have no evidence that would justify such action at present.

49. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about controlling salmonella food poisoning.

Mr Maclean: Control of salmonella in food is a complex problem. The Government have taken action in areas of particular concern, especially through the adoption of a comprehensive package of measures in relation to salmonella in eggs. The Government have also issued important advice to consumers on the hygienic handling and preparation of food in the home.

64. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many chickens have been officially slaughtered in the current year because his inspectors have found salmonella infection in their eggs.

Mr. Maclean: The compulsory slaughter arrangements are based on the testing of birds rather than eggs. Up to 22 December 1989 1,024,149 birds have been slaughtered compulsorily because of the presence of salmonella enteritidis or S. Typhimurium in the flock.

Food Safety Bill

26. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations have made representations to him since the publication of the Food Safety Bill.

38. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any further representations concerning the Food Safety Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have received representations from a wide range of interests, including those of consumers, enforcement bodies and the food industry. The Bill has received a broad welcome from all sides.

Horticultural Growers

27. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what analysis his Department has undertaken on the principal input costs for horticultural growers.

Mr. Curry: Comprehensive economic information on full-time horticultural businesses, including data on input costs, is collected in the farm business survey. The latest published information is in the 1989 edition of "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

EEC Butter

29. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the method of distributing supplies of European Economic Community butter.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Microwave Ovens

31. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to improve consumer information about the operation of microwave ovens.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend the Minister published the report on the study commissioned by the Ministry on the uniformity and reproducibility of reheating in domestic microwave ovens on 4 December 1989, the day on which he received it. He was immediately in touch with the oven manufacturers' representatives. As a result, as the Minister informed the House in response to a private notice question from the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 6 December at columms 323-27, the manufacturers issued updated and improved instructions on that day in relation to the models for which that was appropriate. The manufacturers were also able to make fuller information available through retail outlets and, as the Minister indicated in his reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 18 December at column *30*, we have encouraged retailers to stock this information.

Farm Incomes

32. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on current and future levels of farm incomes.

Mr. Gummer: Estimates of farm incomes for 1989 will be published in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1989" within the next few weeks. Incomes for future years will be influenced by many factors and it is not possible to give reliable estimates at this stage.

Rutland Water

33. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the findings of his departmental veterinary service into the deaths of animals connected with Rutland Water in the weeks up to 8 September.

Mr. Maclean: Ten dead lambs and two dogs were examined by Ministry veterinary investigation centres in the period from 21 August to 7 September. Tissue samples were also examined at the university of Dundee. There is evidence that some of the sheep were suffering from relatively common diseases, such as pulpy kidney and pasteurella. However, results show that some of the sheep deaths and that of both dogs may be linked to the ingestion of blue green algal toxins.

Fishing Industry

34. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of prospects for the fishing industry in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

46. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the prospects for the fishing industry in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

51. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the prospects for the fishing industry in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The value of landings increased by 44 per cent. between 1983 and 1988 against a generally stable volume of catches, but opportunities in 1990 will be less. However, while in the interests of conservation 20 quotas are lower than in 1989, including substantial cuts for North sea cod and haddock, 17 others remain stable and 12 quotas have increased.

Where quotas have been reduced, that has been in order to conserve stocks and safeguard the long-term future of the fishing industry. The extent to which earnings are affected will depend upon the market response to the lower landings.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to devolve central control of the inshore fishing industry of England and Wales to a regional fisheries management organisation which would co-ordinate the work of his Ministry's fisheries inspectorate and provide the contract and administrative body for the sea fisheries committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have no plans to create such a regional fisheries management body, but I am looking at alternative quota management measures.

Irish Sea

35. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about fishing limits in the Irish sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have received inquiries from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations but am aware of

the concern of others. Any arrangement made to implement the provision for a 12-mile territorial sea for the Isle of Man would clearly, in relation to fisheries, have to safeguard the interests of all our fishermen and our Community obligations. I refer the hon. Member to the Adjournment debate on 13 December, *Official Report*, columns 1142-48.

Trawsgoed Laboratories

36. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the Trawsgoed laboratories.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the penultimate paragraph of the written answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) on 14 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *800*.

Transportation of Live Animals

37. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to improve the conditions under which live animals are transported.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 20 December, *Official Report*, column *349*.

Dairy Sector

39. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board.

Green Currencies

40. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet the Agriculture Commissioner of the European Economic Community to discuss green currencies.

Mr. Curry: I meet the Agriculture Commissioner regularly. I shall discuss green currencies with him in the context of the cap price fixing, on which the Agriculture Council may have a preliminary discussion at its meeting on 22-23 January.

HSE Agricultural Inspectorate

41. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives from the Health and Safety Executive's agriculture inspectorate; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: Ministerial responsibilities for the agricultural inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive fall to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Food Labelling

42. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress in establishing a common European standard for the labelling of fats and other nutritional contents of food offered for sale.

Mr. Maclean: A European Community "Common Position" was reached on the Draft Nutrition Labelling (Rules) Directive, which includes provision for the labelling of fats, at the Internal Market Council on 21 December last. The proposals will now go to the Euopean Parliament for its second opinion before returning to Council for final adoption. The Council agreed a two-stage approach similar to the Ministry's nutrition labelling guidelines, consisting of a minimum declaration of the "Big 4" nutrients (energy, protein carbohydrate and fat) plus any other nutrient for which a claim is made. A second group of nutrients (sugars, saturates, fibre and sodium) will be added to the "Big 4" six years after notification of the directive, with the declaration of the "Big 4" only continuing to be an option. The giving of nutrition information will be voluntary except when a nutrient claim is made.

The United Kingdom would have preferred to introduce the second group of nutrients immediately but had to accept the phasing-in arrangements in order to obtain agreement on the total package which, on our initiative, includes provision to review the directive, in the light of experience, eight years after notification. A number of the directive's detailed provisions remain to be agreed at Community level but it is intended that those outstanding matters will be resolved within the time allowed for implementation, which is three years after the directive was adopted. Some changes to United Kingdom regulations will be needed, but there is no reason why manufacturers and retailers cannot adopt the main provisions of the directive as soon as it is finalised and I shall be urging them to give as much nutrition information as possible within the format laid down in the directive. In particular, I believe that a full nutrition declaration should be given whenever a nutrition claim is made, to ensure that consumers are not misled by selective claims.

No progress has been made on the directive to enable the introduction of the compulsory labelling of certain nutrients and that remains on the table for further discussion.

52. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to undertake a comprehensive review of food labelling.

Mr. Maclean: I announced on 15 November that I have asked the Food Advisory Committee to undertake a comprehensive review of food labelling.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

43. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that Britain retains the use of hill livestock compensatory allowances to assist farmers in the less favoured areas.

Mr. Curry: In the negotiations last year on the reforms of the EC structural funds, my right hon. Friend argued vigorously in support of the United Kingdom arrangements for paying hill livestock compensatory allowances. The Government remain fully committed to continuing to provide appropriate support to farmers in the less favoured areas of the United Kingdom including support through the HLCA scheme.

Imported Eggs

44. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many eggs have been imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last three months.

Mr. Curry: The latest monthly data supplied by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are as follows:

1989	*Thousand eggs*
September	58,044
October	38,285
November	74,354

Set-Aside

45. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on his policy regarding set-aside.

Mr. Curry: I shall be announcing in due course the arrangements for the third year of the scheme starting on 1 October 1990.

Consumers Association

47. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Consumers Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maclean: I met the Consumers Association on 21 November 1989 when we discussed healthy methods of cooking in catering as a contribution to reducing the incidence of coronary heart disease.

Food Advisory Committee

48. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he has made to the membership of the Food Advisory Committee in order to improve consumer representation.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 13 December 1989 (*Official Report*, columns *695-97*).

Agriculture Council

50. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last attended an Agriculture Council meeting; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on 13 December (*Official Report*, column *698*).

Farm-Bred Turkeys

53. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any proposals from the European Commission concerning the future of traditional farm-bred turkeys.

Mr. Maclean: The European Commission officials are working on a draft measure for the production of all poultry meat in the single market but have not yet made a formal proposal to the Council. The industry and other interests concerned are being kept fully informed of developments and I shall take account of their views in future negotiations.

Newcastle upon Tyne

54. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how long his Department has used Newcastle upon Tyne as a location for their administration activities.

Mr. Curry: My Department and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries before it has used Newcastle upon Tyne as an office location since at least 1939.

Farm Animal Welfare

55. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on farm animal welfare.

Mr. Maclean: I receive representations from the public, the industry and welfare organisations on many aspects of farm animal welfare.

Fishing Vessels (Licensing)

56. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to amend current licence arrangements for United Kingdom fishing vessels.

Mr. Curry: We have recently consulted the industry on proposed changes to the licensing system, which would permit the aggregation of vessel capacity. We are still awaiting some industry views but hope to be able to make an arrangement shortly.

We are likely to have to make some changes to licensing conditions once the Divisional Court has considered the recent judgment of the European Court of Justice in cases 3/87 Agegate and 216/87 Jaderow.

Cereal Production

57. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons the Agriculture Council determined to disregard the automatic stabiliser for cereal production in December.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 19 December by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister (*Official Report* column *122*).

Upland Farmers

63. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest assessment of economic conditions for upland farmers.

Mr. Curry: A statement on the outcome of the annual review of the economic conditions in the United Kingdom's hill and upland areas will be made as soon as possible.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

65. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policies are being developed to ensure that the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service is becoming more commercial in its operations.

Mr. Gummer: ADAS introduced its commercial services in April 1987. Since then it has exceeded its revenue targets in both 1987-88 and 1988-89, and is

expected to do so again in the current financial year. Steps have also been taken to improve efficiency and reduce costs. The performance of ADAS is kept under review and in the medium term it has been set a target of recovering 50 per cent. of the full economic cost of providing commercial advisory services by 1993-94.

Pollution Control

66. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what uptake there has been in 1989 for pollution control projects under the farm and conservation grant scheme.

Mr. Curry: Interest in the grants available under the farm and conservation grant scheme for pollution control projects has been high. To date nearly 3,000 farmers in England have notified us of their intention to carry out this type of work. Grant paid on work already carried out under the scheme as a whole, which also includes other conservation items, so far amounts to about £1·5 million.

Eggs

67. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will undertake a review of the overall effectiveness of recent legislation affecting the egg producing industry.

Mr. Maclean: The requirements on testing of poultry flocks for salmonella, introduced in March 1989, have already been modified. This and related legislation will be kept under review.

73. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present state of the egg industry.

Mr. Curry: Egg supplies are still somewhat lower than in November 1988 and consumption is also down, but packer to producer prices are very firm and are currently at their highest levels for over five years.

I am encouraging our egg packers and retailers to market British eggs, which are now produced to the highest standards, in a way that will enable consumers to identify and select them.

Papain

68. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the administration of the tendering agent papain to cattle prior to slaughter.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the full statement that I made on this matter during the Adjournment debate on 7 November 1989.

Meat Prices

69. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effect upon retail prices of meat if European Economic Community directive 64/433 is implemented.

Mr. Curry: EC directive 64/433 is already in force and sets down hygiene, inspection and structural requirements for meat plants exporting to other EC member states. Draft proposals currently under discussion would extend similar requirements to all meat plants. Any impact on retail prices of meat would depend on the individual decisions of meat plant operators in the light of the competitive market situation that they faced.

Farm Woodland Scheme

70. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the operation of the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Gummer: The farm woodland scheme came into operation on 1 October 1988. By the end of November 1989 applications had been received to plant 8,938 hectares, 75 per cent. with broadleaved trees. The scheme is clearly successful in encouraging farmers to plant woodlands on land that would otherwise contribute to production of surplus food. It also holds out the prospect of environmental and landscape improvements in the longer term.

71. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current uptake of the farm woodland scheme.

72. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the current uptake of applications for the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Gummer: In the first 14 months of the farm woodland scheme 1,323 farmers applied to plant a total of 8,938 hectares of trees throughout the United Kingdom. The trees will be planted in small areas, which average around 6 hectares per farm and 75 per cent. will be broadleaved species.

Wastes

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields, 14 December, *Official Report*, column *800*, if he will place in the Library the comments of *(a)* Sweden, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* the Netherlands, *(d)* Germany and *(e)* Norway to his proposals to permit licences for the dumping of the relevant wastes.

Mr. Gummer: I have arranged for the material requested to be placed in the Library, together with the documents to which the comments relate and my Department's replies to these comments. The departmental papers show that the wastes concerned will not harm the marine environment and that at present there exists no alternative means of disposal for them on land which would be environmentally acceptable.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many new active ingredients of pesticides have been *(a)* received *(b)* approved and *(c)* rejected for each year since 1985.

Mr. Maclean: The following information relates to new pesticides (active ingredients) for which my Department has responsibility.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
(a) Received	26	28	23	12	15
(b) Approved (full/ provisional/ experimental permit)	21	12	11	5	5
(c) Rejected	0	3	1	—	1

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 11 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns *512-16*, on what basis he has selected the pesticides for which a review is planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The pesticides planned for review cover all those active ingredients approved prior to 1981.

Atlantic Salmon

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to initiate discussions at European Community level about the need for action to combat illegal drift net fishing for Atlantic salmon in international waters.

Mr. Gummer: Ministers and officials discuss the enforcement of regulations with other EC member states and with the Commission and will continue to do so. For international waters, the main forum for discussion of regulatory measures is the North Atlantic Conservation Organisation (NASCO) to which the European Community is a contracting party. That organisation is well aware of the problem of illegal drift netting for Atlantic salmon in international waters.

We have consistently taken a strong line on all forms of illegal fishing for Atlantic salmon and will continue to do so.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 12 January 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Ko Hsuan School

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his inspectors last visited Ko Hsuan school in North Devon; what inquiries they made; if he will publish their report; and if he will now make a statement on the information he has concerning the recent suicide of a pupil at the school.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My Department has asked for a full explanation from the school of the circumstances leading up to the tragic death of Nicholas Shultz.

Her Majesty's inspectors last visited the school in September 1988 to advise the Department about its final registration. The visit involved not only observation of work in progress but discussions with senior management about the curriculum. The boarding accommodation was briefly visited; there was no evidence of boys and girls sharing the same dormitory or bedroom. This was one of the many visits to independent schools carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate as part of its routine information-gathering. As such, it will not lead to a published report.

Teacher Shortages

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is kept on the number of children sent home due to lack of teaching staff in each local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities are responsible for the deployment of teachers, and comprehensive information about the number of pupils sent home is not held centrally by the Department.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average annual salary earned by graduates in *(a)* teaching, *(b)* the Civil Service, *(c)* industry and *(d)* commerce in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Cope: This information is not available.

Recruitment Advertising

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each health and social services board in Northern Ireland amounts spent on recruitment advertising for the last three years, together with a breakdown of the spending between *(a)* national press, *(b)* regional press, *(c)* specialist or periodical press and *(d)* other, stating which; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Figures in £'s

	Nat Press	*Reg Press*	*Specialist Press*	*[1]Other*	*Total*
1986-87					
Northern Board	4,722	73,268	8,959	—	86,949
Southern Board	—	62,542	5,673	—	68,215
Eastern Board	6,232	75,628	12,275	9,725	103,860
Western Board	4,617	70,999	4,980	—	80,596
Central Services Agency[2]	—	13,775	4,048	—	17,823
1987-88					
Northern Board	8,142	69,485	8,290	—	85,917
Southern Board	—	80,678	8,342	—	89,020
Eastern Board	10,970	51,067	12,068	15,125	89,230
Western Board	3,864	96,637	6,301	—	106,802
Central Services Agency[2]	—	13,909	5,050	—	18,959
1988-89					
Northern Board	8,318	69,248	4,523	—	82,089
Southern Board	—	78,996	8,058	—	87,054
Eastern Board	9,879	63,860	13,263	16,820	103,822
Western Board	3,178	75,958	3,446	—	82,582
Central Services Agency[2]	—	13,401	5,897	—	19,298

Notes:

[1] The Eastern Board produces a fortnightly Job Bulletin which is placed at locations to which the public has access eg Job Markets.

[2] Cost of advertisements by the Central Services Agency on behalf of Boards.

Drought Orders

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by *(a)* water company and *(b)* location, where drought orders still remain in force.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no drought orders currently in force in Northern Ireland.

Police Officers (Housing Allowance)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to implement the recommendation of the police negotiating board that officers in provided accommodation should receive a housing allowance and pay rent for their accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: No. The police authority will need to provide accommodation free of rent for the foreseeable future to meet operational requirements and as an incentive to recruitment. It has therefore been decided to maintain the status quo with officers in provided accommodation receiving no housing allowance but living rent-free. Draft regulations which amend the rent allowance provisions of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regulations 1984 have been sent to the police negotiating board for comment.

Beef

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has made any representations to the Commission of the European Communities about the beef industry in Northern Ireland; whether he is prepared to give additional assistance to the beef industry; what representations he has received about the beef industry; and if he will make a statement about the present state of the beef industry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 11 January 1990]:* The Government are aware of the concerns being expressed about the current state of the beef industry in Northern Ireland. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had preliminary discussions with the Ulster Farmers Union on the matter and I intend to have a further meeting with the union shortly.

In the light of discussions with the union we will consider what action, including representations to the Commission of the European Communities through my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, might be taken to alleviate the concerns expressed.

Terrorism (Compensation)

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the criteria by which compensation is awarded to the victims of terrorism and to the families of the victims of terrorism in Northern Ireland and the amount of and the circumstances in which payments have been made in each of the past 10 years; and whether he is satisfied with the way in which the present system operates.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 11 January 1990]:* In Northern Ireland, as in Great Britain, the victim of a criminal injury is entitled to be compensated for pain, suffering and loss of amenities, and for any expenses or pecuniary loss resulting from his injuries. If the victim dies as a result of a criminal injury, compensation is payable to his relatives in respect of expenses incurred or pecuniary loss suffered as a result of the death. Additionally, in the case of incidents occuring on or after 1 July 1988, a bereavement award of £3,500 is payable to the spouse of the deceased victim or to the parents if the victim was unmarried and under 18 years of age. The rationale of the scheme is to ensure that victims and their families do not suffer financial hardship. The legislation makes no distinction between terrorist and other criminal acts except that in terrorist cases there is no upper limit to the amount of compensation for pecuniary loss which can be paid to victims or their dependants.

Where a victim survives his injuries the amount of pecuniary loss arising from his partial or total incapacity for work is based on his earnings and future career prospects and account is also taken of any occupational pension or gratuity and social security benefits payable as a result of the injury. The same considerations apply in assessing the amount of pecuniary loss suffered by the dependants of a deceased victim. In the case of pecuniary loss suffered by other relatives, including the deceased victim's parents, account has to be taken of the amount of the victim's financial contributions and the length of time such contributions could reasonably have been expected to have continued.

In all cases compensation is paid as a tax-free lump sum. Any applicant who is dissatisfied with the amount determined has a statutory right of appeal to the courts.

The compensation provisions broadly follow common law practice and are similar to the compensation provisions in the rest of the United Kingdom. The scheme operates in a fair and reasonable way.

The table shows the total amount of compensation paid in each of the past 10 years to the victims of terrorism, their dependants and other relatives.

Year	*Compensation Paid £ million*
1979-80	1·2
1980-81	5·1
1981-82	3·5
1982-83	3·9
1983-84	4·6
1984-85	5·5
1985-86	7·9
1986-87	4·2
1987-88	4·3
1988-89	5·6
Total	45·8

Traffic Flows

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the last census of traffic was carried out on each road which enters Limavady town; what were the traffic figures for each road on that occasion; and what is his estimate of the present figures, numbers to be given for daily, and maximum and minimum hourly traffic volumes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* Traffic figures on each road entering Limavady are obtained continually from automatic census points and annual figures are derived from these. The information for 1989 is as follows:

	Average daily traffic flow	*Maximum hourly traffic flow*	*Minimum hourly traffic flow*
Roe Bridge, A2	13,142	1,335	13
Ballyquin Road, B68	4,273	396	0
Rathmore Road, A37	6,927	742	3
Dowland Road, A2	3,861	346	0

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the present flow of traffic on a daily and maximum and minimum hourly flow basis across the Bann bridge, Coleraine and the Mountsandel bridge, Coleraine; what were the figures when the last traffic census was taken; and what were the figures for the Bann bridge before the Mountsandel bridge was opened.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The present daily and maximum and minimum hourly traffic flows across the Bann bridge are estimated to be 26,452, 2,600 and 10 respectively. These are based on the last census in 1988 but there have been no significant traffic flow changes since then. Automatic census points on the Sandelford bridge gave actual figures for 1989 of 14,745, 1,463 and eight respectively. The last complete census in 1987 gave figures of 13,450 and 1,350 vehicles with no minimum figure being available.

The average 16-hour daily flow for the Bann bridge in 1972, before the Sandelford bridge was opened, was 22,290 vehicles. Maximum and minimum hourly flows are not available.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show *(a)* the number of vehicles which cross the Roe bridge at Limavady, and *(b)* the number of vehicles which cross the Roe bridge at Dungiven, each day and the number of such vehicles which are believed to be heavy commercial vehicles, and also the highest and lowest hourly traffic flows.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The information is as follows:

	Number of vehicles per day	*Number of heavy goods vehicles per day*	*Highest hourly traffic flow*	*Lowest hourly traffic flow*
Roe bridge, Limavady	13,142	920	1,335	13
Roe bridge, Dungiven	7,324	732	728	3

Civil Service

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will give details of the religious composition of the successful applicants for posts offered by the Department of the Environment, at each grade level in the *(a)* supervisory, *(b)* craft and *(c)* the non-craft grade groups of the industrial staff and: (i) the general service and (ii) the scientific grade groups of the non-industrial staff; and if he will give comparable figures for each year since 1983;

(2) if he will give details of the religious denomination of all applicants for posts offered by the Department of the Environment, at each grade level in *(a)* the supervisory, *(b)* the craft and *(c)* the non-craft grade groups of the industrial staff, and (i) the general service and (ii) the scientific grade groups of the non-industrial staff; and if he will give comparable figures for each year since 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* Equal opportunities monitoring in the Northern Ireland Civil Service began in 1985 when staff were asked to complete, on a voluntary basis, a confidential questionnaire about their schooling background. From this information the religious affiliation of staff was determined.

The statistics available are as follows:

Department of the Environment industrial staff recruitment: October 1988 (first available date) to December 1989

	Protestant		*Roman Catholic*		*Not known*		*Total*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Supervisory, craft and non-craft								
Applicants	628	54·2	451	38·9	79	6·8	1,158	100
Appointments	106	55·8	75	39·5	9	4·7	190	100

Department of the Environment scientific group recruitment

Year	*Grade level*	*Applications*			*Total*	*Appointments total*
		Protestant	*Roman Catholic*	*Not known*		
1985	—	—	—	—	—	—
1986	C	33	26	17	76	2
1987	D	31	15	18	64	3
1988	E	108	58	9	175	2
1989	—	—	—	—	—	—

Information about successful applicants is not provided because the numbers appointed were so small that it could serve to identify the religious affiliation of individuals.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the religious denomination of the members of the directorate of *(a)* the planning service, *(b)* the roads service, and *(c)* the water service; and if he will give comparable details for each year for 1983 to 1988 respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* Equal opportunities monitoring in the Northern Ireland Civil Service began in 1985 when staff were asked to complete, on a voluntary basis, a confidential questionnaire about their schooling background. From this information the religious affiliation of staff was determined.

The statistics available are as follows:

DOE Roads, Water and Town and Country Planning Services Directorates
Total number of staff in the three directorates at 1 January 1989

	Number
Roads	4
Water	4
Town and Country Planning	3
	11

With such small numbers further disaggregation could only serve to identify the religious affiliation of individual officers.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the religious composition of the staff of the Department of the Environment for each grade and level in *(a)* the supervisory, *(b)* the craft and *(c)* the non-craft grade group of the industrial staff; and if he will give comparable figures for each year since 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* Equal opportunities monitoring in the Northern Ireland Civil Service began in 1985 when staff were asked to complete, on a voluntary basis, a confidential questionnaire about their schooling background. From this information the religious affiliation of staff was determined.

The statistics available are as follows:

DOE industrial staff—by grade level

Grade level	*Protestant*		*Roman Catholic*		*Not known*		*Total*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1. At 2 April 1987 (first available date)								
Supervisory	144	43·4	115	34·6	73	22·0	332	100
Craft	248	50·1	114	23·0	133	26·9	495	100
Non-Craft	1,342	43·9	1,007	32·9	709	23·2	3,058	100
2. At 1 Janaury 1988								
Supervisory	144	43·4	115	34·6	73	22·0	332	100
Craft	256	50·2	114	22·4	140	27·5	510	100
Non-Craft	1,363	43·6	1,026	32·8	739	23·6	3,128	100
3. 1 January 1989								
Supervisory	143	44·8	108	33·9	64	21·3	319	100
Craft	243	50·5	105	21·8	133	27·7	481	100
Non-Craft	1,260	42·6	963	32·6	733	24·8	2,956	100

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the religious composition of the staff of the Department of the Environment, for each grade level in *(a)* the general service and *(b)* the scientific grade groups of the non-industrial staff; and if he will give comparable figures for each year since 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* Equal opportunities monitoring in the Northern Ireland Civil Service began in 1985 when staff were asked to complete, on a voluntary basis, a confidential questionnaire about their schooling background. From this information the religious affiliation of staff was determined.

The statistics available are as follows:

Department of the Environment non-industrial staff at 1 January 1985
1. General Service Group by Grade Level

Grade level[1]	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not Known		Total	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
A and B	60	82·2	11	15·1	2	2·7	73	100
C	76	72·4	21	20·0	8	7·6	105	100
D	117	74·1	26	16·5	15	9·5	158	100
E	153	73·2	46	22·0	10	4·8	209	100
F	167	61·4	78	28·7	27	9·9	272	100
G	458	50·5	389	42·9	60	6·6	907	100
H	207	43·7	254	53·6	13	2·7	474	100
Totals	1,238	56·3	825	37·5	135	6·1	2,198	100

2. Scientific Group by Grade Level

Grade level[1]	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not Known		Total	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Totals	36	70·6	12	23·5	3	5·9	51	100

[1] Defined in Third Report of the Equal Opportunities Unit.

Department of the Environment non-industrial staff at 1 January 1986

Grade level	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not known		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1. General service group by grade level								
A and B	65	82·3	12	15·2	2	2·5	79	100
C	75	72·8	20	19·4	8	7·8	103	100
D	124	72·9	31	18·2	15	8·8	170	100
E	153	72·7	48	22·6	11	5·2	212	100
F	165	57·9	95	33·3	25	8·8	285	100
G	463	49·3	424	45·2	52	5·5	939	100
H	228	45·1	263	52·1	14	2·8	505	100
Totals	1,273	55·5	893	38·9	127	5·5	2,293	100
2. Scientific group by grade level								
Totals	35	61·4	13	22·8	9	15·8	57	100

Department of the Environment non-industrial staff at 1 January 1987

Grade level	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not known		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1. General service group by grade level								
A and B	64	83·1	11	14·3	2	2·6	77	100
C	81	73·6	21	19·1	8	7·3	110	100
D	115	71·9	30	18·8	15	9·4	160	100
E	144	68·6	65	25·7	12	5·7	210	100
F	162	55·9	106	36·6	22	7·6	290	100
G	468	48·3	450	46·5	50	5·2	968	100
H	229	44·9	265	52·0	16	3·1	510	100
Totals	1,263	54·3	937	40·3	125	5·4	2,325	100
2. Scientific group by grade level								
Totals	35	62·1	14	24·1	8	13·8	58	100

DOE Non-Industrial Staff at 1 January 1988
1. General Services Group by Grade Level

Grade Level	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not Known		Total	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
A and B	63	80·8	12	15·4	3	3·8	78	100
C	80	74·8	20	18·7	7	6·5	107	100
D	128	71·5	36	20·1	15	8·4	179	100
E	142	65·7	61	28·2	13	6·0	216	100
F	155	54·6	111	39·1	18	6·3	284	100
G	477	48·8	450	46·1	50	5·1	977	100
H	238	45·0	277	52·4	14	2·6	529	100
Totals	1,283	54·1	967	40·8	120	5·1	2,370	100

2. Scientific Group by Grade Level

Grade Level	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not Known		Total	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Totals	36	63·2	13	22·8	8	14·0	57	100

DOE Non-Industrial Staff at 1 January 1989
1. General Service Group by Grade Level

Grade Level	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not Known		Total	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
A and B	65	81·2	12	15·0	3	3·8	80	100
C	79	73·1	22	20·4	7	6·5	108	100
D	125	69·4	42	23·3	13	7·2	180	100
E	153	64·3	71	29·8	14	5·9	238	100
F	152	50·8	130	43·5	17	5·7	299	100
G	512	50·8	450	44·7	45	4·5	1,007	100
H	238	44·6	281	52·6	15	2·8	534	100
Totals	1,324	54·1	1,008	41·2	114	4·7	2,46	100

2. Scientific Group by Grade Level

Grade Level	Protestant		Roman Catholic		Not Known		Total	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Totals	41	65·1	14	22·2	8	12·7	63	100

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Panama

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make available emergency economic and medical aid to Panama to assist the reconstruction of the country following the invasion by United States forces.

Mrs Chalker: I have no such plans.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why compensation paid by Her Majesty's Government to Barlow Clowes investors includes compound interest from the date of deposit to the end of December 1989; and why this interest is deemed to be free of liability for tax.

Mr. Redwood: The terms of the Government's scheme of payments to investors in Barlow Clowes are in accordance with the recommendation of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. The Department's statement regarding the tax liability of these payments reflects the advice of the Inland Revenue and is a matter for it.

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when export credits guarantee cover was restored to Vietnam.

Mr. Ridley [*holding answer 11 January 1990*]: Export Credits Guarantee Department cover for business with Vietnam on medium and long-term credit was withdrawn in March 1982. Since December that year cover for short-term business has remained available subject to payment being made on terms of cash against documents out of an irrevocable letter of credit confirmed before shipment by a bank in the United Kingdom.

While ECGD continues to monitor developments no early relaxation of these terms is envisaged.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the balance of trade with *(a)* the rest of the European Communiity, *(b)* the USA and *(c)* Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

Information from which crude trade balances[1] may be derived can be found in the Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, available from the Library of the House, or on the central statistical office databank which may be accessed through the Library.

[1] Crude balances slightly overstate deficits (or understate surpluses) since the value of imports, but not that of exports, includes insurance and freight.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish a table showing the increase in the volume of manufacturing output less food etc. and of exports of manufactures based on current values.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

Index numbers of the volume of output of manufacturing industries and of food, drink and tobacco —at 1985 prices—are published in the index of output of the production industries press notice, tables 1 and 2 respectively, together with their relative weights. Manufacturing output less food, drink and tobacco can be derived for these two series. Exports of total manufactures —in current value terms—are published in the United Kingdom balance of payments current account press notice, table 8. Both press notices give percentage changes for the latest three months on the previous three months

and on the same three months a year earlier. The press notices are available from the House of Commons Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Lords Lieutenant for England and Wales

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the lords lieutenant for England and Wales, the dates of their appointment and projected date of retirement.

The Prime Minister: A list of lords lieutenant for England and Wales follows, together with the dates of their appointment and expected retirement.

County	*Lord-Lieutenant*	*Date of appointment*	*Date of retirement*
England			
Avon	Sir John Wills, TD, FRICS, JP	April 1974	July 2003
Bedfordshire	Lt. Col. Hanmer Hanbury, LVO, MC. JP	March 1978	January 1991
Berkshire	John Henderson Esq, CVO, OBE	June 1989	May 1995
Buckinghamshire	Commander The Hon. John Fremantle, RN (Retd.), JP	September 1984	January 2002
Cambridgeshire	Michael Bevan Esq.	August 1985	August 2001
Cheshire	The Viscount Leverhulme, TD	August 1949	July 1990
Cleveland	The Lord Gisborough, TD	March 1981	July 2002
Cornwall	The Viscount Falmouth	October 1977	October 1994
Cumbria	Sir Charles Graham, Bt.	February 1983	July 1994
Derbyshire	Col. Peter Hilton, MC, JP	January 1978	June 1994
Devon	The Early of Morley, JP	May 1982	May 1998
Dorset	The Lord Digby JP	September 1984	July 1999
Durham	David Grant Esq, CBE	April 1988	January 1997
East Sussex	Admiral Sir Lindsay Bryson, KCB	November 1989	January 2000
Essex	Admiral Sir Andrew Lewis, KCB, JP	August 1978	January 1993
Gloucestershire	Col. Martin Gibbs, CB, DSO, TD, JP	June 1978	February 1992
Greater London	Field Marshal The Lord Bramall, GCB, OBE, MC, JP	January 1986	December 1998
Greater Manchester	Col. J. B. Timmins, OBE, TD, JP	December 1987	June 2007
Hampshire	Sir James Scott, JP	December 1982	October 1999
Hereford and Worcester	Captain Thomas Dunne, JP	July 1977	October 2008
Hertfordshire	Simon Bowes Lyon Esq, FCA	January 1986	June 2007
Humberside	Richard Bethell Esq.	October 1983	March 1997
Isle of Wight	The Lord Mottistone, CBE	August 1985	December 1995
Kent	The Rt. Hon. Robin Leigh-Pemberton	August 1982	January 2002
Lancashire	Dr. Simon Towneley	March 1976	December 1996
Leicestershire	Timothy Brooks Esq, JP	January 1989	March 2004
Lincolnshire	Henry Nevile Esq.	November 1975	March 1995
Merseyside	Henry Cotton Esq.	May 1989	July 2004
Norfolk	Timothy Colman Esq.	March 1978	September 2004
Northamptonshire	John Lowther Esq, CBE, JP	January 1984	November 1998
Northumberland	The Viscount Ridley, TD	January 1984	July 2000
North Yorkshire	Sir Marcus Worsley, JP	March 1987	April 2000
Nottinghamshire	Sir Gordon Hobday	January 1983	February 1991
Oxfordshire	Sir Ashley Ponsonby, MC	January 1980	February 1996
Shropshire	John Dugdale Esq.	February 1975	May 1998
Somerset	Lt. Col. Geoffrey Luttrell, MC, JP	March 1978	October 1994
South Yorkshire	Hugh Neill Esq, CBE, TD, JP	May 1985	March 1996
Staffordshire	Sir Arthur Bryan	July 1968	March 1998
Suffolk	Sir Joshua Rowley, JP	March 1978	December 195
Surrey	Richard Thornton Esq, OBE, JP	May 1986	October 1997
Tyne and Wear	Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison	July 1984	December 2000
Warwickshire	Vacant		
West Midlands	The Earl of Aylesford, JP	April 1974	November 1993
West Sussex	Her Grace, Lavinia, Duchess of Norfolk, CBE	May 1975	March 1990
West Yorkshire	The Lord Ingrow, OBE, TD, JP	May 1985	August 1992
Wiltshire	Field Marshal Sir Roland Gibbs, GCB, CBE, DSO, MC	December 1989	June 1996
Wales			
Clwyd	Sir William Gladstone, Bt, JP	August 1985	October 2000
Dyfed	Mr. David Mansel Lewis, JP	February 1979	October 2002
Mid Glamorgan	Vacant		
South Glamorgan	Mrs. Susan Williams, MBE	December 1985	August 1990
West Glamorgan	Lt. Col. Sir Michael Llewellyn, Bt.	December 1987	June 1996
Gwynedd	Vacant		
Gwent	Mr. Richard Hanbury-Tenison, JP	June 1979	January 2000
Powys	Mr. Mervyn Bourdillon, JP	July 1986	August 1999

EC Internal Matters (Director General)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are being taken to fill the post of Director General for internal matters in the EEC.

The Prime Minister: Appointments in the Commission are made by the Commission. The Government naturally make every effort to ensure that there is an equitable proportion of British personnel on the staff of the EC institutions, in particular in important posts.

Mr. John Mogg

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister when she expects Mr. John Mogg to leave the service of the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Mogg joined the Cabinet Office in July 1989. On present plans, his posting would last for two to three years.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what compensation has been offered to Mr. Trevor Hicks in respect of each of his daughters killed in the Hillsborough stadium disaster; what is the total compensation to be awarded to bereaved families; and on what basis their claims will be met;

(2) what compensation will be payable to parents who lost a child aged under 18 years, or a spouse aged over 18 years, in the Hillsborough disaster.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to intervene in these matters. I understand, however, that the South Yorkshire police authority, through its insurers, has been in touch with Mr. Hicks's solicitors asking for further information about his claim.

Official Secrets

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the effect of the draft Official Secrets Act 1989 (Prescription) Order 1989 will enable prosecution of the officials listed in schedule 2 to the order under the Official Secrets Act 1989 for disclosing certain categories of information to hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The draft order establishes that the office holders listed in schedule 2 and some associated staff (all of whom at present fall within the scope of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911) are to be treated as Crown servants for the purposes of the Official Secrets Act 1989. They will be liable to prosecution for unauthorised disclosures in the limited circumstances laid down in the Act.

Drugs

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on opportunities for new manufacturers of opium derivatives to enter the United Kingdom market in the light of the recommendations in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report published in April 1989.

Mr. Waddington: While I shall continue to apply strict security measures to the manufacture and distribution of controlled drugs, I shall ensure that they do not create unnecessary restrictions on competition. I therefore welcome firm proposals from new manufacturers to establish opium derivative production.

TRANSPORT

Leeds City Station

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to approve the additional funds required for British Rail's completion of the upgrading of the west end of Leeds City station with an additional platform and improved track and signalling.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Rail has started design work on a major scheme at Leeds, to be undertaken in the early 1990s.

No question of approval by this Department arises at present.

Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year for the last 10 years the number of loaded waste nuclear fuel train movements through Doncaster that were completed *(a)* with no accidents involved and *(b)* with an accident involved.

Mr. Portillo: The Department does not collect this information, but I understand that loaded nuclear fuel flasks do not normally travel through Doncaster and there has not been an accident involving this type of traffic in the Doncaster area.

Blind People

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to require all contractors or councils that dig up pavements or road surfaces to place firm barriers around the holes to ensure blind people are not endangered.

Mr. Atkins: A revised version of chapter 8 of the traffic signs manual to be published later this year will include such measures. The manual is a code of practice, compliance with which is taken to satisfy general legal requirements for the proper guarding of works. The proposed legislation to reform the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 will be used to enforce such requirements for utility works. This legislation will be introduced as soon as there is a suitable opportunity.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Departmental Staff

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he intends to take concerning the involvement of Mr. Peter Wetherby, an employee of his Department, under the pseudonym of Dominic Delaney in the organisation of the Troops Out movement or the Martyrs Committee.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* The activities of Mr. Peter Wetherby in relation to the Troops

Out movement and the Manchester Martyrs are being investigated by his employers, the Inland Revenue. Any subsequent action will depend on the outcome of those investigations.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current position and place of work of Mr. Peter Wetherby.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* Mr. Peter Wetherby is a revenue executive employed by the Inland Revenue in its Greater Manchester region.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has issued any guidance to his employees on involvement with the Troops Out movement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 7 December 1989]:* General guidance on the extent to which civil servants may take part in political activities is given in the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code and in departmental instructions.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 January 1990]:* The information was published on 29 December 1989, in table 12 of the montly press notice on the current account of the balance of payments, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecasts he has made of the impact on the rate of inflation of the uniform business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* The uniform business rate in 1990-91 will raise in real terms broadly the same amount from business as in 1989-90: it will not add to real business costs as a whole. For future years, there is a statutory guarantee that the national non-domestic rate poundage will increase by no more than the rate of inflation.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Parliamentary Rifle Range

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what use is made of the parliamentary rifle range; what representations he has had seeking its closure and replacement by *(a)* a childcare facility or *(b)* a use likely to benefit a large number of hon. Members and staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

Th sports and social club's rifle range occupies a windowless basement room within the House of Lords. I have received no proposals concerning the room since I answered the hon. Member's question on 29 November.

ENERGY

IAEA Safeguards

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information his Department collects on a routine basis on the imports and exports of nuclear materials for the purposes of reporting to the international safeguards authorities.

Mr. Baldry: Under articles 24 and 25 of Euratom Regulations 3227/76 (of the *Official Journal*) the Department forwards to the Euratom safeguards directorate reports by all nuclear operators of exports and imports of nuclear materials. These reports are, in turn, passed by Euratom to the IAEA.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if Her Majesty's Government have given any consideration to the International Atomic Energy Agency playing a role in safeguarding fissile materials involved in non-explosive military uses.

Mr. Baldry: I am content with the UK-Euratom-IAEA agreement which excludes material and facilities in the United Kingdom's military cycle.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to seek an extension to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime to cover visits to non-declared suspect facilities.

Mr. Baldry: No. Safeguards-related visits and inspections are matters for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the relevant state. In the case of non-nuclear weapon states party to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT), the treaty obliges them not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons, and accept IAEA safeguards on all source or fissionable material in all their peaceful nuclear activities.

In relation to non-parties to the NPT, IAEA safeguards can be applied only on a voluntary basis.

In either case the agency's statutes require the inspectors to report any non-compliance to the director general who shall thereupon transmit the report to the board of governors.

Fuel Exports and Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide the latest available equivalent figures about fuel exports and imports to those given in the tables in his answers of 9 November, *Official Report*, column 767 and 19 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns 118 and 119.

Mr. Wakeham: The equivalent information for fuel exports and imports for the 11 months to November 1989 following my previous answers on 9 November and 19 December is as follows:

Table 1
January to November 1989

	Thousand tonnes
Exports (fob)	
Coal	1,890
Oil	[1]63,320

	Thousand tonnes
Imports (cif)	
Coal	10,918
Gas[2]	13,726
Oil	53,636

[1] Contains a small amount of natural gas exports.
[2] Coal equivalent.

Notes:
The volume figures are in thousand tonnes. For oil this is consistent with the basis used in Overseas Trade Statistics publications. However if figures are required on a common basis then the oil figures should be multiplied by a factor of 1·7 to convert them to thousand tonnes of coal equivalent.
Provisional data for the whole of 1989 should be available in mid-February.

Table 2
January to November 1989

	£ million at 1985 prices[2]
Exports (fob)	
Coal	73
Oil	[1]10,820
Imports (cif)	
Coal	584
Gas	1,032
Oil	8,648

[1] Contains a small amount of natural gas exports.
[2] Figures at 1985 constant prices have been derived by applying the unit value for exports in 1985 to the relevant volumes in 1989. The figures for gas are estimated.

Note:
Provisional data for the whole of 1989 should be available in mid-February.

ENVIRONMENT

Contracts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 14 December, *Official report*, column *751*, if he will list separately the contracts that have been extended by the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers to the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Chope: Government Departments cannot contract with each other. There are therefore no contracts extended by the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers to the Department of the Environment.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current estimated population of the London borough of Lambeth aged 18 years and over and who will be eligible to pay the community charge.

Mr. Chope: The information available to the Department shows that 172,529 people in the London borough of Lambeth were eligible to pay the community charge on 1 December 1989, counting students as one fifth and including the estimated full-year equivalent of contributors to the collective community charge.

Commons Crypt

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what work is to be carried out during 1990 to the fabric and structure in the Commons Crypt.

Mr. Chope: There is a major dampness problem in the Crypt Chapel caused by the long-term seepage of moisture through the porous stone.
Consultants have been appointed to identify possible remedies and their report is due shortly. It is therefore, I regret, too soon to say what work will be done this year.

Home Ownership

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which 10 local authority areas in the United Kingdom the largest percentage increases in home ownership have occurred since 1979.

Mr. Chope: This information is not available.
The latest information on the percentage change in the number of owner-occupier households at the local authority level comes from the 1981 Census for the period 1971 to 1981 and can be found in table 17 of "Census 1981: Key statistics for local authorities". We expect the 1991 census to provide corresponding information for the period 1981 to 1991. The Department does, however, make regional estimates of the proportion of the housing stock in owner-occupation and figures for April 1981 and December 1988 are published in table 9.4 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1978-1988". Copies of both publications are in the Library.

Tyre Fire (Powys)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to investigate the pollution implications of the tyre fire at Knighton and Heyhope in Powys.

Mr. Trippier: No. Inspectors have given advice to the local authority which is responsible for regulating waste disposal sites and the burning of tyres.
Questions about the incident itself should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Reports

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses to decide when to publish a report commissioned by his Department *(a)* through Her Majesty's Stationery Office and *(b)* by placing a single copy in the Library.

Mr. Chris Patten: Each case is considered on its merits. The factors involved also include an assessment of the likely public interest, the cost of publication and whether the report concerned should be priced or unpriced.

Northern Industrialised Nations (Conference)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for policy initiatives to be taken at the forthcoming international conference of northern industrialised nations in Bergen, Norway in May.

Mr. Trippier: The Bergen conference, which is being organised by the Norwegian Government under the

auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, will examine the extent to which the recommendations of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development have been implemented. It will enable Ministers from ECE countries to decide what co-operative action is needed to tackle the main environmental problems of the world, particularly those confronting eastern Europe.

The United Kingdom is playing a prominent part in the preparations for the conference. Last year we hosted the first of four international preparatory workshops. We have also contributed a report, "Sustaining Our Common future", reviewing the substantial progress we have made within the United Kingdom in following up the WCED report.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the main findings and conclusions of the most recent joint Department of the Environment-Nature Conservancy Council staff inspection of the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Trippier: The report of the staff inspection last year of the chief scientist's directorate of the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) is an internal NCC document which has not yet been finalised. It would therefore be inappropriate to list its findings and conclusions.

Vehicle Smoke Checks

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of smoke in urban areas is estimated to come from diesel vehicles.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for emissions of black smoke from diesel vehicles have not yet been finalised, but will be published for the first time in the Department's annual digest of environmental protection and water statistics early in 1990.

EC Habitats Directive

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that Community funding made available to implement the European Community habitats directive will be directed to the most-needed areas.

Mr. Trippier: We understand that the European Commission is working up a proposal for funding to assist implementation of the habitats directive once it has been agreed. We shall certainly be keen to ensure that any such funding will be used as effectively as possible.

Rateable Values

Mr. Benyon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the report by consultants on substitutes for rateable values as they are used in housing legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Copies of the report by Price Waterhouse on market rents as substitutes for rateable values as used in housing legislation have today been placed in the House Libraries. The consultants were commissioned to survey rents in certain sectors of the private rented market, to provide evidence on which to base substitutes for the rateable value limits which define protection under certain rent, landlord and tenant and housing Acts, and to make recommendations. The proposed substitutes, set out in the table, would apply to agreements made on or after 1 April when the community charge comes into effect. They will be provided by means of regulations under section 149 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, applying in England and Wales, to come into force on 1 April.

Housing Act 1988: Rent Act 1977 (new tenancies)

Upper Limit for protection	In Greater London	Tenancies with an annual rent of less than £25,000 (excluding certain service charges)
	Outside Greater London	Tenancies with an annual rent of less than £25,000 (excluding certain service charges)
Lower Limit	In Greater London	Tenancies with an annual rent of more than £1,000 (excluding certain service charges)
	Outside Greater London	Tenancies with an annual rent of more than £250 (excluding certain service charges)

Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 Part I: Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Schedule 10

Ground rent qualification	In Greater London	£1,000 pa
	Outside Greater London	£250 pa

The upper limit will broadly be based on the rental equivalent for the premium paid ie an annual equivalent payment taken over the unexpired length of the lease, assuming a maximum lease length of 100 years. The annual equivalent would be derived using the formula shown in the consultants' report, using an interest rate of 6 per cent. Both inside and outside Greater London, it is proposed that protection will generally apply to leases where the rental equivalent of the premium computed on this basis is £25,000 pa and below.

Leasehold Reform Act 1967

Both the ground rent and the upper limit qualifications will be the same as those under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, part I, and Local Government and Housing Act 1989, schedule 10, above.

Commercial Rates

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all local rating authorities which have increased commercial rates *(a)* by 20 per cent. per annum compound in real terms and *(b)* by 15 per cent. per annum compound in real terms, for five successive years since 1979.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* There is none in either category.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority in England the gross commercial and non-domestic rateable value totals in *(a)* 1973 and *(b)* on 2 January 1990; and if he will list in each case the percentage increase.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Institute for European Environmental Policy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent reports commissioned by his Department from the Institute for European

Environmental Policy have been published; and what plans he has for commissioning further reports from the Institute for European Environmental Policy.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 11 January 1990]:* A study by the Institute for European Environmental Policy commissioned by my Department was published on 12 December under the title "Environmental Policy and 1992". My Department has recently let a contract to the institute to provide advice and information on the international aspects of integrated pollution control. The institute also provides regular advice and information to my Department on European Community environmental policy issues under a standing consultancy agreement.

Pollution, Bexhill

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the risks posed by drums of *(a)* sodium cyanide, *(b)* dioxins, *(c)* sulphuric and *(d)* hydrochloric acids on beaches at and near Bexhill in Sussex.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 1 January 1990]:* I am aware that containers, drums and packages, a few containing hazardous substances, have been washed ashore at a number of locations along the south and east coasts in recent weeks. It is thought that they originate from a Pakistani-owned and registered vessel, the Muree, which sank off the Devon coast on 28 October last year.

The Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit has examined the ship's manifest and has advised Ministers that none of the cargo would pose a significant threat to the marine environment. However, some substances which were on board could be hazardous to people who come into direct contact with them. Warning messages have been issued to fishermen and local authorities in areas where it is thought they may come ashore.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Social Security Commissioners (Appeals)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General how many decisions were issued by the social security commissioners relating to each social security benefit, distinguishing between single payments and other supplementary benefits, in each month since January 1988; how many appeals to the commissioners relating to each benefit are outstanding; and in how many of these cases the appeal *(a)* is not ready for hearing, *(b)* is awaiting a hearing and *(c)* has been heard but the commissioner's decision has not been issued.

The Attorney-General: The information is not readily available in the form requested. However, the number of decisions issued by the commissioners in calendar years 1988 and 1989 for each category of benefit is shown in the tables, although existing statistics do not distinguish between supplementary benefit and single payment appeals.

Information on the number of appeals outstanding relating to each category of benefit is not readily available, but the current total of outstanding appeals is 3,331. In 1988, 19 per cent. of appeals, and in 1989 24 per cent. of appeals, were decided after an oral hearing; the balance of appeals in each year was decided without an oral hearing. Of the total of outstanding appeals *(a)* 1,559 are not ready for decision; *(b)* 1,528 are awaiting a decision; and *(c)* 244 have been decided and a commissioner's decision has not yet been issued.

Number of Decisions issued by the Social Security Commissioners in 1988

	Number
Supplementary Benefit	1,198
Family Income Supplement	18
Unemployment Benefit	176
Sickness Benefit	196
Attendance Allowance	173
Industrial Injury	207
Mobility Allowance	221
Child Benefit	33
Retirement Pensions	45
Statutory Sick Pay	8
General Benefits	
e.g. widows benefit, guardian allowance	65
Income Support	—
Total	2,340

Number of Decisions issued by the Social Security Commissioners in 1989

Supplementary Benefit	1,199
Family Income Supplement	7
Unemployment Benefit	134
Sickness Benefit	125
Attendance Allowance	205
Industrial Injury	205
Mobility Allowance	245
Child Benefit	34
Retirement Pensions	41
Statutory Sick Pay	3
General Benefits	
e.g. widows benefit, guardian allowance	68
Income Support	47
Family Credit	2
Total	2,315

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average cost to public funds of an appeal to the social security commissioners, with or without an oral hearing.

The Attorney-General: It is estimated that the average cost to public funds is £2,428·29.

Compensation

Mr. Alton: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what representations he has received about the present levels of compensation payable under the Administration of Justice Act 1982; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will review the current levels of compensation provided for under the Administration of Justice Act 1982.

The Attorney-General: The Solicitor-General and I, as well as the Lord Chancellor, have received a number of letters from members of the public expressing their concern about the present level of bereavement damages which may be awarded under the Administration of Justice Act 1982. The Solicitor-General announced in May 1989 during the Committee stage of the Citizens Compensation Bill *(Official Report, Standing Committee C,* 3 May 1989, col. 21) that the Lord Chancellor would be reviewing the sum specified in the 1982 Act. Since then, the Lord Chancellor has been studying the question whether it

would be appropriate to raise the sum and, if so, to what new level, and he will be issuing a consultation paper shortly.

Constitution (Judicial Review)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he or the Lord Chancellor have received seeking a judicial review of the constitution.

The Attorney-General: No such representations have been received either by me or by the Lord Chancellor.

HEALTH

Malaria

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of malaria contracted in the United Kingdom have been reported in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: During the years 1979-88 two cases of malaria contracted by mosquito bite in the United Kingdom were reported to the malaria reference laboratory at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (both in 1983).

In addition there were reports of cases contracted following congenital infection, organ transplant or blood transfusion in the following years: 1984 (four cases), 1985 (four cases) and 1986 (three cases).

Powered Wheelchairs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether his Department has received a report from the Disablement Services Authority concerning the provision of occupant-controlled indoor and outdoor powered wheelchairs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether his Department will make available the funds to enable the Disablement Services Authority to provide occupant-controlled indoor and outdoor powered wheelchairs to those more severely disabled people who would benefit from such a chair.

Mr. Freeman: The Disablement Services Authority is at present undertaking a study to assess the numbers of most severely disabled people who would benefit from this type of wheelchair. Once the results of the study are known, the authority will consider the resource implications and advise me in due course.

Sight Tests

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what surveys of sight test numbers in late 1989 his Department commissioned; if he will publish details of the form of the survey and its results; and if he will publish comparable figures for each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The results of a survey of the number of sight tests in the first quarter of 1990 compared with earlier periods should be available after Easter, when we expect to provide a summary of the findings for the Library.

Adopted Children

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were adopted in each of the last five years in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Basildon area.

Mr. Freeman: The total numbers of adoption orders granted by courts in England and Wales for children aged under 18 years during each of the last five years are given in the table.

	Number
1984	8,648
1985	7,615
1986	7,892
1987	7,201
1988	7,390

Data for 1989 for England and Wales are expected to be available in April. Because the form from which adoption statistics are derived does not record the residential address of either the child or his/her parents, the numbers of adoptions in particular areas are not available.

Children in Care

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has of the number of children in the care of local authorities in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Basildon area, for each of the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is collected centrally on children in the care of local authorities with social services responsibilities. This is published in "Children in the Care of Local Authorities" and is available in the Library. Information is not available centrally for the Basildon area, but data on children in the care of Essex local authority are available; the most recent data relate to 31 March 1987. These figures and data for each of the last five years are given in the table.

Children in care at 31 March in Essex and England and Wales

	Essex	*England and Wales*
1983	1,594	86,552
1984	1,438	78,889
1985	1,224	73,302
1986	1,189	70,919
1987	1,234	69,249

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average time for which a child is kept in the care of a local authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is available centrally about episodes of care, that is, the continuous length of time a child is in care without a change in legal status. The length of care episodes for children leaving care is shown by time bands in the publication "Children in the Care of Local Authorities", which is available in the Library. This information is also shown by the legal status of the child, the reason the episode ceased and the age of the child.

Genito-urinary Medicine

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for the last financial year the special sums to each regional health authority for genito-urinary medicine; which authorities took up all or part of those allocations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 10 January 1990]:* We have not provided any specific funding for genito-urinary

medicine. We have, however, made it clear to health authorities that we expect them to make full use of the opportunity provided by the extra resources made available for AIDS to improve these services given their role in preventing the spread of HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases.

A total of £130 million was made available for AIDS in 1989-90.

WALES

Jobs

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many major job announcements have been made in the past six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Investment in Wales has continued at a high level over the past six months with a new investment on average every eight working days. Major announcements include Toyota's £140 million investment at Shotton, the Gooding-Sanken joint venture at Aberaman promising 520 jobs, and an expansion of RF Brookes, Rogerstone promising 220 full-time and 50 part-time jobs.

Forests

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to develop forests as a tourist resource in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Welsh forests already provide a substantial tourist resource. Most of those managed by the Forestry Commission are open to the public and attract millions of visits a year. They offer a variety of recreational facilities such as visitor centres, forest walks and picnic places, as well as opportunities for specialist pursuits ranging from horse riding to orienteering. The commission also promotes camping and caravanning holidays to both home and overseas markets and co-operates with tourist boards on a range of initiatives.

A growing number of private forests are open to the public, and applicants under the commission's woodland grant scheme are required to take into account the recreational potential of new woodlands.

Rally Driving School (Powys)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call in the planning application to Montgomeryshire district council concerning the proposed expansion of the rally driving school at Gribyn Forest, Powys.

Mr. Grist: On the information available to him, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State sees no reason why an application of this nature, which does not appear to raise issues of more than local importance, should not be decided by the local planning authority.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the possible expansion of the rally driving school in the Gribyn Forest, Powys.

Mr. Grist: None.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has issued any guidance to the Forestry Commission concerning the possible expansion of the rally driving school at Gribyn Forest, Powys.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. Gribyn Forest is not managed by the Forestry Commission; it is privately owned.

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of part-time employees earning less than *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums, in Wales and each county in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not readily available for all part-time employees, nor for hourly earnings excluding shift and PBR premiums as well as overtime. Statistics could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales why the information on standard spending assessments, referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) of 13 November 1989, *Official Report*, column 34, is not yet available.

Mr. Peter Walker: The 1990-91 standard spending assessments, and the formulae underlying their calculation, are given in the Welsh revenue support grant distribution report, which was laid before the House of Commons on 20 December 1989.

Margam

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will investigate the level of releases of natural gas to the atmosphere from normal operations at the British Steel plant at Margam.

Mr. Grist: No. I have no reason to believe that there are any significant releases of natural gas from the works.

DEFENCE

Hong Kong

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any members of Her Majesty's armed forces stationed in Hong Kong were involved in armed confrontation with Vietnamese emigrants on Lantau Island during the Christmas period.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Her Majesty's armed forces had no involvement in the quelling of the disturbances at Chi Ma Wan camp on 29 December; this was carried out by the Hong Kong correctional services department and police.

One RAF helicopter was, however, deployed to evacuate six injured Vietnamese boat people for medical treatment.

Fissile Material

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has conducted concerning arrangements for safeguarding fissile material from nuclear weapons dismantled as part of arms reduction agreements.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Aircraft Collision, Northumberland

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the collision of two RAF fighters in Northumberland on Tuesday 9 January.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the two RAF aircraft involved in the mid-air collision over the Hexham constituency on Tuesday 9 January were both engaged on low-flying exercises; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the mid-air collision between the RAF jets over the Hexham constituency on Tuesday 9 January.

Mr. Neubert: On Tuesday 9 January 1990 an RAF Tornado and an RAF Jaguar aircraft engaged on routine low-flying training missions were involved in a mid-air collision over Northumberland. The Tornado aircraft crashed about five miles east of Hexham and some wreckage fell on the A68 and A69. There were no civilian casualties. The Jaguar remained airborne and was able to land at RAF Leeming. The crew of the Tornado sustained major injuires and are in hospital in Newcastle. The pilot of the Jaguar was uninjured.

A board of inquiry has been convened in the normal way and a summary of its findings will be published in due course. It would be inappropriate to speculate about the causes of the accident until the inquiry is complete.

Army Scholarships

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the schools in respect of which tuition fees were paid and from whose head teachers endorsements of candidature were received and the numbers of *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls from each school who have received awards under the Army scholarship scheme for pupils aged 15 and 16 years for the latest year in which information is available;

(2) what has been the total cost in grants and tuition paid in respect of *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls receiving both grants and tuition in the latest year for which information is available in respect of the Army scholarship scheme for children aged 15 and 16 years.

Mr. Neubert: The information is not available in the format requested. In financial year 1988-89, a total of £92,000 was spent on the Army scholarship scheme. Each scholar received £750 per academic year at that time. The award was increased to £1,050 with effect from 1 April 1989.

There are currently 96 scholars, including nine females.

The award of an Army scholarship does not rest on the head teacher's endorsement alone. Applicants are required to meet the necessary academic standards as well as passing a test, a medical examination and an interview.

Educational Allowances

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the approxiamte cost of holiday visit passages paid in respect of children of defence service personnel in receipt of educational allowances, for the latest year available.

Mr. Neubert: The information available does not allow the costs of school children's visits to be identified separately from the costs of other types of travel.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total sum paid to *(a)* officers and *(b)* other ranks in educational allowances in the years 1987-88 and 1988-89; what were the numbers of individuals receiving allowances in categories *(a)* and *(b)* above; and what is the average grossed-up value of an allowance in each category.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is as follows:

	Total sum paid in educational allowances		*Numbers of individuals in receipt of allowances*		*Average allowance paid per child*[1]	
	1987-88 (£ million)	*1988-89 (£ million)*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1987-88 (£)*	*1988-89 (£)*
Officers	67·955	65·524	7,951	7,599	5,431	5,423
Other ranks	38·626	41·196	6,559	6,533	4,144	4,378

[1] This is the average allowance paid per child and is inclusive of grossing-up for income tax.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he now expects to be in a position to publish the departmental report on the effect in the salmon fishery of draft netting at sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Work on the review required by section 39 of the Salmon Act 1986 is in progress. My colleagues and I will submit a report to Parliament as soon as possible.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the institutions where the research work into bovine spongiform encephalopathy as recommended by the Tyrrell report will be carried out.

Mr. Gummer: The MAFF-funded research work into bovine spongiform encephalopathy will be carried out mainly at the MAFF central veterinary laboratory, Weybridge, and at the Institute of Animal Health at the AFRC/MRC neuropathogenesis unit in Edinburgh, although some work may be conducted at other research establishments.

Antibiotic Hormone Drugs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the antibiotic hormone drugs given a product licence without reference to the veterinary products committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The only product of this kind licensed without specific reference to the veterinary products committee is Synulox Lactating Cow intrammary suspension (PL 0030/4000), which contains two antibiotics and a glucocorticoid anti-inflammatory agent. Between 1978 and 1984 the VPC reviewed fully the data relating to all intrammary products then on the market and recommended the renewal of licences for a number of them. When the Ministry's expert assessors examined the product licence application for Synulox in 1986 they considered that it raised no new issues not already addressed by the VPC and a licence was therefore granted.

Several members of the VPC subsequently asked for details of the assessment. They accepted officials' conclusions that no new safety or other issue was involved and it was agreed that any future applications for similar products would be referred to the VPC. No further applications have been received.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the social fund allocation for each local office, both in respect of grants and loans, for the year 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: Individual local office allocations for 1990-91 are now being considered and will be announced in due course.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to which offices he is allocating the extra £3 million for the social fund which he announced on 19 December 1989, *Official Report*, column 174; and, for each office, whether this is for loans or grants.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the Library.

Mobility Allowance (Deaf-blind People)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what date he intends to announce eligibility criteria for mobility allowance in the case of people who are deaf-blind.

Mr. Scott: We intend to bring forward proposed amendments to the relevant regulations as soon as possible.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consultation has been undertaken in drawing up the criteria of deaf-blind people for the purpose of entitlement to mobility allowance;

(2) if he will consult the mobility allowance campaign on suitable eligibility criteria for deaf-blind people.

Mr. Scott: We are aware of the representations that have been made on behalf of deaf-blind people for extending mobility allowance to them.

Single Payments

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish *(a)* the annual amounts paid in single payments in the last year in which these payments were available for each of the area offices in Dundee *(b)* the budgets for (i) grants and (ii) loans and *(c)* the actual amounts paid under these headings in the Dundee offices for each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: Details of single payment expenditure for 1987-88, and annual social fund allocations for loans and grants for 1988-89 and 1989-90, listed by local office, are available in the Library, together with details of the amounts of loans and grants paid since 11 April 1988.

Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been taken to ensure that people contracting out by means of personal pension schemes have been advised of the approximate age at which, assuming a rate of return of 0·5 or 2·5 per cent. above the annual increase in earnings, it is likely to be in their interest to return to the state scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is for an individual wishing to take out a personal pension to seek advice appropriate to his or her needs. In the case of personal pension schemes which are investments as defined in the Financial Services Act, persons regulated by bodies under that Act have a duty to provide best advice on such products. It is for the individual to make arrangements for obtaining any further advice which may be necessary in the light of changing circumstances.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether anyone contracting out by means of a personal pension scheme will be allowed to return to the state scheme at any age.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Yes.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each uprating from 1973 to 1990, the percentage above inflation by which the basic state pension has, and is to be, uprated.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 13 December 1989]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Uprating	*Increase of retirement pension above RPI (percentage)*
October 1973	4·9
July 1974	15·6
April 1975	−1·7
November 1975	3
November 1976	0
November 1977	1·4
November 1978	3·3
November 1979	2·1
November 1980	1·2
November 1981	−3
November 1982	4·7
November 1983	0
November 1984	0
November 1985	0
July 1986	0
April 1987	0

Uprating	Increase of retirement pension above RPI (percentage)
April 1988	0
April 1989	0
April 1990	0

In November 1983 the method of uprating changed from being partly based on forecasts of future inflation to being based on known movements in the retail prices index.

EMPLOYMENT

Apprentices

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently participating in apprenticeship training.

Mr. Nicholls: Comprehensive statistics on all types of apprenticeship are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in which 20 parliamentary constituencies the largest percentage fall in unemployment occurred in the last 12 months.

Mr. Nicholls: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the 20 parliamentary constituencies which have experienced the largest percentage falls in unemployment over the last 12 months.

The figures are not seasonally adjusted.

Percentage change in the number of unemployed over the year to November 1989

Constituency name	Per cent.
South West Surrey	−27·1
Chesham and Amersham	−25·8
East Surrey	−25·4
Henley	−24·1
Wantage	−20·6
Surbiton	−20·2
Tunbridge Wells	−20·1
Wokingham	−19·9
Wealden	−18·5
Reigate	−18·0
North West Surrey	−17·9
Guildford	−17·6
North West Hampshire	−17·4
Wycombe	−13·0
Rochford	−12·6
Chelmsford	−11·6
Southend West	−10·9
Basingstoke	−8·1
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	−5·5
Sutton and Cheam	−4·4

Labour Statistics, Cleveland

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest figure for people in employment in Cleveland.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available employment estimates for the county are from the September 1987 census of employment. There were then 184,700 employees in employment, excluding self-employed people and members of Her Majesty's forces, in Cleveland.

Labour Statistics, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the largest 15 categories of employment in the Doncaster area *(a)* to date, *(b)* five years ago and *(c)* 10 years ago; how many were employed in each category; and what percentage of the total work force these represent.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about employment in local areas is available only for dates when censuses of employment are taken. The table gives the available information for the Doncaster travel-to-work area from censuses of employment taken in September 1981, September 1984, and September 1987 (latest available).

Numbers and percentage of employees in employment[1] in the fifteen industry classes with the largest numbers of employees in the Doncaster travel to work area

Classes of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980		September 1981		September 1984		September 1987	
		Number (000s)	Per cent.[2]	Number (000s)	Per cent[2]	Number (000s)	Per cent[2]
11	Coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels	16·8	18·2	13·0	14·8	7·4	8·9
22	Metal manufacturing	—	—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
24	Manufacture of non-metallic mineral products	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	1·9	2·2
31	Manufacture of metal goods (other)	[3]—	[3]—	—	—	—	—
32	Mechanical engineering	5·2	5·7	3·6	4·2	4·0	4·8
35/36	Manufacture of motor vehicles and other transport equipment	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	—	—
41/42	Food, drink and tobacco manufacturing industries	2·3	2·5	—	—	—	—
50	Construction	3·5	3·8	3·0	3·4	4·6	5·6
61	Wholesale distribution	1·9	2·1	2·5	2·8	2·1	2·6
64/65	Retail distribution	9·0	9·8	9·2	10·5	8·4	10·1
66	Hotels and catering	3·7	4·0	2·7	3·1	3·8	4·6
71/72	Railways and other inland transport	5·0	5·4	4·9	5·5	3·4	4·1
81	Banking and finance	—	—	1·6	1·9	—	—
83	Business services	—	—	—	—	2·1	2·5
91	Public administration and national defence	5·2	5·6	3·5	4·0	6·2	7·5
93	Education	5·0	5·4	6·7	7·7	7·4	8·9

Classes of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980		September 1981 Number (000s)	September 1981 Per cent.[2]	September 1984 Number (000s)	September 1984 Per cent[2]	September 1987 Number (000s)	September 1987 Per cent[2]
95	Medical, other health and veterinary services	4·6	5·0	5·1	5·8	6·0	7·2
96	Other services to the general public	1·6	1·8	2·2	2·5	2·2	2·6
97	Recreational services and other cultural services	—	—	—	—	2·1	2·5

[1] Excludes the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's Forces.
[2] Percentage of all industries and services total.
[3] Indicates in top fifteen but figures cannot be given without disclosing confidential information relating to individual firms.

Key Training

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *589*, how many employees of his Department and of what grades it is intended to second to Key Training of 10 Eaton place, Reading, in the fiscal year 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no plans at present to second any employees of this Department to Key Training in the fiscal year 1990-91.

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will estimate the proportion of wages council employees earning below *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums;

(2) if he will estimate the proportion of wages council employees, broken down by region, earning below *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums;

(3) if he will estimate the proportion of wages council employees, broken down by industry earning below *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* 2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums;

(4) if he will estimate the proportion of wages council employees, broken down by collective agreement, earning below *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums.

Mr. Nicholls: No information is readily available for hourly earnings excluding shift and PBR premiums as well as overtime, nor for wages council employees broken down by region or by industry, and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of part-time employees earning less than *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums, for each London borough;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of part-time employees earning less than *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums, in Great Britain and in each standard economic region;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of part-time employees earning less than *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums, in Great Britain and in each county.

Mr. Nicholls: No information is readily available for all part-time employees regionally, nor for hourly earnings excluding shift and PBR premiums as well as overtime, and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Strikes

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many unofficial strikes took place in Great Britain in 1989; and what were the comparable figures for each of the five previous years;

(2) what was the total number of days lost through unofficial strikes in Great Britain in 1989; and what were the comparable figures for the five previous years.

Mr. Nicholls: Separate statistics on unofficial strikes ceased to be published as a regular series in 1981. However, a limited amount of information from a special exercise was included in the Government's Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Action Credit Scheme

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have taken part in the action credit scheme in each of the three pilot areas; how many ceased claiming income support to start full-time work; how many ceased claiming income support to start part-time work; how many failed to secure employment after the three-month jobsearch period; and whether he has any plans to extend the scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested will not be available until after the end of the action credit scheme pilot, which is due to finish at the end of August 1990.

SCOTLAND

NHS

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the £220 million additional expenditure earmarked for the National Health Service in Scotland is new cash; how much is from cash improvement schemes; and how much is from income generation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figure is £223 million and all of it is new money. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 11 December 1989, Vol. 163, column *510*.

Training and Employment Programmes

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the training and employment programmes run by the Department of Employment in

Scotland; and if he will indicate which, if any, of these programmes will not be wholly transferred to the new Scottish Enterprise Agency when it is established.

Mr. Lang: The training and employment programmes run by the Department of Employment in Scotland are set out in the table:

Youth Training Scheme
Employment Training
Community Opportunities
Enterprise Allowance Scheme
Business Growth Scheme
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
Training Access Points
Compacts
Development of Vocational Qualifications
Enterprise in Higher Education
Scottish Wider Access Programme
Employment Rehabilitation Service
Community Industry
Restart
Job Clubs
Job Start
Job Share
Disablement Advisory Service
Disablement Resettlement Service
Sheltered Employment
Travel to Interview Scheme

The programmes which will not be wholly transferred to Scottish Enterprise are:

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
Enterprise in Higher Education
Employment Rehabilitation Service
Restart
Job Clubs
Job Start
Job Share
Disablement Advisory Service
Disablement Resettlement Service
Sheltered Employment
Travel to Interview Scheme

Earnings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing the proportion of part-time employees earning less than *(a)* £4·16, *(b)* £4·32, *(c)* £3·12 and *(d)* £2·80 per hour, excluding overtime, shift and PBR premiums, for Scotland and in each regional authority and, if possible, each borough.

Mr. Lang: No information is readily available for part-time employees regionally, nor for hourly earnings excluding shift and PBR premiums as well as overtime, and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Vocational Courses

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent on vocational courses in colleges of further education in Scotland each year for the past 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available centrally.

Capital Building Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the capital building programme for the Scottish new towns for the next five years comes from *(a)* private and *(b)* public revenue.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish commentary on the Government's expenditure plans for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92 (published in March 1989) indicates at tables 15.5 and 15.6 projected gross capital expenditure on the new town development corporations' housing and other environmental services programmes. Planned expenditure on these programmes for 1990-91 to 1992-93 arising from the recent public expenditure survey will be published shortly in the 1990 Scottish commentary. The Government do not hold projections of private sector capital investment in the new towns. The relative contributions of private and public capital investment in the new towns over the next five years will depend upon decisions made in future public expenditure surveys and the private sector's perception of investment opportunities.

Further Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent by Scottish local authorities on further education provision each year for the past 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The expenditure by Scottish local authorities on further education provision for each year from 1978-79 to 1987-88 (latest available) is set out in the table.

Financial Year	*Scottish LA Expenditure £000s*
1978-79	77,120
1979-80	98,961
1980-81	125,149
1981-82	144,847
1982-83	166,964
1983-84	183,055
1984-85	195,262
1985-86	188,102
1986-87	193,520
1987-88	213,586

Source: Local Financial Returns
Note: Figures cover local authority current expenditure on further education.

New Towns

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the capital building programmes for each of the Scottish new towns for the next five years.

Mr. Lang: The capital programmes for each of the new town development corporations in 1990-91 will be the subject of discussion between my Department and each corporation following the submission of each corporation's annual budget submission later this month. The composition of the corporations' capital programmes and their financing requirements for the following four years will be determined at the same time in subsequent financial years.

Poinding Orders

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations the Lord Advocate has had with sheriff officers and messengers-at-arms as to how they will cope with poinding orders arising out of poll tax debts.

Mr. Rifkind: There has been no request for any such consultations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken by the post in Islamabad on the application of Mr. Basaharat Ali Shakir, who was born on 14 November 1956, Ref. Imm/93660; HO Ref. 5725181, to join his wife in the United Kingdom; when a report from the Home Office concerning this application was received at the post; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Mr. Shakir applied for entry clearance at the British High Commission in Islamabad on 18 February 1988. Following an interview on 9 January 1989 the entry clearance officer referred the application to the Home Office on 27 February 1989 for Mr. Shakir's wife to be interviewed.

Copies of the immigration service report on the interview with Mrs. Shakir were sent to Islamabad on 14 June and 13 October 1989. I regret that both copies of the report appear to have been lost in transit. The Home Office has now sent a further copy, on receipt of which the entry clearance officer hopes to reach a decision without further delay.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese children classified as having family members in Hong Kong live in separate camps from their relations.

Mr. Maude: We do not have figures for the number of children who fall into this category. The policy in Hong Kong is to ensure that families are not divided. As soon as any case comes to notice in which children are separated from family members they are wherever possible transferred between camps so that they can be reunited.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will convene an international conference to seek co-operation in providing third country settlement for those Vietnamese currently in camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: An international conference on Indo-China refugees was held in Geneva in June last year. At that conference the international community pledged sufficient places to resettle all Vietnamese refugees in the South-East Asian region, including Hong Kong. It was also agreed that those who were not refugees should return to their country of origin.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the reasons why no legal advice is available to Vietnamese refugees before screening in Hong Kong; and why no representatives from independent bodies are allowed to accompany refugees to the screening interview.

Mr. Maude: The UNHCR is permitted access to Vietnamese asylum-seekers and may provide legal advice to them both before and after screening. The UNHCR is also permitted to attend any screening interview for monitoring purposes.

Under Hong Kong law there is no provision for Government legal aid to be provided for Vietnamese asylum-seekers for screening and review procedures.

Vietnamese Prisoners

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those persons imprisoned in Vietnam for their political or religious beliefs on whose behalf Her Majesty's Government have made representations to the Government of Vietnam.

Mr. Sainsbury: We regularly raise the question of human rights with the Government of Vietnam. Both bilaterally and together with our partners in the European Community, we have in the course of 1989 raised a number of specific cases, including individuals imprisoned for their political or religious beliefs. These include:

Father Dominic Tran Ninh Thu
Tran Van Luong
Doan Quoc Sy
Pham Van Thuong
Le Manh
Thich Quang Do
Thich Huyen Quang
Thich Tue Sy
Thich Duc Nhuan
Thich Tri Sieu
Nguyen Chi Thien

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of Stae for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on *(a)* the incidence of cholera and *(b)* the availability of sufficient quantities of fresh water in the camps used for holding Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: In 1989 there were 23 cases of cholera in camps holding Vietnamese in Hong Kong.

Enough drinkable fresh water is available in all centres. In 1988 the average daily consumption of water per preson was about 250 litres for all purposes, and in 1989 about 235 litres. Drinking water standards in Hong Kong comply with WHO guidelines on drinking water quality.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the practice followed in holding appeals against the findings of the screening procedure for Vietnamee refugees.

Mr. Maude: When the director of immigration refuses an asylum-seeker's claim to refugee status, the asylum-seeker has 28 days to apply to the refugee status review board (RSRB) for a review of the decision. The immigration department file on the asylum-seeker is made available to both the RSRB and the UNHCR. The asylum-seeker or the UNHCR may present additional information or documentation to the RSRB in support of the claim for refugee status. The RSRB considers the whole of the facts and submissions made by the applicants and/or by those acting on the applicant's behalf before confirming or reversing the director of immigration's decision. Where the RSRB considers it necessary, it may interview the asylum-seekers or the immigration officer before arriving at its decision.

If the immigration officer is so interviewed, it is in the presence of the applicant who has the right to comment on what the immigration officer has said in answer to questions put by the board. Of the 4,594 appeals considered so far 392 (7·9 per cent.) have been upheld. In all, including appeals and UNHCR mandate cases, 922 persons (11·3 per cent.) have been classified as refugees out of 8,167 screened so far.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to repatriate unaccompanied Vietnamese children until their parents have been positively traced and identified.

Mr. Maude: We propose to take up this suggestion with the UNHCR's committee on unaccompanied minors in Hong Kong, which has a mandate to decide on a solution on a case-by-case basis in the best interests of each child.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is his policy to subject Vietnamese unaccompanied children in camps in Hong Kong to the same screening procedures as those used for adult Vietnamese; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Guidelines for the screening of unaccompanied minors were endorsed by the international conference in Geneva in June last year. These stipulate that for children over 15 the interview procedure should be modified to take into account the special situation of each child. For those under 15, the UNHCR special committee on unaccompanied minors would be delegated to carry out the refugee status assessment. The Hong Kong authorities abide by these guidelines in their treatment of unaccompanied minors.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what age the term unaccompanied minor is applied by Her Majesty's Government to Vietnamese children in the camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: This term is applied to children under the age of 18 in accordance with documentation associated with the comprehensive plan of action endorsed by the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees in Geneva in June 1989.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances he has received from the Vietnamese Government concerning passes for repatriated persons.

Mr. Maude: No assurances have been sought from the Vietnamese on this subject. We have no reason to believe that identity cards have not been issued to those who have returned. This is one of the issues to be raised in the course of monitoring.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take to improve conditions in the camps used to house Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: We can most effectively improve conditions in the camps by accelerating the rate at which people leave them, through resettlement in the case of refugees, and repatriation in the case of those who are not. Our policy is directed firmly at these aims. In addition we have contributed or pledged over £21 million since mid-1989 towards accommodation for boat people in Hong Kong.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to complete screening and resulting appeals at the current rate for the Vietnamese boat people currently in camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: At the current rate of screening and appeals, it is estimated that it will take about two years to complete the process for all Vietnamese boat people currently in camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to respond to the petition regarding the plight of the boat people in Hong Kong presented to him by the honourable Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is studying the petition presented by the hon. Member and will be replying to him very soon on the points which are raised in it.

Vietnam

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number of places of worship recently destroyed in Vietnam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are not aware that places of worship have recently been deliberately destroyed in Vietnam. On the contrary; the Bishop's conference has recently published a letter acknowledging the number of churches which have been rebuilt or repaired in the past few years.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the penalties specified by the Vietnamese authorities for Catholics attending mass in Vietnam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are not aware of penalties imposed for attending mass. Congregations at the regular masses given at the cathedrals in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City are large.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the provision for religious worship in Vietnam's re-education camps.

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that individuals detained in prisons or camps in Vietnam are permitted personal religious observances and practices. There are no provisions for collective worship or freedom of access for ministers of religion.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning Vietnamese provincial decrees limiting religious services, church building and repair and the numbers of priests and ministers.

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that local government organisations in Vietnam no longer have the power to issue this sort of regulation. In recent months the Government have authorised a relaxation of control over the building and repair of churches, although there remain problems of funds and resources. State authorisation is required before beginning study for the priesthood. Nevertheless 24 new bishops have been consecrated since 1975, and there are currently some 200 seminarians in four seminaries in Vietnam.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on

the number of prisoners currently detained in re-education camps in Vietnam and the reasons for their detention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The official figure for prisoners still detained in re-education camps is 1,000. A substantial number of political prisoners were released in 1987 and 1988. We have lobbied the Vietnamese Government on a number of occasions, both bilaterally and together with our EC partners, on behalf of specific cases of alleged abuses of human rights.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received concerning the incidence of detention without trial, torture and execution in Vietnam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We understand that approximately 1,000 people remain in detention without trial in Vietnam. We are aware of reports of instances of torture. In the course of 1988 (figures are not yet available for 1989) five people were sentenced to death but no executions were announced.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the number of *(a)* Buddhist monks and nuns, *(b)* Catholic priests and nuns, *(c)* Cao Dai and Hoa Hao priests and *(d)* Protestant ministers currently held in prison in Vietnam and the offences for which they were imprisoned.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not possible to give authoritative figures for these categories, although various individual cases in these categories are known. The charges laid against most of the best known currently in detention involve the organisation of armed disaffected groups.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the persecution of Buddhists who refuse to worship under the auspices of the state Buddhist church in Vietnam.

Mr. Sainsbury: Vietnam does not have a state Buddhist church.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of staff required by Her Majesty's embassy in Hanoi to monitor the welfare of repatriated persons, per 10,000.

Mr. Maude: The number of staff required by Her Majesty's embassy in Hanoi to monitor the welfare of repatriated persons would depend on the number of non-volunteers returned. At present UNHCR monitors those who volunteer to return. We hope that they will agree to monitor all who return as they do with those returned to Laos from Thailand. It also depends on the regularity of the visits proposed. A requirement to monitor 10,000 people could be covered by two to three full-time staff bearing in mind the fact that those returned will be divided into family groups and that the majority of those come from a relatively small area.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of flights from Hong Kong carrying volunteers for repatriation that have been refused landing rights in Vietnam: and if he will make a statement on the reasons for refusal given by the Vietnamese authorities.

Mr. Maude: None.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Vietnamese Government regarding their policy towards religious activity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We and our EC partners regularly raise the question of human rights with the Government of Vietnam, including cases of individuals imprisoned for their political or religious beliefs. We recently raised the imprisonment of Father Dominic Tran Dinh Thu.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a member of Her Majesty's embassy in Vietnam last visited a Vietnamese re-education camp; and if he will summarise the contents of any report resulting from the visit.

Mr. Sainsbury: No member of Her Majesty's embassy Hanoi has visited a Vietnamese re-education camp in the past three years.

British Ambassadors

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British ambassadors are currently in service; and how many are *(a)* black, *(b)* Asian and *(c)* women.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are 123 ambassadors and high commissioners currently in service, including non-resident ambassadors and high commissioners. In addition, there are nine heads of delegation to international organisations currently in service who have the personal rank of ambassador.

Of these, five are women. None is black or Asian.

Hong Kong

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many citizens of Hong Kong of non-United Kingdom origin are entitled to right of abode in the United Kingdom in addition to the 225,000 specified in his statement of 20 December.

Mr. Maude: There may be people in Hong Kong who have qualified for right of abode under existing United Kingdom law, for example, a Commonwealth citizen who before 1 January 1983 was married to a man who had right of abode in the United Kingdom. The information is not available but the numbers are likely to be very small.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitments were given by Her Majesty's Government to the authorities or other bodies in Hong Kong concerning the numbers and nature of right of abode to be offered in the United Kingdom prior to the statement of 20 December.

Mr. Maude: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* attempted and

(b) successful suicides have taken place among Vietnamese nationals in detention camps at Hei Ling Chan, Sham Shui, Po and Whitehead in Hong Kong in 1989.

Mr. Maude: The figures are:

	(a) Attempted	*(b) Successful*
Hei Ling Chan	0	0
Sham Shui	0	0
Po	0	0
Whitehead	1	0

United States of America

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to visit the United States of America; and how he plans to explain British policy and promote British interests there.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expects to visit the United States soon for wide-ranging discussions with members of the United States Government.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since May 1979 Her Majesty's Government have conveyed reservations to the United States Government concerning *(a)* United States internal human rights policies and *(b)* United States military interventions in sovereign states.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to convey formal reservations to the United States Government in these contexts.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has received from non-governmental organisations in regard to initiatives that may be taken at the forthcoming nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference in Geneva.

Mr. Waldegrave: Only one such proposal has been received, in a letter from Dr. David Lowry of the European Proliferation Information Centre (EPIC). It concerned the possibility of diverting resources from weapons development to measures to combat global warming.

Eastern Bloc

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet his counterparts in *(a)* Romania, *(b)* the German Democratic Republic, *(c)* Hungary, *(d)* Bulgaria, *(e)* Czechoslovakia, *(f)* Poland, *(g)* Albania and *(h)* the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs plans to meet over the next few months his counterparts from all these countries except Albania, with which we have no diplomatic relations. He will meet the GDR Foreign Minister during his visit to East Berlin on 22-24 January.

Parliamentary Questions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his practice on making statements and answering parliamentary questions on the internal affairs and human rights records of other countries.

Mr. Sainsbury: We answer questions as they arise, and make statements when it is appropriate.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 164**

SESSION 1989–90

18th December 1989—12th January 1990

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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